

The Forest of Magic & Mystery: the Wily Will-O-The-Whisp

David and Lisabeth Sewell McCann, Sparkle Stories

PRODUCTION NOTES: *This “play” is structured as a series of short performances – to be experienced by groups of people in the order given below. Each of the “stations” needs to be spaced apart – enough distance so that the action of one doesn’t distract from another.*

This can be performed in woods or fields or parks, or even in the classrooms and along the halls of schools. Or it could be in different houses of a neighborhood. The path between the stations can be lit with jack-o-lanterns or luminarios.

At the performance’s end, there should be a table that represents the “fairy ball” with edible treats.

There is a lot of “singing” and “dancing” in this show – but this in no way needs to sound or seem “professional”. The songs can be the simplest diddies – or even spoken as verses. As long as the performer is having fun, so will the children!

Below is the “script”. The play is interactive, and so the language can be flexible and open to improvisation and embellishment. The logistical details, however, do need to be included and stressed – as they propel the story and the journey for our “travelers” or the children who have come to enjoy themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS: *Have a volunteer parent “guide” go with each group to help direct, in case the children forget the clues or songs.*

Parents should join children on the walk. No unattended children.

At each station, a little Halloween “Goodie” can be handed out. We’ve used glass gems, little paper leaves, polished stones, small pinecones, etc.

::

PLAYERS

Narrator
Grey Lady
Woodcutter
Wandering minstrel
2 Wood Elves
Gnome

Jack the Fire Sprite
Fairy Princess

SCENE: Forest or field. A group of children and parents are greeted at the “entrance” to the Forest by the Narrator.

NARRATOR: My dear travelers, I wonder – have you come for the Fairy Ball? You are not sure? Well this is a special night in the fairy world where the line between our world and that of the fairies is so thin that we can meet and share sweet treats --and even dance together! But I’m afraid I have bad news - the Fairy Ball may need to be cancelled.

Well, I have just heard that our Princess -- the sweetest, dearest maiden ever known -- has been enchanted – and alas by her own magic! You see, she was given a golden wand with the power to freeze anything it touches. With it she can make a galloping horse freeze utterly still. Or a scampering squirrel turn as still as a stone. She can even freeze fluttering leaves in mid-air! Of course, she can undo the spell with the very same wand. It is powerful magic.

But tonight is Halloween – a night when the fire sprites – those mischievous will-o-wisps – are on the loose and playing tricks. One particularly tricky fire sprite stole her wand right from her gentle hand, and then used it on the poor maiden! Alas, she is frozen in the woods! And the will-o-wisp has run off with the only wand that can undo the magic.

Of course, the spell will wear off in the morning light, and all will be well, again. But without the princess there can be no Fairy Ball this special eve!

But wait – you look like a band of wise travelers! Perhaps you could find a way to help! Follow this path – it will take you to the princess. But stay alert -- along the way you might see that mischievous will-o-wisp. He can’t help himself but wish to play tricks. Surely he will try to play one on you. REMEMBER THIS: if you call him by his name, then he must return to his pumpkin lantern, and he can no longer work his mischief.

His name ... is Jack. Can you remember that? Jack. Say that with me loud and clear: JACK! That’s right now.

And! Hum this song as you go – it will help light the way....

(The Narrator sings a simple, repetitive tune, and invites the children to join along, repeating until they have it.)

MMMMMM mmmmmmm MMMMMM mmmmmmm

Look! (*Pointing to the lanterns on the path.*) There is the light that guides you! Good luck my wise travelers! I wish you well!

(*The travelers follow the lantern lit path to the First Station.*)

::

1ST STATION: THE GRAY LADY

(*The Gray Lady is dressed all in gray. She is tending a fire, and singing softly to herself. She notices the children in their various costumes.*)

GRAY LADY: Let me see – ah, a ghost, a tiger, a bat, a fairy (*naming the costumes in front of her*) – you must be headed to the Fairy Ball. Is that so?

But oh, be warned: Jack, the will-o-wisp, has been freezing the poor folk of the forest -- and he might freeze you! And you will all spend the night in the forest, still as stones!

But you look like a very brave band of travelers. And ready for some adventure. Is that so?

And do you know the magic word that will send that will-o-wisp right back to his lantern? Yes, that's right. His name! Jack.

OK, then I'll give you something else that will help you on your way. If you find a poor soul that's been frozen by the magic wand, you can sing a special little song that will put life back in their limbs.

Here is the song – sing it with me (*sung to the same tune as the Narrator's song*):

Jack o lantern Jack be lit
Jack his magic be hushed a bit

That little song will unfreeze anyone who has been frozen by the want's magic, but only for a moment or two.

And in that time -- they may tell you something that will help you find Jack and help the fairy princess.

Let's sing it again, nice and loud:

Jack o lantern Jack be lit
Jack his magic be hushed a bit

Are you wondering why it is that I was not frozen by little Jack as he passed? I'll bet you are. Well, he knows better than to meddle with the powers of the Gray Lady of the woods. You see, on this night, magic is at its fullest – and my magic is the power of reflection. Jack knows that if he tries to play a trick on me, well then – his mischief will only be reflected back on him. And this is also the case with you, dear travelers.

If your heart is pure, and your aim is true – you shall find your way through the woods – and you will help many along the way. But if mischief is your plan, then be on your guard!

Go now and ... and watch your step.

(The travelers follow the lantern lit path to the Second Station.)

::

2nd STATION: THE GENTLE WOODCUTTER

(The children approach the Gentle Woodcutter, who was frozen while cutting wood. When they sing their song, the Woodcutter unfreezes and speaks to them.)

GENTLE WOODCUTTER: Ah finally – oh, my back. I've been chopping all day and then to be frozen in this position. Ooooooh, that's better.

Travelers – did you see the will-o-wisp? He had a wand that should not have been in his hands. Powerful magic. Do you know where he got such magic?

From the Princess? Well! Tell me -- he didn't freeze her too, did he? Oh dear. This is tricky business. But it seems you have magic too - somehow you unfroze me.

You have done me a great service. And one good turn deserves another.

You will see strange things ahead – that will-o-wisp has surely left many frozen with his stolen magic. But these woods are friendly, and many will guide you on your way.

Now I am person like you -- I am not of the fairy folk. But I can hear the fairies speaking at times. I know there is to be a Fairy Ball. Do you know this too? Yes. And it is cancelled? Oh dear.

Well, I can tell you – it is a rare human that is invited to a Fairy Ball. But if you are the ones to find the wand and save the princess, then you will be invited, if not to dance, then at least to partake of their feast! And fairy treats are something you'll never forget. Mmmm-mmmm...

So good luck to you and thank you. Goodbye travelers

(He freezes again... The travelers follow the lantern lit path to the Third Station.)

::

3rd STATION: THE WOOD ELVES

(Two or three Wood elves are frozen. The children sing the song and unfreeze them They converse, speaking in turn, and are quite down and sad.)

ONE: That was Jack – I'm sure of it!

TWO: Oh, I remember Jack from last year – mischievous little fellow. I wish he would just stay in his pumpkin and not go around spoiling all the fun.

THREE: But it is the way of the will-o-wisp – they will never be tame – no indeed. They must hide and they must surprise!

ALL: Oh! Hello! We are surrounded.... We did not see you! Are you travelers? Hello!

(Yes...)

THREE: What brings you to these woods on such a sad night? Trying to steal some fairy magic are you? Well – what are you doing here?

(The travelers will say something about the fairy ball – if they don't mention the fairy ball – then inquire.)

ONE: Oh the fairy ball! Do you know it has been ruined! Ruined!

TWO: No sweets for us. No cakes, no cookies, no cider!

ONE: Tonight it is just swamp water for us. And moss. Yum. *(Not convincing.)*

TWO *(sad)*: Swamp water and moss. Yum.

THREE: No dancing, no merriment, and no fun. *(All sigh.)* And now we'll have to wait until next year. *(All moan.)* It's sad sad sad.

THREE *(perking up)*: But wait a moment – you are brave travelers with magic in your bag! Look what you have done for us! Perhaps you...

ONE *(getting excited)*: Can find the will-o-wisp! And get the wand!

TWO (*even more excited*): And rescue the princess! And then we'll have the ball!

(They all cheer and jump about.)

ALL: The Ball, the Ball, the Fairy Ball! The Ball, the Ball, the Fairy Ball!

THREE: He went right down this way. Not much further on and you will find him! Off with you now, and help all the fairy folk of the forest! Hooray for you!

ALL: Hooray! Hooray! Hoo-

(They all three freeze again. The travelers follow the lantern lit path to the Fourth Station.)

::

4th STATION: THE WANDERING MINSTREL

(He is frozen mid-song. The children sing the song and unfreeze him. He continues to play, picking up where he left off...)

MINSTREL: Did you see that?!

I was a strollin strollin strollin strollin
And singing my forest song
Then he came rollin rollin rollin rollin
And waved a magic wand

Then standing here
Filled with fear
A bug crawled in my ear (tee hee hee)

And then you came along
And made right from wrong
And what do you think of my unfrozen song?

(He talks while playing his instrument.)

Oh, I hope you find that will-o-wisp – he'll probably freeze up everyone in the forest.
And then we'll all be still as stones until the morning comes.

Stones! You know who can help us! That gnome! Yes that's just it!

Do you know what a gnome is? (*Kids describe or say “yes”.*) Good. There’s a gnome in these woods who knows all kinds of important things. And he might know how to stop that will-o-wisp. In fact, I’m sure he does!

(Sings again.)

Well maybe I can give you a hand
Sing a song of the fairy lands
What you think is merely a stone
Is really a magical gnome
So if you sing bahoo bahah baheee!
He’ll talk and dance like me.

(The minstrel does a little jig.)

Bahoo! Bahah! Baheee! (*Repeat and invite children to sing along. Once they have it, he speaks:*)

So look for a stone, but remember it’s really a gnome! And sing our little song and he will show himself!

Its so nice to unfreeze, and if you please, I’ll continue to dance and -

(He freezes again. The travelers follow the lantern lit path to the Fifth Station.)

::

5th STATION: THE STONE THAT IS A GNOME

(The travelers approach and see someone rolled up in their own clothe,s looking like a little boulder. They all sing Bahoo Bahah Baheeee. If they don’t, the stone comes to life anyway – only more slowly. The gnome is nervous, and looks for a place to hide.)

GNOME (*nervously*): Are you will-o-wisps?

Yes? No? (*cautiously inspecting them*) Well, it’s true you don’t look like will-o-wisps. If you aren’t will-o-wisps then what are you doing here?

(Likely answers: ‘looking for the will-o-wisp’ or ‘going to the ball’. The gnome begins to relax.)

You are looking for the will-o-wisp that stole the princess’s wand? You are very brave.

But once you find him – he will freeze you! How will you stop him? Do you know his name? (*“Jack!”*)

You do! Good! Very good!

But you musn’t send him back to his pumpkin before you get the wand. This is very important. How will you get the wand from him? (*Likely answers: just take it! Grab it from him!*) It is not that easy. You must have something he wants.

I have something here... Do you see this? It is a gem. The will-o-wisp loves all things that sparkle.

Here’s what to do:

He will sing and he will dance for you – and oh it will be fun to see! He’ll jig a bit here and jog a bit there, and sing so sweetly. But when he stops his song and dance, he will be still for just a moment. And when he is still, show him the gem. And he will be mesmerized.

Tell him the gem has strong magic, stronger than the wand. Tell him if he gives you the wand, you’ll give him the gem.

And he will, I’ll promise you. But don’t let him trick you from that wand! Once he has that gem, send him back to his pumpkin right then and there.

How do you send him back to his pumpkin? Do you know? That’s right. Call his name. JACK.

Good. Now. Continue down this path – I think he is close! Good luck!

(The gnome turns back into a boulder. The travelers follow the lantern lit path to the Sixth Station.)

::

6th STATION JACK O LANTERN

(The children approach a big jack o lantern and look around. Jack appears slowly with the magic wand.)

Oh! How did you know I was here? I was hiding ! No one can catch a will-o-wisp! No one! And look at what magic I have! It’s a magic wand! Oh yes it is! (*He begins to dance about with it and sing/rhyme.*)

I froze the princess

So that she
Can not this night
Prepare to be
the one who gives
the fairy ball.
I've spoiled the fun
For one and all!

But if you
This magic own
Then you this night
Can be the one
To give her back
Her happy glow
And to the ball
You all can go!

The only thing
that you must know
Is to tap her
on the toe!

The only thing
that you must know
Is to tap her
on the toe!

(He taps his own toe and laughs.)

This is the most magical secret of all: the only way to unfreeze the princess, tap her on her little toe!

But now that you know the most magical secret....

(He pauses and is still for a moment... and then begins to wave the wand in a magical way. The travelers should offer him the jewel, but if they don't, he can "sense" it.)

What is that you have there? A gem! Oh, it is so pretty – and you say it is magical? I shall have it! Give it to me! Give it! *(The travelers offer to trade.)* For the wand.... Well... oh.... But..... – OK.

(He makes the trade and dances happily about!)

Watch out watch out
A will-o-wisp is about
He'll tickle your nose
He'll tickle your toes
He'll trick you
He'll stick you
And no one shall stop this game
Unless you know my name!

(The children will shout JACK! at any point. If they do not, the song can be repeated.)

Oh – who told you my name? Oh fie fie. My magic is gone. Take the wand, go to the princess and tap her on the toe. It will unfreeze her. She is there, she is there, she is just over there... *(He points in the direction of the last station.)* Oh, my fun is over - I must return to my pumpkin! Boooooooo.....

(Jack shrinks away and disappears into his pumpkin – or under his cape - and the children proceed to the frozen princess.)

::

7th STATION – THE FAIRY PRINCESS

(The children find the lovely princess, frozen in a reach. They unfreeze her with the wand – by tapping her on the toe. She slowly comes to life and gasps with delight.)

Oh, dear travelers you've saved me. My wand, my wand – thank you for bringing back my magic wand.

Oh is it still Halloween?

It is! Wonderful! Then there is still time for the fairy ball. There will be dancing and singing and such festivities! Oh such good news! All the fairies must be waiting right now.

Please, dear travelers, be my guests of honor at the fairy ball and each of you – take one of these. *(She gives them each some kind of token or ticket.)* Give them to the lovely fairies by the banquet table and they will let you choose something so sweet. So very sweet. And you can taste it, remembering all that has happened tonight – and how you have helped the fairy world. We will always remember each of you.

Go now go, and I will call all of the fairy world so that the festivities can begin.

Happy Halloween!

::

End of Play.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO PRODUCE THIS HALLOWEEN EVENT, we request that you kindly give credit to Sparkle Stories for the script, and that you let us know that you intend to produce it. Thank you!

FOR INFORMATION or PERMISSION, please contact:

*Lisabeth & David Sewell McCann
SPARKLE STORIES
1212 Prindle Road
Charlotte, VT 05445
lisabeth@sparklestories.com*