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For my loved and loving mother

Hilda Zimmerman

Cast of Characters

MOLE (male)

2 MOTHER RABBITS

RIVERBANK ANIMALS

BUNNY RABBIT (female)

PETER RABBIT (male)

RATTY

OTTER

DON WEASEL

JUAN WEASEL

SEAN WEASEL

JOHN WEASEL

RON WEASEL (male)

LON WEASEL

WILLY WEASEL

JILLY WEASEL

BILLY WEASEL

TOAD (male)

ALBERT THE HORSE

BADGER

MARTHA THE MOUSE

HENRY and HARRY, The Engineering Hedgehogs

GERBY THE GERBIL

KATE THE SHREW (female)

TILDA THE HAMSTER (female)

DR. IDA BEBETTEROFF, The Mongoose

Character Notes

All roles can be played by either gender, except when noted. Character names can be adjusted to accommodate gender. Harry and Henry can be combined into one person if needed and Weasels can be added. Any number of Riverbank Animals can be used. Multiple casting is also possible.

Production Ideas

Here are some productions notes from our workshop in case they are of interest or use.

Music Notes

Of course, if any of these are used, all laws regarding Music Rights will have to be observed.

ACT 1

Scene 3: Our Weasel music was a song called *This is the Army of Forgotten Souls* by Transglobal Underground. It was used for their initial entrance and subsequently as their recurring theme music, including at Don's birthday party at Toad Hall in Act 2, Scene 6.

Scene 5: Alison Krauss and Union Station. A song called *Daylight* (the 1:22-2:55 portion) from the *New Favorite* album.

Scene 10: Lou Reed's song *There is No Time* from the *New York* album. The first 50 seconds played until the blackout then the rest of the song continued through intermission.

ACT 2

Scene 1: Johnny Cash's *The Beast in Me*. In our production, we laid a harmonica track on the CD and the actor playing Toad pretended to play harmonica along with the song.

Scene 7: Neil Young's *There's a World* (from 1:48 to the end of the song) from the *Harvest* album.

Set

We had a backdrop painting of the riverbank setting and then used fabric to create the river on the floor of the stage. The river was removed and curtains drawn in front of the backdrop for scenes that took place in locations other than riverbank; the entrance and removal of the river were done in full view of the audience and worked well theatrically. There were two permanent platforms on the stage. Simple stools and benches were used to establish Badger's house and the jail. These were also used for Toad Hall in addition to a table.

Toad's Car: we used an old car door, a piece of a fender and some headlights. His entrance is the crash so we worked with blackout and flashing lights for his entrance to avoid having to ever see the whole car intact.

Costumes

Our costumes were eclectic.

RATTY: Otter and Moley all wore clothing evoking early 20th century.

BADGER: World War Two French Resistance feel, complete with a beret.

TOAD: shiny lime green contemporary suit with a white turtleneck. In prison he wears black & white striped old time prison uniform.

GERBY: shorts and a T-shirt with GERBY on it in big letters—this helped the site gag of his entrance.

MOTHER RABBITS: white pants and 60s mod shirts.

KATE the SHREW: Khaki skirt and top, indicating a uniform.

TILDA: an oversized, long dress that was rigged with Velcro for quick removal. For the onstage costume switch with Toad, she had on large, old fashion bloomers. She also wore a wig affixed with a bonnet that was also put on Toad.

WEASELS: dark suits and ties. They are patterned after Damon Runyon characters and/or film noir criminals. If girls are playing these roles they could still wear suits with either pants or skirts.

IDA BEBETTEROFF: modern, professional skirt and blouse. She wore suede boots to evoke a sense of animal skin.

MARTHA THE MOUSE: a sweat suit

ALBERT: our Albert was a girl. She wore brown skirt and top with a brown jacket with fluffy lapels that evoked a horse's mane.

HENRY and HARRY: white lab coats

Acknowledgments

This adaptation was workshopped at Crossroads School for Arts and Sciences Middle School in Santa Monica, California in January 2006, with the follow cast and staff:

MOLE.....	Natanyel Bohm-Levine
MOTHER RABBITS	Vivi Mildenberger, Sara Worth
RIVERBANK ANIMALS.....	Arianna Cameron, Rose Gilroy, Camila Gonzalez, Isabella O’Neal
BUNNY RABBIT	Anna Mayer
PETER RABBIT.....	Matthew Schulman
RATTY	Daniel Rasch
OTTER	Marty Abbe-Schneider
DON WEASEL	Jack Quaid
JUAN WEASEL	Jesse Printz
SEAN WEASEL.....	Tancredi Selvaggio
JOHN WEASEL.....	Gabriel Greenland
RON WEASEL.....	Adam Platt
WILLY WEASEL	Lucas Kouyoumdjian
DANCING BIRDS.....	Jasmine Anderson, Arianna Cameron, Rose Gilroy, Camila Gonzalez, Lily Linke, Natasha Mayer
BIRDIE (Dance Soloist).....	Isabella O’Neal
TOAD.....	Ben Luben
ALBERT THE HORSE	Miranda Chartoff
WILD WOOD	Jasmine Anderson, Arianna Cameron, Anna Mayer, Isabella O’Neal
BADGER.....	Jenna Martin
MARTHA THE MOUSE	Lily Linke
HARRY THE ENGINEERING	
HEDGEHOG.....	Noah Goldman
HENRY THE ENGINEERING	
HEDGEHOG.....	Joe Jaffa
GERBY THE GERBIL.....	Casey Alexander
KATE THE SHREW	Rose Gilroy
TILDA THE HAMSTER	Vivi Mildenberger

Acknowledgments (continued)

DR. IDA BEBETTEROFFNatasha Mayer
LON WEASEL Camila Gonzalez
BILLY WEASEL..... Arianna Cameron
JILLY WEASEL..... Jasmine Anderson

Director Zoey Zimmerman
ProducerAdrienne Breslow
Lighting Design / Technical Direction Carl Faber
Set Design and Scenic Artist.....Nadia Morgan
Production Fairy GodmotherSara Kay
Assistant Technical Director.....Daniel Hartley
Assistant Directors Aaron Rosenberg,
Jordan Alper
Costume Design Sukeshi O’Neal,
Zoey Zimmerman
Choreography..... Samantha Grad, Davida Wills
Fight Choreography.....Daniel Hartley
Sound Design.....Max Dowaliby, Daniel Present
Sound OperatorJulian Black
Costume AssistanceJennifer Price
Running Crew Eddy Liptzin
Publicity..... Betty Walsh
Flyer Design.....Casey Alexander
Harmonica on “The Beast in Me” Tom Nolan
Crossroads Middle School Director..... Morgan Schwartz

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

freely adapted by Zoey Zimmerman

FROM THE NOVEL BY KENNETH GRAHAME

ACT 1

Scene 1

VOICE OVER.

In the very earliest time,
When both people and animals lived on earth,
A person could become an animal if he wanted to
And an animal could become a human being.
Sometimes they were people
And sometimes animals
And there was no difference.
All spoke the same language.
That was the time when words were like magic.
The human mind had mysterious powers.
A word spoken by chance
Might have strange consequences.
It would suddenly come alive
And what people wanted to happen could happen—
All you had to do was say it.
Nobody can explain this:
That's the way it was.
Words were magic. (*Inuit tale.*)

(Lyrical music and lights slowly fade up to reveal River, the riverbank, and some of its inhabitants. TWO MOTHER RABBITS read to their young ones. The audience sees MOLE living what the Mothers are reading.)

MOLE. (*In full cleaning gear:*) ONION SAUCE!

MOTHER RABBIT 1. (*Reading to her little ones:*) The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little hole under the ground, his home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs.

MOLE. Oh bother! Blow!

MOTHER RABBIT 2. Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with its spirit of divine discontent and longing.

MOLE. Hang spring cleaning!

MOTHER RABBIT 2. So he scraped and scratched and scabbled and scrooged, and then he scrooged again and scabbled and scratched and scraped working busily with his little paws and muttering to himself...

MOLE. Up we go! Up we go!

MOTHER RABBIT 1. ...till at last,

MOLE. (*Outside of his hole now, he gasps.*)

MOTHER RABBIT 2. ...he found himself rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow.

MOLE. This is fine! (*Starts to walk.*)

PETER RABBIT. Hey, Mole, where do you think you're going?

MOLE. I was...

BUNNY RABBIT. You can't just come through here.

MOLE. Why not?

PETER RABBIT. Earth tax. For upkeep.

MOLE. Onion sauce!

PETER RABBIT. Don't you onion sauce us. Everyone has to help.

BUNNY RABBIT. That's right. You have to pay a toll.

PETER RABBIT. At least if you're Mole.

BUNNY RABBIT. And you've gone outside your hole.

PETER RABBIT. Onto our grassy knoll.

MOLE. Ok, ok, I get it. But...I, I can't pay.

PETER RABBIT. He can't pay.

BUNNY RABBIT. Why can't he pay?

PETER RABBIT. Why can't you pay?

MOLE. I haven't any money, bunny.

PETER RABBIT. He hasn't any money, honey.

BUNNY RABBIT. I thought he said bunny.

PETER RABBIT. I'm calling you honey, dear.

BUNNY RABBIT. You are? Oh dear... *(He moves in seductively.)* not so near!

PETER RABBIT. You've nothing to fear. *(MOLE crosses to river.)*

BUNNY RABBIT. Hold on there, Mr. Mole

PETER RABBIT. What about the toll?

MOLE. Hey Flopsy...

BUNNY RABBIT. What?

PETER RABBIT. My name is Peter.

MOLE. *(Indicating river:)* What is this, Peter?

PETER RABBIT. What?

MOLE. This long—sliding—gurgling thing?

PETER RABBIT. What is it?

BUNNY RABBIT. It's a river.

PETER RABBIT. Never come across one before? *(MOLE freezes in wonderment.)*

MOTHER RABBIT 1. *(Continues to read:)* Never in his life had he seen a river before—this sleek, sinuous, full-bodied animal, chasing and chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh, to fling itself on fresh playmates that shook themselves free, and were caught and held again. All as a-shake and a shiver—glints and gleams and sparkles, rustle and swirl, chatter and bubble. The Mole was bewitched, entranced, fascinated. By the side of the river he stood and listened, as one listens of the voice of a person

who holds one spellbound by exciting stories. And he listened as the river chattered on to him, a babbling procession of the most beautiful stories in the world, sent from the heart of the earth to be told at last to the insatiable sea.

Scene 2

RAT. (*Offstage, composing a poem:*)

All along the backwater
Through the rushes tall,
Ducks are a dabbling,
Up tails all!

(*Enters wearing a backpack accompanied by OTTER.*)

Ducks' tails, drakes' tails
Yellow feet a-quiver
Yellow bills all out of sight
Busy in the river

Slushy green undergrowth
Where the roach swim
Here we keep our larder
Cool and full and dim.

OTTER. (*Clapping:*) Best one yet, Ratty. Can we eat now?

RAT. Everyone for what he likes!
We like to be
Heads down, tails up
Dabbling free!

(*OTTER starts to clap...*)

All along the backwater
Through the rushes tall
Ducks are a dabbling,
Up tails all!

OTTER. I could go for some duck.

RAT. (*Taking in the beauty, he puts down the pack and OTTER begins to empty it's contents.*) Oh, Otter, listen...the intoxicating melody im-

poses its will and I am once again, and always in the place of my song-dream.

OTTER. I was just gonna say that.

RAT. The wind in the willows calls out as it troubles the waters with twirling eddies and floating foam-streaks. The scented herbage and undergrowth that leads us up to this marvelous green where...

OTTER. Did you remember to pack the chicken salad?

RAT. I think I did. I hope I did. I did. I know I did. I think I did.

MOLE. (*Who's been watching from the other side of the river.*) Uh, excuse me... (*OTTER, startled, grabs food protectively.*)

RAT. Oh, Hello.

MOLE. Hello.

RAT. Why, you're Mole aren't you?

MOLE. Uh-huh. Are you Rat?

RAT. Indeed I am. Well, this is an unexpected pleasure. A bit far from home aren't we? Never seen you around here before.

MOLE. No, I—I've taken the day off.

RAT. The day off? What an excellent idea.

MOLE. I was spring cleaning and I...

RAT. (*Very understanding:*) Say no more, my young friend. The day comes when we all hear the call of the River, the intoxicating melody that...

MOLE. Mr. Rat?

RAT. Call me Ratty. Please. All my friends do.

MOLE. Ok, Ratty, excuse me, but, this is all really new to me, I've...I've never been to a river before.

RAT. Not a river, little Mole. *The* river.

MOLE. The river. And you live by it?

RAT. By it and with it and on it and in it. It's brother and sister to me, and aunts, and company and food and drink, and (naturally) washing. It's my world, and I don't want any other. What it hasn't got is not worth having, and what it doesn't know is not worth knowing. Lord! The times we've had together! Whether in winter or summer, spring or autumn, it's always got its fun and its excitements.

MOLE. Does it ever get dull at times? Just you and the river, and no one else to pass a word with?

RAT. No one else to—well, I mustn't be hard on you. You're new to it, and of course you don't know. The bank is crowded with kingfishers and dabchicks and moorhens and...

OTTER. Otters

RATTY. ...egrets and sliverbirch and the reeds and

OTTER. Otters

RAT. bulrushes and willow-wrens and

RAT and OTTER. Otters (*They hug.*)

RAT. Otters. Otters, Otters! Have you two met? Mole, Otter, Otter, Mole.

MOLE. Hi.

OTTER. Yo.

RAT. Say, how's about if our new friend Moley, may I call you that (*Not waiting for an answer:*) how's about if Moley joins us for our picnic.

OTTER. Ok, but I've got dibs on the Gherkins.

RAT. Come on over, Moley, we'll have a feast!

MOLE. How do I get across?

RATTY. Dive in!

MOLE. What?

OTTER. Swim, Nit Wit.

RATTY. Otter!

OTTER. I mean sweetheart.

MOLE. I don't know how.

RATTY. Just walk through it, Moley. The water's lovely. You'll like it.

MOLE. *(Hesitating:)* I'm afraid.

OTTER. Good. More for us.

RATTY. *(Reprimanding look towards OTTER:)* I understand, Moley. You take your time. There's plenty of food and we're certainly in no rush. You can join us when you're ready.

OTTER. Yeah, Moley, it's ok.

RATTY. *(To OTTER:)* And...

OTTER. And, I'll be sure to save you one of the really crunchy pickles, even though they're my favorite.

RATTY. Now let's see, we have cold chicken, cold beef, cold ham, deviled eggs, potato salad, slaw, beets, cucumber sandwiches, Cobb salad, ginger beer, lemonade and chips.

MOLE. Chips?

RATTY. Chips.

OTTER. *(Stuffing them in his mouth:)* Chips.

(Perhaps a bird calls cheep, cheep, etc. OTTER protects his chips.)

MOLE. Ratty, what's over there? *(Pointing east.)*

RATTY. *(Eating a sandwich:)* Where?

MOLE. There? That dark place on the horizon.

RATTY. Oh. *(Very nervous:)* Nothing, Moley, nothing at all...

MOLE. Yes there is. It's a forest.

RATTY. Yes, yes, all right, if you insist, it's the Wild Wood and we stay away from that, we river-bankers.

MOLE. Aren't they—aren't there very nice creatures there.

RATTY. Well, the squirrels and the rabbits are all right, and then there's Badger, of course. (*He and OTTER share a loving glance about BADGER.*) She lives square in the middle of it, wouldn't dream of living anywhere else. Crazy, darling Badger. Not an especially optimistic creature, though...always ranting and raving about how the River's in trouble, that it needs our help and all sorts of nonsense. But she's a dear, really, just a dear.

MOLE. She's a deer.

RATTY. Oh yes.

MOLE. But I thought she was a Badger.

RATTY. She is.

MOLE. So she's not a deer.

RATTY. I just said she was.

MOLE. But...

OTTER. Oh for God's sake, d-e-a-r, nit wi— (*RATTY looks at him threateningly.*) darling. What Ratty is trying to say is that the Badger is a wonderful...*badger* who lives in the middle of a treacherous forest because she just as soon eat a pile of rusty bicycle wheels than carry on a civil conversation.

MOLE. Oh. Why is it treacherous?

RATTY. (*He and OTTER look at each other.*) No reason.

OTTER. It's the weasels.

RATTY. Shhhhhh...

MOLE. The weasels?

OTTER. Shhhhhh...

RATTY. Loathsome creatures. Criminals. Unhappy souls who specialize in hunting small rodents...

Scene 3

(Weasel music comes up and the WEASELS dressed in suits with black sunglasses come dancing menacingly up and surround MOLEY, who remains on the other side of the river from RAT and OTTER.)

DON W. Hello, Ratty. *(A la “Hello Newman” from “Seinfeld.”)*

RATTY. Hello, Weasel.

DON W. Looks like we have company today, eh Rat?

RATTY. That’s our friend, Moley. He’s new here.

DON W. New, eh? Well, welcome to paradise, Mole. It’s a pleasure to meet you.

MOLE. Thank you, Weasel.

JOHN W. That’s Don Weasel to you, Mole. Where were you raised, in a hole?

OTTER. Well, actually...

RATTY. Shhh....

JUAN W. Maybe we oughta teach our little, burrowing, furry, fellow mammal here a lesson on respect for his elders.

DON W. Whad’ya think, Rat? I’ve been thinkin’ of settin’ up a charm school for the more...unrefined amongst us animals. Perhaps Moley here could be our first, victim—I mean student.

RATTY. Now, now, Don Weasel. Mole hasn’t been above ground in quite awhile. He’s just getting used to life on the outside.

DON W. Ya? Me too! I just did 3 years in the varmint slammer on accounta the humans caught me trying to kidnap a rich lady’s French Poodle.

SEAN W. You would’a had it too, Boss, if Juan here hadn’t been late with the getaway scooter.

JUAN W. I wouldn’t a been late if you hadn’t left it in the wrong...

DON W. It’s all water under the bridge, my good fellows. Let us live harmony with one another and put the past behind us. We are

a benelovent, beveloment, beviolent, a kind breed, we carnivorous weasels, seeking only a peaceful co-existence with our meal tickets, I mean, fellow species in the animal kingdom.

OTTER. (*Under his breath:*) Well that's reassuring. (*RATTY glares at him.*)

SEAN W. Speaking of meal ticket, Don, I could go for a little lunch.

JUAN W. We ain't eaten since dawn, Don.

SEAN W. No need to repeat yourself.

JUAN W. I didn't.

SEAN W. You just said Don Don.

JOHN W. Not Don Don, dawn, Don.

SEAN W. Ya, see, Don, Don.

JUAN W. No, you idiot, DAWN D—

DON W. (*Hisses threateningly. They stop fighting immediately.*)

RATTY. (*Trying to deflect attention away from MOLE:*) Perhaps you would care to join us in our picnic. We've plenty to eat.

OTTER. (*To RAT:*) What are you do—

RATTY. (*To OTTER:*) Shhhhh... How about it, your Donness,

DON W. As tempting as that sounds, Ratty, I believe we had something a little...fresher...in mind... (*They begin to circle MOLE.*)

SEAN W. Nothing like a bit of just picked luncheon meat to satisfy the palette...

MOLE. Ratty...

JUAN W. No, actually, we were thinking more along the lines of a burrowing sort, the kind with soft fur and strong forearms...

RATTY. (*Urgently:*) jump in the river, Mole. They can't cook you if you're wet.

DON W. He's got a point there, Moley. Go ahead...dive in...

OTTER. You can do it, Mole, don't be afraid...

MOLE. But I *am* afraid...

RATTY. Jump in anyway, it's your only chance...

MOLE. (*Totally panicked:*) But...

(During the above scene, the RIVERBANK ANIMALS have all eventually entered, on the other side of the River with RAT and OTTER. They sensed trouble. MOLE is alone with the WEASELS on the other side.)

ONE OF THE ANIMALS. (*Sings to the tune of "Wade in the Water:"*)

Wade in the water

Wade in the water, Moley

Wade in the water

Moley's gotta wade in the water

OTTER. (*Jumping into the River:*)

Otter in the water

Otter in the water, Moley

Otter in the water

Swim with Otter in the water

ALL ANIMALS but MOLE.

Wade in the water

Wade in the water, Moley

Wade in the water

Moley's gotta wade in the water

MOLE. (*MOLE jumps in:*) I'm in the water

ALL. You're in the water, Moley

MOLE. I'm in the water

ALL. Holy moly, Moley's in the water

Wade, etc.

(OTTER and other animals all sing all swim—staged is bathed in blue light—entire cast, including, perhaps, WEASELS [caught up with the joy of the music] all singing, clapping, swimming.)

Scene 4

(Suddenly—loud screeching sound of car, horn blows, lights flash, etc. TOAD and ALBERT THE HORSE enter completely disrupting everything with loud, abrasive car crash.)

(Suddenly silence and complete darkness. We hear some grunts, groans, etc. Lights come back up—we see pieces of a fender, a steering wheel, picnic debris and TOAD, ALBERT, RATTY, MOLEY, and OTTER on various parts of the stage, having been tossed and turned by the car.)

TOAD. *(Standing up, dusting himself off:)* Ah, nothing like the open road, right Albert.

ALBERT. We're nowhere near a road.

MOLE. *(In terror:)* What was that???

RATTY. It's ok, Moley. It's ok. This is our friend, Toad. And his trusty steed, Albert.

MOLE. Hi.

ALBERT. Yo.

TOAD. A gracious good day to you, young Master Mole.

RATTY. Toad, you should be ashamed of yourself. What were you thinking, driving that horrible thing, that...filthy automobile...

TOAD. Ashamed? Filthy? Why my dear Ratty, with each new day my Driving achievements surpass themselves. I am proud of my perambulatory accomplishments. With your beady little eyes, you gaze, my good friend, upon an unprecedented master of the Vehicular Arts. My chauffermanship is unparalleled. Even the wildest of carriages have been domesticated under my tutelage. I assure you, not in this, or any other lifetime has a finer Automobile Whisperer graced our good highways. I am...

RATTY. A menace to society...

TOAD. The supreme motor-genius of my generation. I am...

OTTER. Jeopardy on a stick.

TOAD. A driving demi-god, I'm...

ALBERT. Satan on wheels...

RATTY. Ok, that's enough. Is everyone all right? Anyone hurt?

TOAD. Well, I...

MOLE. I think my tail's broken.

OTTER. (*Distraught:*) Lunch is ruined.

RATTY. Toad, you have got to rethink this...compulsion to drive you have. It'll be the death of you. It'll be the death of us all.

TOAD. Now, now, Rat, don't you think you're over-reacting just a bit. It's just lunch.

OTTER. JUST LUNCH? Are you mad???

ALBERT. Absolutely.

RATTY. And Moley's tail. And Lord knows what else you've broken or smashed or ruined along the way.

TOAD. But what is life without our passions, Ratty. Oh, the wondrous world of rubber and tar, the crisp click of a changing gear...

ALBERT. The endless stream of blather pouring out of your exhaust pipe...

TOAD. Exactly!

MOLE. Perhaps you could take up another hobby, Mr. Toad.

ALBERT. Free falling from extreme heights, for example.

TOAD. But Automobiling is my one true love. My northern star. My destiny.

RATTY. Do you notice a pattern here, Toad? First, it was boating. You treated that houseboat of yours like it was the Queen of Happy Candyland. And you spent more money on that darn boat in a week than most people can spend on food for their kids in a year. But after awhile you...you got tired of it. Remember? And the second that Gypsy caravan came along you were hooked and just *had* to have one. Caravanning was "the only thing that made sense" to you. The boat sat and rotted in the dock while you went off to pursue your new "reason to live"...and now, this...this fixation on cars.

You've got a problem, Toad, and it's time to face it, head on. (*Everyone but TOAD claps enthusiastically.*)

TOAD. (*Bows humbly, thinking the applause is for him:.*) Oh, thank you, thank you very much. You're too kind.

ALBERT. Ok, that's it... (*He goes to attack TOAD.*)

RATTY. (*Holding him back:.*) Easy boy. Rope it in. Deep down inside he knows I'm right.

TOAD. Say, how's about we all go back to Toad Hall for a splendid repast of potted lobster and sardines. I believe there are fresh biscuits in the pantry, and jam...

OTTER. Jam?

TOAD. Jam.

OTTER. I'm in. Let's go.

RATTY. I'd like to show you Toad Hall, Moley. It's a splendid estate. Been in the Toad family for generations. Agamemnon Toad built it just after the Crimean wars.

TOAD. Saddle up, Albert!

RATTY. We're not riding Albert are we?

TOAD. But of course.

ALBERT. That's why he brings me along. So when the cars crash, he'll have a way to get home.

RATTY. Ah. I see.

TOAD. My sturdy steed and I have galloped apace on many a grand adventure. Tally ho, big Al...

RATTY. You know, it's so lovely out. And there's still plenty of daylight. How's about if we all take a nice hike over to your place, Toad. You could tell Moley here the story of how your kind came to evolve in these parts.

TOAD. Splendid idea. A little stretch of the legs will do us good. Come, Mr. Mole, the story of we Toads is a scintillating tale of glory and triumph. It all started long ago when we were a large school of

the highest quality amoebas swimming in the primordial sea... (*As they all begin to walk off, MOLEY lingers back.*)

Scene 5

(MOLEY lingers while the other's exit, taking in the beauty of the scene and marveling at everything that's just happened. FOREST ANIMALS enter and perhaps a dance ensues [see music notes]. Eventually RATTY re-enters beckoning MOLEY to come with them to Toad Hall.)

Scene 6

MOTHER RABBIT 1. And off they went, this merry tribe of multi-specied travelers, to illustrious Toad Hall. That day turned into other days in which these dearest of friends continued to delight in the pageant of the river-bank marching steadily along.

MOTHER RABBIT 2. Spring and Summer fell into Winter. (*As she reads the other animals change the setting from the Riverbank to the Wild Wood covered in snow. Included in the setting are Trees played by humans.*) Mole settled into riverbank residence with Ratty, the most genial of hosts. Animals were always dropping by for a meal and a chat. For entertainment, Ratty would recite poetry about ducks or tell stories of Otter, and Don Weasel and dear Badger, that much beloved hero of the Wild Wood.

MOTHER RABBIT 1. Mole had long wanted to make the acquaintance of the mysterious Badger, who seemed, by all accounts, to be a formidable creature. And so, one cold, still afternoon with a hard steely sky overhead, Moley slipped out of the warm parlor into the open air. With great cheerfulness of spirit he pushed on towards the Wild Wood, which lay before him low and threatening, like a black reef in some still sea...

Scene 7

MOLE. (*Nervously entering the Wild Wood:*) I don't see what all the fuss is about. It's a bit dark, I admit, but it's just a wood. What is there to be frightened of.

(A tree hisses. MOLE sings a little song to comfort himself. After singing a few rounds he begins to hear what sounds like an echo of the song. The WEASELS have been listening and they sing the song as the creep up on him.)

DON W. Well, well, well. Ratty's little Mole out for a stroll in our pretty timberland.

JOHN W. And singing such a lovely tune.

SEAN W. Kinda makes ya wanna hum along, don't it Juan.

JUAN W. I betch'a that old Rat taught it to him. Probably wrote it himself, poet that he is.

SEAN W. How 'bout it, Moley, your pal Mr. Rat ya teach that tune? Speaking a' which, where is that companion of yours? Never seen ya out alone before.

DON W. Now, now, boys, go easy on the lad. We seem to be making him just a wee bit...nervous. Can't say as I blame you, Mole, what with being so far from the riverbank and all alone without anyone to protect you.

MOLE. I just wanted to meet the Badger.

JUAN W. Oh, isn't that sweet.

JOHN W. He wanted to meet the Badger.

SEAN W. He's such a tender fella.

JUAN W. Ya, sweet and tender.

JOHN W. Sweet

SEAN W. and

JOHN W. Tender (*They each take a fork and knife out of suit pocket as they say this.*)

MOLE. (*Pointing behind them:*) Say, is that a French Poodle.

(They all look. MOLEY runs in other direction. They chase after him and just as they are about to catch him, RATTY, OTTER, TOAD, and ALBERT come running on and manage to chase them away.)

RATTY. Didn't we tell you stay away from the Woods.

MOLE. I'm sorry Ratty. I wanted to meet Badger.

OTTER. Ya, well, you almost met your Maker.

MOLE. My Maker?

ALBERT. Ya, you know...you almost kicked the bucket.

MOLE. Was it your feed bucket? I'm sorry.

OTTER. No, you idio—you poor misguided rodent. You could've gotten us all killed.

MOLE. I didn't mean to.

RATTY. We know that, Moley. But, next time *(Trees hiss.)* ...shhh... do you hear that...

TOAD. *(Hiding behind ALBERT:)* Is it the weasels?

OTTER. Let's get out of here.

RATTY. We can't risk trekking back through woods just yet. Those varmints will be gathering reinforcements and it's almost dark. Badger's house isn't far from here; we'll go hide out with her till daylight. *(A car is heard in the distance.)*

OTTER. What was that?

TOAD. *(His eyes lighting up:)* There's a human road on the south side of woods.

ALBERT. Not now, Toad.

TOAD. Yes, yes. Gentleman, many are called, but few are chosen. I'm heading south, my friends. I'll burgle the Buick and pick you up in the morning.

MOLE. Burgle the Buick?

TOAD. Not to worry, young Mole. You'll be no one's brunch as long as I'm alive and there's a Sedan to steal.

MOLE. Sedan?

TOAD. Come, mighty stallion, duty calls. Our chariot awaits. These darkening woods shan't conquer us. (*Trees hiss. TOADS whimpers and cowers.*) You go first. (*To ALBERT. They exit. BADGER enters.*)

BADGER. That won't end well.

RATTY. Badger! (*He hugs her. BADGER isn't happy about it.*)

OTTER. Oh, Badgy! Are you a sight for sore eyes...

BADGE. All right, all right, that's enough. I don't know what you fools are doing out here but you'd better come inside. I heard all the ruckus and figured the weasels were prowling about. Now, come on let's go, it's almost dark. (*Notices MOLE:)* Who's this?

RATTY. This is our friend, Moley. He's very anxious to meet you, Badge.

MOLE. Hello.

BADGE. Yo.

OTTER. He left his hole and now he lives with Ratty on the riverbank.

BADGE. Is that a fact. So, you're a Mole. Strong forearms?

MOLE. Uh-huh.

BADGE. Like to dig?

MOLE. Love it.

BADGE. I could use a Mole like you. Come inside. We need to talk. (*They exit.*)

Scene 8

(*WEASELS rush back on—all but SEAN WEASEL.*)

JUAN W. C'mon, Boss, let's ambush 'em from west side. They'll never see us comin'.

DON W. Oh, but where is the sport in that, my friend? Where is the finesse? Surely you don't suggest we simply sneak up behind the mighty Badger like she was just some ordinary snacking mouse? No, hers is a demise that cries out for panache, style, wit... And I believe I am this close to crafting a plan so stylish that if you had a mind, it would be blown. Boys, I've got a hold of some inside information that could help us gain control of the entire county; I'm talkin' not just these woods, but the fields, meadows, the river, all of it, even Toad Hall.

JOHN W. Inside information.

JUAN W. How inside?

DON W. So inside, even I don't know what it is.

JOHN W. Uh... *(Confused.)*

DON W. I'm kidding.

JOHN W. I knew that...

DON W. Seems our friend Badger has hatched a bit of plot that involves joining up all the...

(We hear car crash, police siren and sounds of TOAD getting arrested off stage.)

JOHN W. Sounds like Mr. Toad is in a spot of trouble with the law.

DON W. Maybe we should go help him.

JOHN W. *(Confused:)* Uh...

DON W. It's a joke.

JOHN W. I knew that.

JUAN W. Hey, Don, didn't you and the frog used to be friends, back in the day?

DON W. Indeed we did, but that was another lifetime ago.

JOHN W. What happened?

DON W. When I was a wee pup, the forest in which we lived got cut down by the humans, and my entire family—wiped out, except

for me of course. For weeks after, in a daze, I wandered the countryside, growing steadily weaker, too young to fend for myself. Then, one day, I stumbled upon Toad Hall, and, drawn by the smells of supper on the table, I tumbled in through an open window and collapsed, right there on the floor of the banquet hall near death just as Mr. Toad was getting ready to entertain his guests. Startled by my ragged appearance and sudden entrance, he quickly ordered the cook to serve me a hot meal and a glass of fresh tomato juice with a slice of lemon. You gotta hand it to the Toad, he really has an eye for detail. Over the next few months, as I was nursed back to health, I freely roamed the halls of that glorious estate, and I came to love it, as I had loved my first home in the forest; and, being that I was a young orphan, I felt Mr. Toad to be a kind of adopted uncle to me. But then, one morning, this so-called Uncle sits me down and says, “Ok, my little freeloading charge, it’s time to go to work. Surely you don’t expect a weasel of your...means...to be accepted into an esteemed family such as the Toads.”

JOHN W. I don’t get it.

JUAN W. I do. The Don had no money and Froggy Boy is loaded.

DON W. Indeed. I was to pay him back for taking me in, and, thus, I came to spend the next 2 long years working 12 hour days of hard labor in exchange for some meager rations and a spot in the corner stall of the barn.

JUAN W. Sounds rough, Don.

DON W. I’m not gonna lie to you, boys, it was. To this day, there are times I still think it would have been better to die on that marble banquet floor rather than suffer the loss of yet another home I’d come to love. *(He weeps a little.)*

JUAN W. Ever been back there, Don?

DON W. As a matter a fact, I have not, Juan. But, fear not, my friend, for every weasel has his day, and when my plan comes together, I’ll not only be back, but you’ll be with me, you and John and Sean and Ron and Lon and all us weasels, even the ones with two syllable names. And we won’t just be visiting, either. Someday boys, were gonna take over that place.

SEAN W. (*Running on:*) Hey, Don, guys, guess what. Toad's been arrested.

JOHN W. Ya, we heard the commotion.

JUAN W. What's the big deal? He'll just pay off the judge and be home in time for supper.

SEAN W. Not this time, Juan. He stole a police car.

DON W. What??

SEAN W. He stole a cop car and totaled it.

DON W. (*Whistles.*)

JOHN W. I hear the police don't really like it when you steal their property.

SEAN W. Especially when there's a known criminal in the back of the car who they'd finally managed to arrest after years of trying.

DON W. (*Whistles again.*)

JUAN W. Did the crook escape?

SEAN W. He's half way to Brazil by now.

DON W. Oh, this is good. This is very, very good.

JOHN W. They could give Toad 20 years for this, at least.

JUAN W. Don't tell me that lousy amphibian is finally gonna come to justice.

DON W. Gentlemen, this just might be the break we've been looking for. (*Paces and thinks for a moment.*) With the good Mr. Toad apparently otherwise engaged, for, oh, say, a couple of decades, he might be in need of some trustworthy souls to look after his beloved estate.

JOHN W. Wait a minute, are you saying...

JUAN W. Gimme 10 minutes to pack and I'm there...

SEAN W. Oh man, this is gonna be great...

DON W. Yes my friends, the plot thickens. Come, let us away, Gents, let us away through the woods...

SEAN W. ...and up the river... *(Their theme music comes up.)*

JOHN WEASEL. ...and past the fields...

DON WEASEL. ...to our knew home...

ALL. TOAD HALL! *(They dance excitedly off.)*

Scene 9

(Lights up on Badger's house. On an easel there is a drawing of Toad Hall with extensive underground tunnel system leading from it.)

BADGE. *(Entering with RATTY and gang in tow:)* Martha, soup!

MARTHA. *(A mouse, wearing sweatpants and possibly a T-shirt with the globe on it. She pumps her biceps with hand weights as she enters.)* You got it, Badgemeister. Oh, *(Seeing everyone:)* new recruits?

BADGE. Possibly. I'll have the mulligatawny. Hot. Rat?

RATTY. Lentil for moi, if you please, Mademoiselle.

OTTER. Black Bean with extra sour cream if you have it. And may I have a cracker?

MARTHA. Sure, pal. I think there's a Zwieback left in the cookie jar from last night's meeting. How 'bout you, cutey? What's your pleasure, soup-wise?

MOLE. Chicken-noodle?

MARTHA. Consider it done. Care for a Zwieback?

MOLE. Yes, please.

BADGE. I'll take a piece of that cracker action. You down for some, Rat?

RATTY. Who doesn't like a nice Zwieback. They're awfully crunchy.

MARTHA. Fine. We got a mulligatawny extra steam, one B and B heavy on the cream, a chick, chick noo noo for cutie pie here, a nice big lentil for Mr. Polite and Z-Backs all around. *(She exits.)*

OTTER. She seems nice. Knows a lot about soup.

BADGE. She's my right hand mouse. Couldn't begin to pull my plan off without her.

RATTY. What plan, Badge?

MOLE. Does it have something to do with the recruits she mentioned?

BADGE. Nicely deduced, Mole. Smart boy. *(MOLE blushes. RATTY and OTTER are a little jealous.)*

OTTER. I was just gonna say that.

RATTY. *(Looking at easel:)* What's all this about, Badge.

BADGE. The Wide World is in trouble, Rat. And it's bad this time. Real bad.

RATTY. Oh, Badger, you're not going to get all alarmist again are you?

MOLE. What's the Wide World?

RATTY. It's something that doesn't matter, either to you or me. I've never been there, and I'm never going and neither are you. So forget it. Let's just eat our soup and have a nice chat. About the river or something. It should be thawing any day now. Won't that be lovely, Otter...we can swim and...

BADGE. What are you talking about, Rat? The river thawed weeks ago, in the middle of winter. Doesn't that, oh, I don't know, CONCERN you?

RATTY. Not at all. It's still too cold to swim.

BADGE. But it's flooding, Ratty. Completely out of season. Beaver's dam got swept away with his kids still in it. He hasn't seen them since.

RATTY. Well he should have gotten his kids out of there before the flood came.

BADGE. How?

RAT. Anyway, These things happen. It's the nature of nature. Oooo, That gives me an idea for a poem. *(He pulls out his book.)*

BADGE. *(Grabs book harshly:)* It's anything but nature.

MOLE. What do you mean, Badge?

BADGE. Look, Mole...the Wide World is what lies beyond the Wild Wood. It's where the people live. And they...*build* big things there, and...*make* a lot of stuff...and it's all very impressive but there's a *huge* problem. They build in such a way that hurts the river, and us and themselves.

MOLE. You mean that's why the river flooded? 'Cause they build stuff?

BADGE. Well...the problem is *how* they tend to build it. It's a question of design.

MOLE. Design? What's that?

BADGE. Well, it's got to do with trying to create buildings and other things in ways that help the river to stay healthy.

MARTHA. *(Entering with cart:)* Soup's on. *(She sets cart and starts doing sit-ups.)*

OTTER. Yes! *(He grabs his and starts eating.)*

BADGE. *(Handing the other's their bowls:)* Speaking of healthy. Eat up, Mole, you're gonna need your strength.

RATTY. Now look, Badger. Just cause he's young and impressionable doesn't mean he can be brainwashed into going along with whatever crazy scheme you've cooked up. Bon appetite *(He takes a bite of soup.)*

OTTER. Man, this soup is good.

RATTY. Oh, yeah.

MARTHA. *(Continuing to exercise:)* Thanks.

BADGE. The Wide World is killing itself, Rat, but there's a change afoot and I plan to be a part of it.

OTTER. *(Still engrossed with his meal:)* You're changing a foot?

RATTY. Simmer down, Badger, you're scaring the Mole.

BADGE. Good! I'm shaking in my paws every second of the day.

OTTER. But you just said it was a foot. I'm confused.

BADGE. It's the 59th minute, Rat. When the clock strikes midnight, it's all over.

OTTER. What's she talking about?

RATTY. I have no idea.

BADGE. Martha, can you explain this?

MARTHA. *(Continuing to exercise:)* Sure, Badger. The humans have organized themselves in a way that is reeking havoc with the river. Seriously, Rat, if we don't do something soon the river will die.

RATTY. Oh, come on, that's ridiculous! Can't you just let us eat our soup in peace.

BADGE. Otter, remember the family of salmon that used to visit you every summer on their way to the ocean? What were their names?

OTTER. The Cohos. They were a fun bunch. Good swimmers.

BADGE. When was the last time you saw them.

OTTER. It's been awhile.

BADGE. Twenty years. They've been gone twenty years. And do you know why they don't swim by anymore.

OTTER. They moved?

BADGE. They're dead, Otter. They died. They died because the river's weak and it couldn't hold them and they fell out of it. They fell, Otter. And your next. And Ratty, and Mole and all of us. We're all next. *(OTTER begins to weep.)*

MOLE. Can't we do something? Can't we help the river?

BADGE. Yes. Mole. But we've got to do it now.

MOLE. The 59th minute?

BADGE. Yes, my dear, the 59th minute.

(They all pause and think. OTTER continues to weep softly. MARTHA offers him a tissue.)

RATTY. So, what's the plan?

(BADGER and MARTHA look at each other.)

MARTHA. We'll need some cake.

(OTTER lights up and starts to clap. MARTHA exits.)

BADGE. *(Calling out to another room in the house:)* Harry! Henry! We need you.

MOLE. Who are they?

BADGE. They're our Chief Engineers. They come from a long line of engineering hedgehogs. Guys!

HARRY. *(Entering:)* Ok, ok, we hear ya.

HENRY. We were in the laborator...oh, what's all this?

BADGE. Harry, Henry, this is Ratty, Otter and Mole.

HARRY. *(To RATTY:)* Hi.

RATTY. Hi.

HENRY. *(To OTTER:)* Hey.

OTTER. Hey.

HARRY. *(To MOLE:)* Yo.

MOLE. Hi.

BADGE. They want to help us, Guys. I need you to tell them the plan.

HARRY. Is there any cake?

BADGE. On it's way. *(OTTER claps.)*

HARRY. *(Crosses to easel, dons a white lab coat, glasses and a pointer.)*
As you can see by this blueprint here, our intention is to immobilize one of the pivotal instruments of environmental degradation throughout the Wide World. We plan to systematically incapacitate every single conveyance constructed from steel that utilizes fossil fuels, which, as of course you know, when burned, emit sulfur compounds and hydrocarbons which cause acid rain, smog, and heavily contribute to global warming.

HENRY. Now, it goes without saying that if we eliminate...

BADGE. Guys,

HENRY. Ya?

BADGE. They have no idea what you're talking about.

HENRY. Oh.

HARRY. Perhaps we should simplify.

BADGE. I recommend it.

HARRY. Oh. All right. We have a plan to get rid of every single automobile in the World.

MOLE. Why?

BADGE. Keep it simple, Guys.

HENRY. But it's not simple.

BADGE. Fair point.

MOLE. I think I understand.

RAT and OTTER. You do??

MOLE. Ya, in some way, automobiles make the river sick. If the cars went away, the river could get well.

RATTY. Is that true, Badge?

BADGE. Gentlemen.

HARRY. Well, I suppose, in a way you could say that, Moley.

OTTER. But how do cars make the river sick?

HARRY. Well, the current most popular design for motor vehicles incorporates steel in the structure...

HENRY. ...which is a problem...

HARRY. ...and is propelled by petroleum a.k.a. gasoline which, of course, is a major contributing factor to the greenhouse effect which is why the weather is growing increasingly hotter, which is *big* problem. Now,...

BADGE. Harry...

HARRY. Ah, yes...look, The Wide World has a lot of problems and they're all complicated.

MOLE. But there are things we can do to help fix the problems?

HENRY. Yes.

MOLE. And those things are also complicated?

HARRY. Yes.

MOLE. But we can do our part, and that will help?

HENRY. Possibly.

BADGE. Probably.

BADGE and HENRY. We hope.

HARRY. We think.

BADGE. I'm fairly certain.

(Pause.)

RATTY. So what's the plan?

BADGE. There is a vast network of tunnels that extend beneath the surface of the Earth throughout the Wide World, and they all germinate from the same location: Toad Hall.

RATTY. Toad Hall!

HENRY. Toad Hall. Toad's Grandfather, Sir J. Hammer Toad, had them dug during the great Amphibian Extraction at the turn of the

century. He tried to save every frog this side of the county and darn near did too, with all those escape routes.

HARRY. He was a hero.

BADGE. We've great numbers of small, burrowing animals—Moles, Badgers, Armadillos, you name it, ready to reopen the tunnels, enter the Wide World, and then place a powerful little seed in *all vehicles everywhere*. It's a seed the Hedgehogs here developed in their laboratory.

RATTY. I thought they were Engineers.

HENRY. We minored in chemistry.

RATTY. Oh. Good for you.

OTTER. Very impressive.

MOLE. What does the seed do?

HARRY. Once the seed is planted in the vehicle, it has a little mechanism in it that will forevermore turn gasoline into...onion sauce.

MOLE. Onion sauce??

HARRY. Onion sauce, thus rendering the vehicle permanently undrivable while providing a delicious substance that can be used to flavor vegetables or create a tasty party dip.

HENRY. And if the humans try to make more cars, we can just keep making more onion sauce.

BADGE. So not only will we have rendered automobiles virtually extinct and made a positive contribution to the food supply, but the tunnels we reopen can be used as subway systems so the humans still have a way to get around.

OTTER. Would it be possible to make it chocolate sauce instead?

MOLE. So...the plan is for this burrowing animal team to plant this seed in every single automobile engine in the World.

HARRY. Yes.

MOLE. Which would end up making *all* the cars that exist now or in the future, undrivable.

BADGE. That's correct.

MOLE. And to do this, the animals have to leave from Toad Hall.

HENRY. That's correct.

MOLE. Because that's where there are the entryways into the tunnels.

HARRY. Also correct.

MOLE. So what you're saying is that Toad, *Toad*, needs to let a throng of meerkats, chipmunks and gerbils into his house so they can get rid of all the *cars* in the Wide World.

BADGE. Yeah. Why? Is that a problem.

RAT and OTTER. That's correct.

Scene 10

(Off stage we hear:)

MARTHA. Whoah, Nelly, hold on!

ALBERT. My name's not Nelly and I'm sorry to barge in like this but I need Ratty. Is he here?

ALBERT. *(Entering:)* Oh Ratty, Otter, I need you.

RATTY. What's wrong Albert?

ALBERT. Toad's been arrested.

OTTER. Uh-oh.

MOLE. Oh-no.

RATTY. I knew it. Was it the Sedan?

ALBERT. Of course, He went to steal that stupid automobile we heard on the south side of the wood. Turns out it was a police car.

BADGE. He stole a police car?

ALBERT. You say that like it's a bad thing.

HARRY. Of course it's a bad thing.

ALBERT. *(Looks at him with disdain:)* I'm kidding.

RATTY. Where is he now?

ALBERT. Locked up in the county jail.

MOLE. We've got to get him out.

BADGE. What's he doing stealing a car anyway? I thought he was into boats.

RATTY. That was two addictions ago.

BADGE. Toad's addicted to cars?

RATTY. Ya, Badger. He's got a real gerbil on his back.

OTTER. I believe the phrase is monkey.

RATTY. He's got a gerbil on his monkey? That doesn't make any sense.

OTTER. Not monkey. Back.

RATTY. But you just said it was a monkey.

OTTER. No, he's got a real monkey on his back.

RATTY. So where does the gerbil come in?

GERBY. *(Entering:)* Did someone call me?

HARRY. Sadly no, Gerby, But as long as you're here...stay. We may need your help.

BADGE. All right, let's just calm down and think this through.

GERBY. I heard there was gonna be cake up here.

BADGE. No time for cake now. We have an emergency.

OTTER. *(Upset:)* I knew it.

MOLE. It's all right, Otter. We can have cake after we save Toady.

OTTER. *(To MARTHA:)* Can we?

MARTHA. Sure, hon.

OTTER. Thanks, Martha.

MARTHA. You're welcome, Sweetheart.

HENRY. May I make a suggestion. Perhaps we should be figuring out how to spring Toad rather than sitting around sniffing over lost pastry opportunities.

GERBY. What happened to Toad.

RATTY. He's in the slammer. His automobile obsession finally caught up with him.

GERBY. Toad's into cars?

OTTER, RAT, and MOLE. Yep.

GERBY. I thought he liked caravans.

RATTY. Not anymore.

GERBY. Cars, huh? That could be a problem. Did you know about this, Captain?

BADGE. Don't call me Captain, and, no, I didn't know about this.

GERBY. Ok, Chief. (*BADGER winces.*)

BADGE. Ok, here's what we need to do (*She diagrams the following on the easel pad.*) First, we've gotta get that amphibian outa the slammer. Ratty, Otty, Moley, Albert, you three head over to the county jail.

OTTER. It's four.

BADGE. What do you think it's for? We got to get Toad out.

OTTER. No, I know that, I mean there's four of us.

BADGE. You don't think that's enough.

OTTER. No, you said...

BADGE. You know, you may be right. Take Gerby with you. (*OTTER starts to press the point but all the others wave him off it.*)

BADGE. I don't care how ya do it, but by this tomorrow I want that frog back here with us, where he belongs. Harry, Henry, as soon as he gets here we'll be needing an intervention. Make the necessary arrangements. This addiction to automobiles has got to stop. Martha, make sure we have enough provisions to feed our burrowing animal team for some extra days. Tell everyone Operation Car-Away Seed has encountered a bit of a road block, I mean, tell them there's been small bump in the road..., I mean, tell them there's been a short delay but after that it's full speed ahead, I mean...

HARRY. Never mind, Chief, we got it covered.

BADGE. Don't call me Chief.

HENRY. Ok, Boss. (*BADGE winces.*)

MOLE. Do you really think we can cure Toad, Badger?

BADGE. I don't know, Moley, but, we've got to try. For his sake, for our sake and for the sake of the Wide World.

RATTY. I'm with you, Badger.

MOLE and ALBERT. Me too!

OTTER. I'm in everybody. All the way!

BADGE. Ok then... Circle up.

RATTY. So we free Toad...

HARRY. ...enter the Wide World.

GERBY. Get rid of all the automobiles...

MARTHA. And then...

RATTY. And then...

OTTER. And then...

ALL. CAKE!

(Blackout. Lou Reed's "There is no Time " underscores end of dialogue then bumps up for Intermission.)

End of Act I

ACT II

Scene 1

(In blackout we here Johnny Cash singing "The Beast in Me." It continues as lights up on TOAD in jail, wearing black and white striped prison outfit and playing harmonica. Song fades:)

TOAD.

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eye's
I all alone bewep my outcast state
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with car possessed
Desiring this man's Dodge and that frog's coupe...

KATE. *(A guard.)* Lunch, Toad. Food's a must, even under arrest.

TOAD. O, I could not eat now, not even soup.

KATE. Ok, then, see you later.

TOAD. Well, if you insist, I'll try to get something down. *(Eats.)*

KATE. Why the long face, Toad?

TOAD. Oh my dear, need you ask? This is the end of everything. At least it's the end of the career of Toad, which is the same thing. The popular and handsome Toad, the rich and hospitable Toad, so free and careless and debonair! How can I hope to be ever set at large again having been imprisoned so justly for stealing so handsome an automobile with such an audacious manner.

KATE. You stole a cop car right.

TOAD. A vision in black and white...

KATE. And there was a guy under arrest in the back seat?

TOAD. So I'm told.

KATE. A little restraint might have been in order.

TOAD. A little? O stupid animal that I was, now I must languish in this dungeon till creatures who were proud to say they knew me, have forgotten the very name of Toad! Oh, dear, clever, Rat, and

perpetually hungry Otter, and young Moley, dear little one, who will teach him how to drive? And my beloved residence, when will I set webbed foot again upon those illustrious grounds of my ancestors? How I long for the days when I could hop freely about those hallowed corridors of my darling Toad Hall.

KATE. Toad Hall?

TOAD. O woe is the Toad so far from home. Woe to the foolish, rash, uncontrollable Designer of His Own Loathsome Fate! Woa...

KATE. Listen to me, Toad. Listen to me carefully. You've got to get a hold of yourself.

TOAD. Worthless, stubborn, incorrigible... *(KATE slaps him.)*

TOAD. Ow!

KATE. Look Toad, I'm not saying a little self examination isn't in order right now, but if you are who I think you are, we're gonna have to spring you from this joint and fast, you're needed on the outside.

TOAD. You hit me.

KATE. Are you listening to me, Toad? We've got to get you out of here.

TOAD. My dear, I don't know how you were raised, but...spring me?

KATE. Ya, pal, it's time to fly the coop.

TOAD. Coupe? Is that the getaway car.

KATE. Look, you're Toad of Toad Hall, right. You're the one who owns that big estate up the river past the Wild Wood, right?

TOAD. As a matter of fact I am. You've heard tell of me, I see. I'm quite well known in these parts.

KATE. Ya, I've heard of ya, Toad. I've heard all about you, from Badger.

TOAD. Yes, Badger is a big fan of mine. She's not alone of course, why throughout the county I'm considered...

KATE. ...a pompous oaf...

TOAD. *(Checks in his mind to see if that's right.)* ...No, a leader among all sentient beings.

KATE. Well listen, Your Sentience, Badger is part of a coalition dedicated to saving the Wide World. She hatched a big scheme with the Burrowing Animal Team but we need your help.

TOAD. We?

KATE. Yes, I'm on the team. I'm a shrew.

TOAD. I see. What's your name?

KATE. Kate.

TOAD. Kate the shrew.

KATE. Yes.

(Pause.)

TOAD. Funny, you don't look shrewish.

(A cleaning woman, TILDA, enters moping the floor, humming "Wade in the Water.")

KATE. Ah, Tilda, excellent. I have an idea. I need you to change your clothes.

TILDA. But it's not Friday.

KATE. Toad, get that uniform off. You're gonna wear Tilda's dress and mop your way out of the building. Tilda, we're gonna tie you to the chair and make it look like Toady boy here overtook ya.

TOAD. Excuse me, Kate, but Toad of Toad Hall does not mop. I have animals that do that for me. Perhaps we could fetch one of them and they could...

KATE. Listen you two, change outfits and change them now. *(They do. The outfit includes a bonnet attached to a wig.)* There's no time to lose. Tilda, I'm sure when this is all over Toad will be happy to compensate you for your troubles. Now Toad, I need you to follow my exact instructions. You're gonna put on Tilda's dress, you're gonna put your head down and you're gonna hum. You're gonna

hum and mop like the future of the planet depends on it. And if anyone tries to stop you, or even just talk to you, you keep humming, you understand me? You hum even louder, and you mop even harder, you mop and hum yourself all the way back to Toad Hall. And when you get there, stay put. Wait for Badger. Toad, some are born great. Others achieve greatness. And some have greatness thrust upon them. *(She thrusts the bonnet with wig on his head.)* When you hear Badger's plan, you'll see that your place in history is assured. You'll be known far and wide as a hero, the Hero Toad of Toad Hall! Now hum, Toady, and mop. *(He does.)* Yes, that's it. Keep going. All the way...all the way, Toad the Hero! *(They watch him leave.)*

TILDA. 10 bucks says he doesn't make it past the next cell.

KATE. *(Continuing to watch him:)* At least you don't have to clean the floor. *(Lights fade to black.)*

Scene 2

(Lights up on RATTY, OTTER, ALBERT, MOLE, and GERBY entering the Wild Wood.)

GERBY. Ah, sorry, guys, this is where I get off. I don't do the Wild Wood.

RATTY. Come on, Gerb, it's the fastest way to the county jail.

GERBY. I prefer the scenic route. It's prettier and there's less traffic.

(The Trees all hiss threateningly.)

ALBERT. C'mon, let's ditch the rodent and proceed as planned, guys. This is no time to discuss an alternate path.

MOLE. Just come with us Gerby.

RAT.

Fear not these darkened woods
Although a treacherous road
Be brave and persevere
So we may get our toad

Think of the duck who's head

and tail do not get soggy
you too will be protected
so we may get our froggy

(He pulls out book and writes:) froggy, froggy, duck, duck,

GERBY. Ok, ok, I'll come. *(To ALBERT, desperate:)* Just please, make it stop...

RATTY. *(Can't stop the poem:)* ribbet, ribbet, quack, quack...

(They hear a humming offstage. All watch as the female clad, unrecognizable TOAD mops and hums on stage and right past them.)

OTTER. Excuse me, Miss.

RATTY. Pardon us, Mademoiselle, but an attractive woman like yourself shouldn't be out wandering, er, uh, cleaning these woods all alone. It isn't safe.

(TOAD of course can't resist being called "attractive" and stops in his tracks. He still doesn't look up though.)

TOAD. *(In a high pitched voice:)* Attractive?

RATTY. Yes, M'am.

TOAD. Well, that's kind of you say.

ALBERT. Wait a minute.

TOAD. This isn't even my own dress. I borrowed it from...from a princess. A royal princess.

ALBERT. All princesses are royal. That's why they're princesses.

TOAD. Yes, well, she was very royal. She was president of the Princess League.

ALBERT. Princess League, my hoof. It's Toad!

MOLE. Toady?

TOAD. No, no, I'm just a washerwoman. *(Starts humming and mopping. He mops one of the Trees who grabs the mop and hits him on the head. TOAD grabs the bonnet and wig in pain and they come off.)*

ALBERT. AH—HAH! *(Everyone gasps.)*

MOLE. It is Toady!

OTTER. What the—

RATTY. How did you—

GERBY. Good to see ya, Toad.

TOAD. Ratty, Otter, Mole...what are doing here? Have you been in the Woods this whole time.

ALBERT. Ya, that's right. They been waitin' for you to pick 'em up in that car you were gonna steal.

TOAD. About that, guys, there was a little snag.

RATTY. We know all about it, Toady. We were just on our way to break you out of jail.

GERBY. How'dja get out, anyway?

TOAD. Well, I devised a most ingenious plan...a shrewd scheme you might say... (*The Trees hiss.*)

OTTER. What's say we take this little party back to Badger's pad. She's waiting for us, Toad, and...she has a little surprise for you.

TOAD. Oooo, is it a new pair of driving gloves? Mine seem to have been absconded in that horrible stockade.

RATTY. Uh...

ALBERT. Ya, that's it. Badger gotcha a new pair of driving gloves. Made 'em herself.

TOAD. That doesn't surprise me. She's a big fan of mine you know.

RATTY. Whatever you say, my dear friend. In any case, it's awfully good to see you. Let's head back, shall we.

TOAD. Of course and likewise, Ratty. Albert, have you the saddle.

ALBERT. Don't even think of it, Lady.

TOAD. (*Gasps, very insulted.*)

MOLE. Let's just go, huh, before the weasels show up.

RATTY. Good idea, Moley.

GERBY. I'm outa here.

OTTER. Right behind ya.

TOAD. How's about if I take the lead. *(They all scurry off.)*

(Blackout.)

Scene 3

(Lights up on HARRY, HENRY, and IDA the Interventionist at Badger's house.)

HARRY. This is Ida, Badger. She runs the rehabilitation center downstream near where Beaver's dam used to be. She's here to run the Intervention on Toad.

BADGE. Thanks for coming on such short notice, M'am. It's a bit of an emergency. I assume Harry and Henry here filled you in our circumstances.

IDA. I believe so, yes. It sounds like Mr. Toad is on a downward spiral due to his preclusion toward motor vehicles.

BADGE. Can't leave the stuff alone. Tragic, really. Got himself arrested recently for police auto theft.

IDA. Yes, I heard about that. And I understand you've devised a plot to save the Wide World by getting rid of all the cars, but you need Mr. Toad's cooperation in order to accomplish it.

BADGE. That's right, M'am. Think you can help us.

IDA. I'll certainly try Ms. Badger. I admire your work. I'd like to help in any way I can. I'd like to do my part.

MARTHA. *(Running on:)* Badger, Harry, Henry, listen, I've got some bad news. I just got a report that the weasels have taken over Toad Hall.

BADGE. What?

MARTHA. The weasels, Boss. They heard about Toad's arrest and knew they place would be empty. Apparently they've really moved in. Even painted the guestroom.

HENRY. What color?

BADGE. Henry.

HENRY. Off point?

BADGE. Slightly.

HENRY. How'd they get in? *(He looks at BADGE.)*

BADGE. Better.

MARTHA. They found his hide-a-key under the welcome mat.

BADGE. Who'd you hear all this from?

MARTHA. Alvin the Chipmunk. His hole is Toad Hall adjacent. He says the weasels partied all night long and the vibrations kept him up, so he snuck onto the grounds and peeked through the window. Oh, and he overheard a couple of their guards saying tonight there's a big birthday celebration for Don Weasel.

(We hear the gang off stage.)

BADGE. Shh. I hear Ratty and Otter. They may have Toad with them. Let's proceed as planned and just keep this to ourselves till we figure out what to do.

IDA. I'm ready. *(The gang enters.)*

RATTY. Hey, Badger, Harry, Henry...

OTTER. ...look who we have.

TOAD. Badger, my dear girl, it's been too long! *(Hugs non-responsive BADGE.)*

BADGE. What's with the dress, Toad?

TOAD. This old thing, it's just a little something I borrowed from—

BADGE. Lose it. We have serious business to attend to. Martha, chairs!

TOAD. *(To HENRY and HARRY:)* And who are these fine young gentlemen, Badge? *(Very manly and debonair:)* I don't believe we've met. I'm Toad, of course, but then you probably already knew that, given my stature in the community.

ALBERT. Would you even consider giving it a rest.

HARRY. Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Toad. I'm Harry.

HENRY. I'm Henry. We work with Badger here.

TOAD. Lucky you. We're very fond of the old girl around here.

BADGE. And this is Ida. Ida, this is Toad, Ratty, Otter, Mole, Albert, and Gerby.

(MARTHA has entered and is setting up chairs.)

And this is my assistant, Martha.

OTTER. She's an accomplished soup buff. Any questions you have about soup, she's your girl.

IDA. Thanks. I'll remember that.

MARTHA. Nice to meet you.

IDA. Likewise.

HARRY. Shall we get started.

IDA. Yes, I'd like to suggest that we all sit down and I'll explain why I'm here.

(All sit.)

IDA. Toad, my full name is Ida Bebetteroff. Dr. Ida Bebetteroff. I'm a psychoanimalologist. My specialty is in working with a syndrome called Overdoesum Doinitem. Generally, this means I work with animals who suffer from one kind of addiction or another.

TOAD. Let me stop you right there, Miss. All solicitations must come through my secretary. She handles all charitable contributions for the estate. I invite you to contact her and I'm sure we can...

IDA. Actually, Mr. Toad, I'm not here to ask you for help. I'm here, we're all here, to offer it.

TOAD. Well, that's awfully kind, I'm, I'm rather moved by the gesture, but I assure you my finances are quite stable. Copious in fact.

IDA. We're not here to offer you money.

RATTY. We're worried about you, Toady.

OTTER. About your behavior.

MOLE. Something's not right inside.

TOAD. Now wait a minute. Just because I wear a dress ONE time, doesn't...

IDA. You suffer from an addiction, Mr. Toad, and we need you to acknowledge it.

TOAD. An addiction?

IDA. Surely you've sensed there is a problem.

TOAD. A problem. With me? Toad? You are surely mistaken, Miss. Tell her, Ratty.

RATTY. She's not mistaken, Toady. Think about it. When was the last time you woke up in the morning without some sort of bruise or bash or broken bone? When was the last time you spent an entire day without having some sort of accident or other.

OTTER. How long has it been since you've taken a swim in the river, or gone for a picnic with Moley, Rat, and me, or done anything that didn't involve...

TOAD. Wait a minute...

ALBERT. Face it, Toad, you got a thing for cars and it's killing you. It's killing all of us.

TOAD. Yes, of course, I have a hobby, a passion, I happen to a very passionate creature. It's my nature.

IDA. There's a thin line between passion and obsession.

TOAD. Oh, posh. I'm not obsessed. I can stop automobiling anytime I want. But why give up something that gives me such pleasure? It makes no sense.

IDA. Could you really stop, Mr. Toad, just like that?

TOAD. Of course.

RATTY. Ok, then, how about if tomorrow we spend the whole day at the river. I'll organize a little celebration in your honor. After lunch we can play all your old favorite games: leap frog...

TOAD. That sounds delightful, Ratty. I'd love to. Of course I will need to go for my morning drive and then there's a special sale at the motor vehicle lot, but after that, say, fish, oh, no wait a minute, I have appointment with my mechanic...

IDA. How about the day after tomorrow.

TOAD. Well, that's impossible. There's that special symposium on axle technology. The keynote speaker is the Hamster who wrote *How the Wheel Turns*, a pivotal text. My attendance is a must.

RATTY. And the day after that?

TOAD. Well, that could work. What day is that?

OTTER. Tuesday.

TOAD. Oh dear, I'm afraid that's bath day. They'll be expecting me for my usual appointment at the car wash. Every Tuesday, like clockwork. Musn't miss that.

MOLE. Toady.

TOAD. Yes.

MOLE. You need help.

TOAD. I know you all mean well, but this is most unnecessary and I refuse to discuss it any further. Ms. Bebetteroff, you'd be better off turning your attentions to someone who could actually use your expertise. Ratty, I understand your deep longing to celebrate the great and wonderful Toad of Toad of Hall, but I'm afraid the festivities will just have to wait for now. And speaking of Toad Hall, I believe it's about time I returned. The garage needs cleaning and if I'm not there to supervise God knows what havoc will be wrought.

BADGE. Speaking of havoc reeking, Toad, there's something I need to tell you about Toad Hall.

TOAD. Toad Hall is my home, Badger, it's been in my family for generations and I assure you there is nothing about it I don't already know.

BADGE. It's been taken over by weasels.

OTTER and RATTY. What?

TOAD. What did you say.

HENRY. The weasels heard you were arrested and they figured you'd be locked up for awhile, so they made themselves at home. They're even having a birthday bash for Don Weasel tonight.

TOAD. The weasels?

MARTHA. They've redecorated and everything.

TOAD. (*Horried:*) Redecorated??

BADGE. They've moved in, Toad. Taken over. And all because you had to steal that automobile.

TOAD. But, I, wanted it, it, sounded so inviting, I just had to have it...

IDA. Had to have it

TOAD. Yes, I...

ALBERT. *Had* to have it...

MOLE. No matter what...

OTTER. Regardless of the consequences...

TOAD. Yes, I, suppose, you, may have a point...

IDA. Is automobiling worth losing your home, Mr. Toad?

TOAD. Nothing's worth losing Toad Hall. My family has entrusted me with that estate. It's my responsibility to pass it down to future generations.

RATTY. Oh, Toady, what have you done?

IDA. Mr. Toad, do you have an answer to Ratty's question?

TOAD. I've ruined everything. I've lost my home, my legacy, my friends...

IDA. You haven't lost your friends, Mr. Toad. They're all right here. And, as long as you acknowledge you have a problem, they won't leave your side.

RATTY. She's right, Toady.

OTTER. We're not going anywhere.

MOLE. We're with you every step of the way.

(They all look at ALBERT.)

ALBERT. *(Glowers at TOAD and others for a moment, but he can't help himself—he opens his arms wide:)* Oh, come here you big lug. *(Gives TOAD a big hug. The others join in.)*

TOAD. *(In the middle of the group hug:)* I have a problem! I have a problem!

RATTY. *(Starts to sing the song "You've got a Friend":)* When you're down and troubled and you need some love and...

BADGE. Ok, that's it, I have my limits. Toad, I'm proud of you. The first step is to admit you're a total lunatic.

IDA. Actually the first step is to admit you have a problem.

BADGE. Ya, ok, what she said. But now that that's part's over with, we have some important business to attend to. First we got to get those weasels out of Toad Hall.

TOAD. You think you can do that, Badger?

BADGE. Not me, Toad, we, all of us, together.

TOAD. How?

BADGE. We just have to use our imaginations and devise a plan.

TOAD. Well, I'm sure I could come up with something. *(They stare at him while he thinks.)*

BADGE. Harry, Henry, any thoughts?

GERBY. I have an idea.

HARRY. What is it, Gerby?

GERBY. Doesn't Alvin the Chipmunk live right by Toad Hall.

TOAD. Yes, he's my neighbor. He has a lovely little burrow just east of the estate. It's small of course, but cozy. He's done it up nicely, with an Asian theme...

GERBY. How about if we assemble the Burrowing Animal Team and infiltrate Toad Hall through Alvin's tunnel.

(HARRY, HENRY, and BADGER look at each other and nod.)

HENRY. That could work, Gerby. Good thinking.

IDA. Can I come. Those weasels are fierce; you'll want extra paws.

BADGE. Absolutely. Pleasure to have you.

MARTHA. The team'll need sandwiches. I'm thinking tuna salad.

BADGE. On whole wheat if you have it.

OTTER. Could I have mine on rye?

RATTY. Not now, Otty.

GERBY. Of course, we have to take them by surprise. If they see us coming, we're doomed. We should create a diversion.

MOLE. I have an idea. Toady, give me that dress.

TOAD. Oh, Moley, this no time for fun and games, we have urgent business to attend to.

ALBERT. Just give him the dress, Toad.

MOLE. You guys go ahead and plan the attack from Alvin's place on the east. I'll take care of the rest.

OTTER. Where will we meet up with you?

MOLE. I'll find you at Alvin's, but don't wait for me. Once the team's assembled, move forward with the plan.

RATTY. Ok, Moley, *(In fatherly mode:)* but be careful.

MOLE. I will, Ratty. You too. *(He exits.)*

BADGE. We all need to be careful. Remember, once we get back Toad Hall, the real work starts: Operation Car-Away Seed.

TOAD. Car-Away Seed?

RATTY. Oh boy.

BADGE. There's a lot we haven't told you, Toad.

OTTER. A lot!

IDA. I think you better sit down for this.

HARRY. *(Goes to easel.)* The Wide World is in trouble, Toad, and it needs your help... *(We see Toad's face as he looks at the picture of Car-Away Seed.)*

(Lights fade to black.)

Scene 4

(Lights up in front of Toad Hall. LON and RON WEASEL are getting orders from JUAN WEASEL.)

JUAN W. Now Lon, what are your orders?

LON W. We're to guard this side entrance of Toad Hall. Nobody is to pass, but if anyone does try to get in I stop at anything to prevent them.

JUAN W. Close enough. Just keep your eyes to the grindstone.

RON. You got it sir, we'll keep our ears peeled, like a couple of carrots.

JUAN W. What did you say?.

RON. I don't really know, sir.

JUAN W. Look, just don't let anyone pass through.

LON. We can do that, sir.

JUAN W. Doubtful, but I'm going in anyway.

RON. *(As JUAN exits:)* Very good, sir. Thanks for the vote of confidence.

(LON and RON stand attention. Within 30 seconds they are both asleep. MOLEY approaches wearing the dress. He looks at them asleep and clears his throat. They both bolt away.)

LON. Who comes there?

MOLE. Actually it should be “who goes there.”

LON. Coming or going, what difference does it make.

RON. Technically, he’s right. You’re supposed to say “goes,” “who goes there.”

LON. Really. I always thought it was...

RON. It’s definitely “goes.”

LON. Huh. Interesting. You’d think...

MOLE. *(Stopping this hopeless conversation:)* I’ve come to see if you want any washing done today.

LON. No, we don’t. We don’t do any washing on duty.

MOLE. Or any other time I bet.

LON. What’s that?

MOLE. Nothing. Are you sure, no washing?

RON. Definitely not. Now run along my good woman. Run along.

MOLE. Don’t you “my good woman” me. And as for “running along” it won’t be me that’s running along in a very short time from now.

LON. What does she mean by that, Ron?

RON. Don’t worry about it, Lon. She doesn’t know what she’s talking about.

MOLE. Oh don’t I? Well let me tell you something. My...brother... washes for Ms. Badger, and he overheard her talking about how over a hundred bloodthirsty Badgers are going to attack Toad Hall this very night.

LON. A hundred?

MOLE. Bloodthirsty.

RON. Badgers?

MOLE. That's right. They're home sharpening they're claws right now, and then my brother heard them say they're going to pour through the western gate.

LON. The western gate. That's this one.

RON. Don't worry, Lon. Now that we know they're coming, they'll be easy to repel. We'll get reinforcements.

MOLE. Perhaps you'd like me to come back in the morning. You might have some undies to wash.

RON. We'll be fine, little missy, but your brother might be needing some help with those Badger uniforms.

MOLE. You know, you just might be right. Perhaps I will go and join him. What a clever fellow you are. I just know you'll have no trouble with those silly Badgers. Bye now.

RON. *(They watch her exit.)* She's kinda cute, actually. Maybe I'll look her up sometime.

LON. She'd keep you in clean clothes anyway.

RON. Let's go tell Don we'll need some help out here. *(Lights fade.)*

Scene 5

TOAD. *(In full on panic attack, having now been told of the plot to get rid of all the cars:)* I can't breathe. I can't breathe.

IDA. Get him some water.

MARTHA. *(Turns to get it.)*

TOAD. *(Shaking and panting:)* Carbonated if you have it. *(MARTHA starts to exit.)* With maybe a little lime wedge. *(MARTHA now can exit.)* NO ICE. *(He calls as she goes.)*

BADGE. Pull yourself together. There's no time to spare here. C'mon, be a Toad!

TOAD. Madam Badger, surely you know I have no intention of joining this ridiculous plan of yours.

BADGE. You have to.

RATTY. Now, now, Badge, one step at a time here. This is a pretty big leap, even for a Toad. Just give him a few moments to...adjust to the idea.

TOAD. Yes, yes, a moment to adjust...to the notion of wiping out the very soul of my existence. *(Starts to gasp again.)*

IDA. Have a seat, Mr. Toad. Slow breaths.

(MARTHA enters with water.)

RATTY. Is it really necessary to make ALL the automobiles undrivable, Harry? Couldn't we leave a few, so Toady could ride on occasion?

TOAD. Yes, that's a splendid idea. Perhaps I could ride on Sundays only, and the occasional Tuesday. And holidays of course, and my birthday...

HARRY. You see, Ratty, I'm afraid it's an all or nothing proposition.

OTTER. What if they just changed the way they make the automobiles. *(TOAD lights up a bit.)*

RATTY. What you mean, Otter.

OTTER. Well...

TOAD. *(Excited by this thought:)* He means what if the cars were built in such a way that didn't make the river sick.

HARRY. You mean, redesign them?

TOAD. Yes! Redesign them. "In the struggle for survival, the fittest win out because they succeed in adapting themselves best to their environment." Cars don't need to become extinct. They just need to adapt.

(HEDGEHOGS and BADGE look at each other.)

RAT. “When you were a tadpole, and I was a fish, In the Paleozoic time, And side by side in the sluggish tide We sprawled in the ooze and slime.”

TOAD. *(Has no idea what this nonsensical remark means, but senses it's supportive:)* Ok.

HENRY. Car designs have been slowly changing.

HARRY. But not fast enough...

GERBY. Maybe the humans just need a leg up.

IDA. You know, in the history of human kind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.

BADGE. Are you suggesting we collaborate with the humans?

IDA. I think the idea here is that rather than become an enemy to people by essentially destroying their property, we befriend them and teach them how to evolve.

TOAD. Think of it, Badger, we could usher in a whole new era of transportation with their brains, *(Pointing to HENRY and HARRY:)* my expertise and your moxy.

HENRY. *(Who has been madly writing on the easel:)* I think where the humans have it wrong is that they keep thinking in terms of “less bad.” People have been trying to design cars that are less and less poisonous, but it’s not enough. The cars are still toxic and they still hurt the river...

HARRY. Less toxic is still

HARRY and HENRY. toxic!

TOAD. What if we designed a car that was actually good for the river.

HENRY. Yes!

HARRY. Exactly!

(Pause.)

MARTHA. Kinda like a nutritious vehicle.

OTTER. A carlicious.

HARRY, HENRY, and TOAD. Yes!

(Pause.)

BADGE. How would it work?

TOAD. Ok, for example, cars emit a lot of water. It's water that just goes to waste. What if all that water were somehow captured instead, and then used to water the plants on my estate.

HARRY. That's easy; we'd just have to add a chamber to catch it.

BADGE. But you guys said it was the carbon emitted from gasoline that causes the weather to keep getting hotter and melt the river in winter.

HARRY. You know, we could also catch the carbon emissions. That would actually create a usable substance called...

HARRY and HENRY. *(Excited:)* ...carbon black!

TOAD. We could sell the carbon black to rubber manufacturers who could make tires from it...

HENRY. Tires that are designed to attract harmful particles so they help clean up the air...

TOAD. YES! Or we could do away with gasoline altogether... there's already a design for that, we just need to come up with good marketing scheme...and then, of course, it goes without saying that the body of the car would need to be made of materials that could go back into the biological or technical cycle at the end of it's useful life.

HARRY. That's totally doable.

(Everyone looks at TOAD, stunned by his competency.)

ALBERT. Have we met?

BADGE. Are you insane? You're never gonna pass that design off on the humans.

HARRY. *(Looking at TOAD:)* Yes, Badge, I think we can.

BADGE. It's impossible.

HARRY. From a design perspective, it's very possible.

HENRY. It's a question of whether or not we can get the people to do it.

(Pause.)

TOAD. Listen, Badge, let's open those tunnels. Let's go to the Wide World, not to bury their automobiles, but to praise them as the testament to human ingenuity they are. And then let us speak to them of the river and share our poetry and our grief. And then, as bonds born of respect and shared vulnerability are forged, we shall offer this vision of...

BADGE. Ok, ok, yes...just stop talking.

(TOAD and HENRY and HARRY shake hands. General feeling of happiness.)

RATTY. So, what's the plan?

BADGE. First things first. Moley will have created a diversion by now. Let's head up to Toad Hall and drive out those lousy weasels for good. Then we can start digging. Henry, Harry, you guys, and Toad can brainstorm this new design along the way.

RATTY. Yes, let's hurry to Toad Hall. I don't like the idea of Moley out there all by himself.

OTTER. We are at the ready, Captain.

TOAD. Lead on, MacBadge.

ALBERT. I'll gallop ahead and make sure the coast is clear. *(He runs off in the wrong direction as they all watch. He comes back.)* You said the eastern gate, right?

(Everyone nods and ALBERT runs off in the right direction this time.)

(Lights fade to black.)

Scene 6

(Inside Toad Hall WEASELS create scene change as part of the party. Weasel theme music plays loudly. They bring on at Banquet table, etc. dancing, carousing. Eating, joking...There is a Happy Birthday Don sign.)

WILLY W. Hey, you guys remember Don's birthday last year? We spent the whole night stealing every egg from every chicken in the county.

BILLY W. Ya, and then Sean cooked a 30 pound omelet and we hoisted...

JILLY W. ...it high about the mayors house and dropped it over the bedroom. He and his wife are still in traction.

BILLY W. Made the evening papers.

WILLY WEASEL. Good times, good times.

DON W. *(LON and RON have sidled up to him to tell him about the attack.)* Ok, everyone, I have a little announcement to make. Looks like Badger and company are on their way to Toad Hall for a little visit.

JILLY WEASEL. Should we set some extra places for them? *(All laugh.)*

DON W. Ron here tells me they plan to attack through the western gate. How about if you fellows collect all the guards from the eastern and southern gates and show the Badgers the way home? No need for us to interrupt our little fiesta here.

LON W. Right away, sir. We'll let you know how it goes.

DON W. Yes, you do that my good weasel. Let's have a toast to Ron, Lon and the rest of our mighty infantry! *(All toast and applaud. RON and LON exit.)*

JOHN W. And here's to our new home, the finest lodgings we could ever hope to abscond. Here's to Toad Hall.

SEAN W. And here's to the birthday guy himself, our fearless leader, the indomitable Don Weasel! *(All call out SPEECH, SPEECH, etc.!)*

DON W. (*Visibly moved:*) I find myself uncharacteristically at a loss for words... To be here tonight, back in this magnificent estate celebrating with you all, my colleagues, my friends, my family... As many of you know, I lost my birth family at a very young age. Our den was plowed over by the humans one dark morning when I was just a wee pup. I visited the spot recently; at least I think it was the spot. The forest of my youth has been leveled, and what stands there now is too horrible to recount. Suffice to say, my brave father Hezekiah, my brothers and sisters Leroy, Tom, Amanda and little Wanda Mae, and dear Audrey, beloved mother, all gave their lives in the service of (*With disgust:*) human commerce. I've often asked myself; why me? Why did I alone survive, only to be eternally haunted by the echoes of my shrieking family as the sliver plow blades descended upon our... (*In agony at the memory:*) Oh, the horror... (*Collects himself for a moment.*) There's no answer to that question of course. But, since that dire time, as that Big Ermine in the Sky is my witness, I have fought to not let one creature on this Earth, human or otherwise, destroy anything or anyone I love. It's eat or be eaten in this world, I learned that early on. In the animal kingdom I am known as criminal, a deviant, a demon force, but I say to you tonight, I AM NO CRIMINAL. (*Cheers go up.*) I AM NOT A MONSTER. (*More cheers.*) I stand before you a short tailed weasel trying to secure a safe habitat for all weasel kind. Where is the crime in that???? (*Silence.*) Where is the crime in that? (*He has had his back to the tables; BADGE et al. have snuck up behind the WEASELS in the their seats and covered their mouths. DON, turns and...*)

DON W. Uh-oh.

RON and LON W. (*Enter.*) Uh-oh.

JILLY WEASEL. (*Entering with birthday cake, singing:*) Happy Birthday to you, happy...uh-oh.

Scene 7

(*Big fight scene ensues.*)

(*Fight ends. WEASELS are huddled in a corner shaking in fear, except for DON on another part of the stage, lying dead. Somewhere in the chaos of the fight, he was killed.*)

BADGE. Is everybody all right?

GERBY. Right as rain, Badger.

MARTHA. Never better, Chief.

BADGE. Moley, are you ok?

MOLE. *(In shock:)* I think so.

TOAD. I was magnificent! Did you see me, Ratty. Those weasels never stood a chance. Take over my estate...Balderdash! Never gonna happen my friends.

RATTY. Fighting's no fun, is it Moley? *(Trying to comfort him.)*

IDA. Sit down, Mr. Mole.

TOAD. Cheer up, my friends, and hold your heads high. As my great granduncle General Robert E. Toad said after the Bullows Pond battle of 1865: "Today we did what we had to do. They counted on us Amphibians to be passive. They counted wrong." I cannot thank you all enough. On behalf of my ancestors and my progeny, may I offer my deepest, most heartfelt recognition of your efforts to preserve the great Toad Hall. To think you all risked life and limb, just to restore this home to its rightful inhabitant... I am touched, truly touched.

ALBERT. Oh you're touched all right.

HARRY. Speaking of progeny...

BADGE. Toad Hall Shmoad Hall, Froggy, it means nothing if we don't help the Wide World.

TOAD. Then let us do just that, my fearless leader. Let us go and make our mark.

BADGE. Martha, get the shovels.

(MARTHA exits.)

HENRY. I've got plenty of sharp pencils, Toad, and pads.

HARRY. The three of us will take up the rear so we can work on our nutritious vehicle design while the others dig on ahead of us.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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