

FRONTRUNNER FABLE: A TORTOISE AND HARE STORY

By Charlotte Nixon

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**FRONTRUNNER FABLE:
A TORTOISE AND HARE STORY***A Comedic One Act Play***By Charlotte Nixon**

SYNOPSIS: It's the most anticipated event in Forestville—the annual town foot race! The dynamic duo, Toby Tortoise and Harriett Hare, are beyond excited to compete. They have the gear! They have the determination! They even have Max, Marley, and Mattie Moose, personal trainers to the animal stars! If anyone's going to win this race, it's going to be one of them! But what begins as light-hearted banter quickly escalates into an epic showdown. Toby and Harriett, once united by friendship, are now locked in a high-stakes competition—because in this Forestville face-off, there can only be one winner. Who will outwit, outsmart, and outpace the other? Will it be the steady and determined Toby Tortoise, or the lightning-fast and sassy Harriett Hare?

DURATION: 70 minutes.**TIME:** Modern Day.**SETTING:** A park in Forestville.**CAST OF CHARACTERS***(3 females, 3 males, 10 either, 0-10 extras)*

TOBY TORTOISE (m).....Best pals with Harriet. Loves to joke but can be competitive. *(150 lines)*

HARRIET HARE (f)Best pals with Toby. Loves to joke but can be competitive. *(150 lines)*

BAXTER BEAVER (m).....Deputy Mayor of Forestville. A law-and-order civil servant that loves to enforce the rules. *(60 lines)*

BARBARA BEAR (f).....Mayor of Forestville who has just woken up from hibernation. Kind, compassionate, and consistently hungry. *(51 lines)*

MARLEY MOOSE (m/f).....Personal trainer to the animal stars. Very intense. *(26 lines)*

MAX MOOSE (m/f)	Personal trainer to the animal stars. Very intense. <i>(21 lines)</i>
MATTIE MOOSE (m/f)	Personal trainer to the animal stars. Very intense. <i>(18 lines)</i>
GANDER (m/f).....	A misunderstood Canada Goose, spectator, and race enthusiast. <i>(42 lines)</i>
HONKER (m/f).....	A misunderstood Canada Goose, spectator, and race enthusiast. <i>(41 lines)</i>
QUACK (m/f)	A misunderstood Canada Goose, spectator, and race enthusiast. <i>(38 lines)</i>
SQUIRE SQUIRREL (m/f).....	A romantic and slightly forgetful squirrel. <i>(33 lines)</i>
PENELOPE PORCUPINE (f).....	A porcupine and mother of triplets who is looking for a day off. <i>(40 lines)</i>
GORDY GOPHER (m).....	The “senior” junior member of the Forestville Nature Explorers. <i>(45 lines)</i>
GREER GOPHER (m/f)	The actual Senior-junior leader of the Forestville Nature Explorers. <i>(16 lines)</i>
GUNNER GOPHER (m/f).....	A member of the Forestville Nature Explorers. <i>(11 lines)</i>
GERI GOPHER (m/f).....	A member of the Forestville Nature Explorers. <i>(11 lines)</i>

EXTRAS:

RACERS.....	Possible extras. <i>(non-speaking)</i>
TOWNSPEOPLE	Possible extras. <i>(non-speaking)</i>

CASTING NOTE: For marked either-gendered characters, pronouns in the script can be updated by the Director to match the gender of the actor playing that character. If using extras, it is suggested that the director have the extras replace the audience members used throughout the play.

COSTUMES

All of the characters in this play are based on woodland creatures and their costumes should reflect their animal. For example, Gordy is a gopher, and the costume should highlight his gopher features. Costumes should also allow the actors freedom to physically embody the character. As the play takes place over the course of the day, no costume changes are required.

If using extras, please make sure that the extras are also woodland creatures. The world of the play is entirely made up of animals and so if extras are being used, they should fit into that animal world.

SET/ STAGING

The play takes place in a park during a race. Some possible suggestions for staging include faux trees of various heights, faux shrubs of various heights, faux prairie grasses, and some faux flowers.

LIGHTING/ SOUND CUES

As we are outside at a park, the lighting should be bright, warm, and have the feeling of being outside. A suggestion would be to have additional sounds to help create the outside atmosphere, such as birds chirping or wild rustling in the leaves. Specific sound cues include:

- offstage crashes
- workout music
- “Rocky Movie” training music
- cellphone ring
- “3 Stooges” instrumental music

PROPS

- podium
- megaphone
- pad of paper
- pen
- clipboard with paper
- stereo
- berry granola
- long rope for starting line
- checkered flag to start race
- a long scroll like list of guidelines
- 3 lawn chairs
- acorn
- purse
- sunglasses
- book
- 4 coffee cups
- blanket
- muffin
- cellphone
- napkins
- 3 “Cheering” signs (2 sided)
- first aid kits
- backpacks
- sashes with badges
- badges
- shovels
- buckets
- ice cream
- finisher medal
- prize money

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This play is a race, and the momentum should match that of a race. The play is always chugging along, picking up speed, and sprinting to the finish line. A recommendation for any director is to try to harness that energy.

Next, make sure that the actors physically embody the animal they are playing. Getting the cast to engage in some character development around their respective animals before delving straight into the script might be beneficial.

Also, consider staging the scenes in which Toby and Harriet are mid-race in a unique mime-like way. Have the actors run in place, represent an overtake, and explore what it might be like for their characters to fall behind. Additional mime work with these actors would be advantageous, especially for those scenes.

As a bonus and for a little bit of fun, it is strongly encouraged that the actors playing Gander, Honker, and Quack receive dialect support to master the Canadian accent, specifically the Southern Ontario dialect, which is similar to the Minnesota accent. There are plenty of online videos that can help with this.

HISTORY

This play was written in 2022 while in residency at the Caetani Cultural Centre Society located in Vernon, British Columbia. In March of 2023, Frontrunner Fable underwent extensive revisions at a residency in Artscape Gibraltar Point (with funding from Alberta Foundation for the Arts) and was awarded the 2023 National Theatre for Young Playwrighting Award by Little Ottawa Theatre, Canada.

DEDICATION

For my little brother, a big softie with a knack for spreading laughter.

SCENE 1**ANNOUNCING FORESTVILLE'S 5TH ANNUAL FOOT RACE**

AT START: *In Forestville Park. There are trees, grasses, a few small shrubs, and wildflowers. HARRIET and TOBY enter from opposite sides and interact with the audience. HARRIET and TOBY ask the audience about racing and being a good runner. They are super excited about the upcoming Town of Forestville announcement because they think it is related to the annual foot race. Soon TOBY stands and notices HARRIET.*

TOBY: *(Waving madly.)* Harriet!

HARRIET: Toby!

HARRIET and TOBY rush towards each other. They do an intricate handshake/high-five sequence. Next, they start to question and respond in total unison. It should be clear that these two characters are best friends.

TOBY and HARRIET: Did you hear about the—

TOBY and HARRIET: Yeah I did!

TOBY and HARRIET: Do you think it'll be about the—

TOBY and HARRIET: Yeah I do!

TOBY and HARRIET: Do you think we should—

TOBY and HARRIET: Absolutely!

TOBY: I've been waiting all year for this!

HARRIET: Me too!

TOBY: You did so well last year!

HARRIET: You did too!

TOBY: *(Looking offstage.)* Look, I think they're about to start.

HARRIET: We should find a seat, so we don't miss anything. Front row?

TOBY: *(Very confidently.)* You know it! We should get used to being in the front if you know what I mean!

HARRIET: Oh yeah! Front and center!

TOBY and HARRIET take a seat right up front. There are loud noises and crashes coming from offstage. BAXTER enters, bringing in a podium, a clipboard, a pad of paper, a pen, and a megaphone. BAXTER is muttering to himself while he sets up the podium, clipboard, and megaphone in the middle of the stage. BAXTER takes his job as Deputy-Mayor of Forestville very seriously. Eventually, BAXTER gets everything set up and grabs the megaphone.

BAXTER: Attention! Attention! All forest creatures! Good morning, I am Baxter Beaver, *Deputy*—(The word deputy should always be said more quietly than the rest of BAXTER’S official title.) Mayor of Forestville! There will be an official announcement from the mayoral office shortly. Please standby as I and the Mayor will be with you momentarily. (Pauses.) What a perfect day to promote citizen engagement! I do love bumping elbows with the electorate.

BAXTER sighs, but immediately notices an audience member and is taken aback. BAXTER puts the megaphone and clipboard on the podium, grabs the pad of paper, pen, and crosses to the audience member.

BAXTER: You! Right there! What do you call this? Wearing socks with sandals? Where do you think you are, Walmart? I’m writing you up! You’re in violation of section 6.3a of Forestville’s Bylaw: “the wearing of inappropriate and unsafe clothing to a public event.” I mean, there are other people around, did you even think about their well-being?

BAXTER writes a bylaw ticket on the pad of paper and hands it to the audience member.

BAXTER: As I was saying, I do love getting out and chit-chatting with the voters. Their welfare is why I went into civil service—

Suddenly, BAXTER notices another member of the audience and rushes over to them.

BAXTER: Excuse me, you, over there, in the back, unwrapping your hard candy in the middle of an official announcement! Did you bring enough candies for everyone or just the people in your party? Mmm? I see... Oh, don't even bother with the excuses: Violation! Section 13e Forestville Bylaw states "No hoarding of goods and services in a time of need." Did it ever cross your mind that everyone might be in "need" of a refreshing mint during today's event? Well, you're paying for it now, aren't you?

BAXTER writes up another bylaw ticket on his pad of paper and hands it to the audience member. BAXTER returns to a more pleasant state.

BAXTER: Bringing people together is really what good governance is all about.

BAXTER then notices cars parked in the park's parking lot offstage and immediately approaches another audience member with his pad of paper and pen.

BAXTER: *(Dramatic gasp.)* And those cars? *(Writing down a license plate number.)* Excuse me, but did you park nearby? What's your license plate number? *(Regardless of the response.)* I knew it! You have that look about you!

BAXTER makes a large sweeping gesture that indicates to several vehicles offstage.

BAXTER: Violation! Section 9.2b Forestville Bylaw states that "citizens must park no less than two feet away from the vehicle in front of them when utilizing street parking". *(Looking offstage again.)* I mean, look at that park job! Ridiculous. Come on, this isn't a barnyard! *(Starts writing the ticket.)* Do you know what would happen to Forestville if we let everyone park where they pleased? Anarchy! Total and complete anarchy!

BAXTER hands the ticket to the audience member.

BARBARA: *(Calling from offstage.)* Baxter?

BAXTER immediately rushes back to the podium and hides the pad of paper and pen. BAXTER freezes in an awkward position, attempting to look natural. BARBARA enters. BARBARA is a kind, sweet grizzly bear, but has just woken up from hibernation so has some grizzly moments.

BARBARA: *(Yawning a little.)* Baxter Beaver, are you handing out Bylaw tickets again? For the last time, you are Deputy-Mayor, not a bylaw officer—

BAXTER: What can I say, Madam Mayor, I'm one eager beav—

BARBARA: Don't say it! It's way too early in the season for that. Please, just leave the nice people alone.

BARBARA covers up a big yawn.

BAXTER: Fine. *(Sounding official.)* Attention, please. It's time to begin the big news from city council. Hello and good morning my fellow Forestvilleans! It is my extreme pleasure as Deputy-Mayor of Forestville to thank you for coming to our special announcement today. On behalf of the Forestville city council, I'd like to convey our sincerest gratitude for the treasured moments we get to spend with you, the people of—

BARBARA has fallen asleep and begins snoring. BAXTER ignores the sound and continues.

BAXTER: *(Nervous laugh.)* Ahem. It has been a long and bitterly cold winter, but spring has finally arrived and—

BARBARA lets out another loud snore. BAXTER continues to ignore it.

BAXTER: *(Nervous sigh.)* Oh dear. *(Continuing on.)* And we are so fortunate to be able to celebrate the new season with all of you. I, for one, am excited to—

BARBARA lets out the biggest, longest snore imaginable.

BAXTER: Okay, I've had quite enough of this. (*Gently.*) Mayor? Wakey-wakey?

BARBARA: (*Still sleeping.*) I'm Mayor Barbara Bear and I approve this message...

BAXTER: (*Gently touching her shoulder.*) Mayor?

At BAXTER'S touch, BARBARA immediately wakes up, grabs BAXTER by the arms, and growls. BAXTER screams.

BAXTER: Don't eat me!

BARBARA realizing what's going on, lets BAXTER go.

BARBARA: Baxter, I'm so sorry. I just got out of hibernation. I'm not quite myself yet.

BAXTER: No, no, no worries, Mayor. I completely understand.

BARBARA: (*Nervous laugh.*) You know what they say about poking a sleeping bear?

BAXTER: Don't.

BARBARA: (*Changing the subject.*) I see, it's my turn to speak.

BAXTER: Yes, yes, whatever you need and maybe after the event, I'll take you for some breakfast? That would be nice, mmm?

BARBARA: Baxter, I would love that! I haven't eaten in months, literally! Ha! I have been told I can get a little hangry.

BAXTER: You? Mayor of Forestville, never!

BARBARA takes to the podium. TOBY and HARRIET are still in the audience, bursting with excitement.

TOBY: Here we go!

HARRIET: Any second now...

TOBY: The anticipation is killing me—

HARRIET: I think I might explode!

BARBARA: Citizens of Forestville, I'm thrilled to announce that the 5th annual foot race will take place right here in the park, four weeks from today!

TOBY and HARRIET jump up out of their seats.

TOBY: Yes!

HARRIET: Called it!

TOBY: Oh yeah!

TOBY and HARRIET proceed to do a victory dance with a lot of booty shaking and hip bumps.

BAXTER: You two! Bylaw violation section 2g: Public disturbance! Don't make me write you up!

BARBARA: Baxter! They're just excited—

BAXTER: I'm sorry Madam Mayor. Interruptions just gnaw at me!

HARRIET: Gnaw! Ha!

TOBY: Because you're a beaver and you gnaw!

BARBARA: The Forestville annual ten-mile foot race raises money for our local charities and our community's participation over the years has been commendable! The support you've shown for this event is truly inspiring—

TOBY and HARRIET: (*Whispering.*) Please have prize money, please have prize money, please have prize money.

BARBARA: I'm also happy to share with you that our sponsors will once again be awarding \$1,000 to the first-place finisher—

HARRIET and TOBY jump up and start victory dancing again.

TOBY and HARRIET: (*Ad-libbing.*) Money, money, money... money! Show me the money. Make it rain!

BAXTER: That's it! You're dammed!

TOBY: Did the Deputy-Mayor just say dammed?

HARRIET: Like a beaver dam?

HARRIET and TOBY snicker at BAXTER'S mistake. BAXTER is flustered.

BAXTER: I meant banned! Banned!

BARBARA: Baxter...

BAXTER: But—

BARBARA: Let me finish, please. (*Sounding official.*) We will also be giving out commemorative medals to all participants as a way to celebrate the event and—

TOBY: Medals?

HARRIET: There's medals?

TOBY and HARRIET: We get medals!

TOBY and HARRIET act out giving each other medals and flowers and waving to the crowd.

BAXTER: One more outburst, and I'll take away your library cards, pool passes, and block party permits!

HARRIET: Can you even do that?

BAXTER: Just try me!

BARBARA: Baxter, no need to threaten the little ones.

BAXTER: But they—

BARBARA: They're just excited, right?

TOBY: Exactly. We placed so strong last year.

HARRIET: We were so close to winning!

BARBARA: See! Now let them be. (*Sounding official.*) Registration is now open and I highly encourage everyone here to sign up. Let's do some good for our community! Who's with me? Wahoo! Thank you everyone, and we'll see you in four weeks! (*Turning to BAXTER.*) Can we go to that breakfast place with the lox bagel platter? I have an odd craving for salmon.

BAXTER: Odd?

BARBARA: I know, right? So strange...

BAXTER: Sure...

BARBARA: Perfect. You clean up and I'll get a table. See you soon!

BARBARA exits. BAXTER grumbles while cleaning up the podium, megaphone, clipboard, pad of paper, and pen. BAXTER exits. This leaves just TOBY and HARRIET onstage. They playfully tease each other.

TOBY: It's happening! It's finally here!

HARRIET: I know I'm so excited. I just know I can win this year!

TOBY: *(Pointing to himself.)* You mean, you know that I can win this year! Ha!

HARRIET: Oh, is that what I meant?

TOBY: Well, one thing is for certain: We need to train! We only have four weeks!

HARRIET: Don't worry, I know some people.

TOBY: Some people? We're best friends, your people are literally my people—

HARRIET: Just hurry up! If you can go any faster! Oooh!

HARRIET exits.

TOBY: Was that a slow joke? Because you better watch it, I'm—

TOBY exits.

SCENE 2

TRAINING DAY

AT START: *MARLEY, MATTIE, and MAX enter. MAX brings in a stereo. MAX, MATTIE, and MARLEY start warming up. They are dressed like personal trainers. They have that personal trainer energy that is both energetic and annoying.*

MAX: Hey Mattie, are you al-moosed ready for today's training session?

MATTIE: Oh, I'm al-moosed ready! Hey Marley, are you al-moosed ready for today's training session?

MARLEY: Oh, I'm al-moosed ready! Hey Max, are you al-moosed ready for today's training session?

MAX: (*Hyping up.*) Oh, I'm al-moosed ready! You?

MATTIE: (*Hyping up.*) Oh, I'm al-moosed ready! You?

MARLEY: (*Hyping up.*) Oh, I'm al-moosed ready! You?

MAX: (*Hyped up.*) Al-moosed ready! You?

MATTIE: (*Hyped up.*) Al-moosed ready! You?

MARLEY: (*Hyped up.*) Al-moosed ready! You?

MARLEY, MAX and MATTIE: (*Chest bump.*) MOOSED!

MARLEY: Wait, where are Harriet and Toby? They never miss a training session.

MAX: Running late? Finishing up their Moose-li?

MATTIE: Made a Moose-take with the time?

MARLEY: Probably. Well, what should we do while we wait?

MARLEY, MATTIE, and MAX slowly look out into the audience.

MAX: Hey Mattie, are you thinking what I'm thinking?

MATTIE: Hey Marley, are you thinking what I'm thinking?

MARLEY: Hey Max, are you thinking what I'm thinking?

MARLEY, MAX and MATTIE: Absol-moose-ly!

MAX, MATTIE, and MARLEY run into the audience, pick an audience member, and bring them to the stage.

MARLEY: Well, hello there! I bet this isn't what you had in mind when you woke up this morning, am I right? My name is Marley Moose. And those two over there are Mattie Moose and Max Moose, and we are—

MARLEY, MAX and MATTIE: Personal trainers to the animal stars.

MARLEY: (*Echo.*) Stars.

MAX: (*Echo.*) Stars.

MATTIE: (*Echo.*) Stars.

MARLEY: You've totally seen our work before. You know Cliff? Well, let's just say he was the "little" red dog before he met us!

MATTIE: Have you ever prepped 101 puppies for a 5K, in the middle of winter, over uneven terrain? Cuz we did!

MAX: And do you really think ol' Betsy would have gotten the height she needed for that moon jump if it weren't for us? Not a chance!

MARLEY: I think what we're trying to say is: We're good.

MAX and MATTIE: We're really good!

MARLEY: And today is just a taste of what we can do to change your life! Hit the Moose-ic!

MATTIE crosses to the stereo and turns on some amazing workout tunes. MAX moves to the front of the stage as MARLEY and MATTIE get the audience members set up further back to follow along. MAX starts out with a slow workout sequence that is easy to follow along: Jumping jacks, shadow boxing, etc.

MAX: *(Naming the moves as they go.)* We'll start with the Moose-tang, Sally! It's time to shake that moose-caboose! I call this one the Moose-walk! *(Pause.)* Oh yeah! We got it! Now it's time to break a sweat! Double Time!

MATTIE crosses to the stereo and changes the music to something much faster. Something that would be impossible for anyone other than MAX, MATTIE, and MARLEY to keep up with. MAX, MATTIE, and MARLEY complete the sequence again only going double speed. The audience members should have difficulty keeping up, which should be hilarious. TOBY and HARRIET enter.

MAX: *(Shouting.)* Wahoo! Yeah! And that's how you get—

MARLEY, MAX and MATTIE: Fa-moose!

MATTIE crosses to the stereo and turns off the music.

TOBY: Sorry, we're late! Someone got distracted by a vegetable patch.

HARRIET: They had green beans, and pumpkins and carrots: My favourite.

TOBY: *(To HARRIET.)* It's called keeping your head in the game, you ought to try it sometime. It might help your performance.

HARRIET: But carrots, so many delicious carrots. Carrots for everybody! You get a carrot, and you get a carrot, and you get a carrot—

Both HARRIET and TOBY laugh.

MARLEY: *(To audience members.)* While that was a-moosing to watch, your workout is done. Round of applause for our trainees!

MARLEY and MATTIE take the audience members back to their seats. MAX, HARRIET, and TOBY get ready for their training session.

MAX: Ready to use those moose-cles?

TOBY: The race is next week and I'm feeling good. I feel ready.

HARRIET: Me too!

TOBY: Just think of all that prize money!

HARRIET: Yeah! Think of all the carrots that I could buy!

TOBY: More carrots? I'm gonna get a shell shine!

HARRIET: Really? Where do you get that?

TOBY: The car wash, obviously! I'm gonna get my buddy Leonardo to do it.

HARRIET: Obviously.

TOBY: Well, what about you? Carrots? You could buy any food you wanted and you went with the thing you eat for every meal?

HARRIET: I'll have you know carrots are excellent for maintaining a healthy lifestyle and include several vitamins crucial to—

MARLEY: Do you know what else helps with a healthy lifestyle? Training!

MATTIE: *(To the audience.)* Let's cheer them on. On this side, you're going to be team Toby, and on this side, you're going to be team Harriet. Less talking, more moosing!

MATTIE crosses to the stereo and turns on the music. It should be more "Rocky" inspired type training music. MARLEY is with TOBY on one side of the stage. MAX is on the other side of the stage with HARRIET. MATTIE is in the middle acting like a referee and hyping up the crowd. They are doing a series of movements they have learned

before: jogging on the spot, high knees, jumping jacks, shadow boxing, etc. While this sequence is taking place, TOBY and HARRIET should be looking over at each other and measuring their progress. MAX and MARLEY are cheering and coaching them on as they go. The audience should be encouraged to cheer for their side. It should look extremely competitive. The sequence should end with both HARRIET and TOBY mimicking Rocky's final moments at the top of the stairs. MATTIE crosses to the stereo and turns off the music.

HARRIET: That was awesome! You were awesome, almost as awesome as me!

TOBY: I think you mean, more awesome.

HARRIET: The awesome-est!

TOBY and HARRIET laugh.

MARLEY: Great job team! We're going to head out.

MATTIE: We got another training session to get to.

MAX: Got to get the pups ready for the next season of patrol, if you know what I mean!

MAX grabs the stereo.

MARLEY: Remember: Keep your eye on the prize—

TOBY and HARRIET: *(Jokingly.)* Winning at all costs!

MARLEY: *(Shaking head and smiling.)* No. Just try to stay focused on—

TOBY and HARRIET: Victory over everyone!

MARLEY: No, focus on what really matters—

TOBY and HARRIET: Being the best!

MARLEY: I meant each other. Focus on your friendship.

TOBY: No worries there, Marley!

HARRIET: We got that locked in!

TOBY and HARRIET do their secret friend handshake.

MAX and MATTIE: *(Joining the group.)* Hey Marley—

MARLEY: Max? Mattie?

MAX: *(Tapping his own head.)* Duck... *(Tapping MATTIE'S head.)*
Duck... *(Tapping MARLEY'S head.)* Moose!

MAX with the stereo and MATTIE take off running. MARLEY chases after them. MAX, MATTIE, and MARLEY exit. TOBY and HARRIET are left onstage.

TOBY: I can't wait for race day!

HARRIET: Yeah, everyone will be eating my dust... even you!

TOBY: Oh, that's some big talk comin' from you, fluffy butt!

HARRIET: Just you wait! This fluffy butt will be hopping right on past you on race day!

TOBY: We'll see. I really come out of my shell under pressure.

Both TOBY and HARRIET laugh at their banter. TOBY and HARRIET exit.

SCENE 3

STARTING LINE AND BEAVER TAILS

AT START: *BAXTER enters with a long starting line rope that he proceeds to set up across the stage. BAXTER also brings out a large race flag, his clipboard, and megaphone.*

BAXTER: What a beautiful day for a race! There's so much potential and anticipation in the air. Reminds me of building my first lodge. *(Sighs and turns to the audience.)* So let's not ruin it with civil disobedience, shall we? As Deputy-Mayor, I thought we would go over just a few of the public park guidelines.

BAXTER grabs his clipboard and attached to his clipboard is an exceedingly long, scroll-like, list of guidelines.

BAXTER: Town of Forestville: Day Use Guidelines. Guideline Number 1: No person without written authorization will start a fire in an open space. Guideline Number 2: No person in an open space will propel a golf ball, engage in archery, or use a slingshot. Guideline Number 3: No person in an open space will affix or attach any object to a tree, structure, or recreation facility. You hear that, you holiday fanatics, with your glittery festive ornaments blanketing the trees in July! That one is for you!

BARBARA enters. BARBARA is consuming berry granola at an alarming rate.

BARBARA: Baxter! Enough. Let the people be. Here, have some “beary” berry granola. It has such a cute title and a little bear on it.

BAXTER: Umm, no thank you.

BARBARA: Thank goodness. I did not want to share. This is like my fifth bag this morning. I’m hungry all the time. I swear I’m putting on ten pounds a day!

BAXTER: Well, you are a bear, so...

BARBARA: (*Angry.*) And what’s that supposed to mean?

BAXTER: Nothing, nothing. I’ll just finish setting up. (*To self.*) Someone’s a little grizzly today.

BARBARA: I can hear you!

BAXTER: Eek!

HARRIET and TOBY enter. They are in their race day gear. They start stretching close to the starting line. While this is going on, BAXTER has gone into the audience and found an audience member to come on stage to be the flag holder.

HARRIET: It’s race day! Let’s get warmed up. Stretches?

Both HARRIET and TOBY do some quick stretches.

TOBY: Check!

HARRIET: Gear?

Both HARRIET and TOBY check their running gear.

TOBY: Check!

HARRIET: Visualizations?

Both HARRIET and TOBY close their eyes and make ridiculous faces as they visualize their win.

TOBY: Check!

HARRIET: We're ready!

TOBY: In the zone!

HARRIET: Good to go!

TOBY: Ready to rock!

HARRIET: Hot to trot!

TOBY: Oh, good one!

TOBY and HARRIET both laugh.

BARBARA: *(Still eating her granola.)* Good morning, Forestville! Are you ready to run today? Let me hear you make some noise!

TOBY: Harriet, today I'm going to mop the floor with you!

HARRIET: Please! I'm gonna hop circles around you before you even pop your head out of that shell.

TOBY: I hear there's some vegetable gardens on the route—

HARRIET: Really? I might need to—

TOBY: Gotcha!

HARRIET: Tricky! Do you actually think you'll win?

TOBY: Oh, I know I'll win!

HARRIET: Care to bet on it?

TOBY: Totally! If I win, you have to give up eating carrots for a whole year!

HARRIET: And if I win, no shell shines for a year!

TOBY: Deal!

HARRIET: Deal!

BARBARA: The rules of the foot race are simple: Run the ten-mile loop, stay on the designated route, and the first one to cross the finish line is the winner. Contestants: Let's keep it a fun and family-friendly race. Now, where is the flag to start us off?

TOBY and HARRIET cross to the starting line and get into a starting position. BAXTER and the flag holder come to centre stage.

BARBARA: Runners, when the flag is raised the race will begin. *(To audience member.)* I'm going to say ready, set, go and then you are going to raise the flag on the word "go". Are you ready?

BAXTER and BARBARA: Ready... Set... Go!

The audience member lifts up the flag and HARRIET takes off running way faster than TOBY.

HARRIET: Better buy a scrub brush, Toby! Your shell shines are about to be DIY!

HARRIET exits.

TOBY: *(Calling after her.)* It's a long run, save the hot air for when you'll need it.

TOBY exits. BAXTER takes the flag from the audience member and takes them back to their seats.

BARBARA: Baxter, I'm hungry.

BAXTER: Again?

BARBARA: *(Angry.)* Are you judging me? *(Getting emotional.)* I feel like you're judging me?

BAXTER: No, no, never.

BARBARA: *(Chipper again.)* Good. I think we have time for a little snack and I'm totally craving a warm, delicious, doughy beaver tail.

BAXTER: *(Terrified and holding on to his own tail.)* A beaver tail, Madam Mayor?

BARBARA: *(Licking her lips.)* They are so good. You have to come get one with me?

BAXTER: I've suddenly lost my appetite...

BARBARA: Come on! This tummy waits for no one.

BARBARA exits. BAXTER reluctantly packs up the flag, race line, clipboard, and megaphone. BAXTER exits, carrying all the things.

SCENE 4 RACE PACE 1

AT START: *HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK enter with lawn chairs. They are Canadian Geese, and they should look like typical Canadians and be holding a coffee cup. They set up their chairs at the side of the race route.*

HONKER: *(Nodding a greeting.)* Gander.

GANDER: *(Nodding a greeting.)* Honker.

HONKER and GANDER: *(Nodding a greeting.)* Quack.

QUACK: *(Nodding a greeting.)* Gang's all here then.

HONKER: Gotta come out n' support on race day, don't cha know?

QUACK and GANDER: Oh yeah, no, for sure.

HONKER: Gotta come out on race day.

GANDER: Gotta come out on race day.

HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK sit in awkward silence and take a very loud sip of their coffees in complete unison. HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK look up and down the race route.

QUACK: Seen anyone run past?

HONKER: Nah!

GANDER: Nope.

QUACK: Moves a little slower than hockey, don't cha know?

HONKER and GANDER: Oh yeah, no, for sure.

HONKER: Slower than hockey.

GANDER: Slower than hockey.

Awkward pause, another loud coffee sip.

GANDER: But when they go by, that's when we'll give 'er, don't cha know!

QUACK and HONKER: Oh yeah, no, for sure.

HONKER: Give 'er.

QUACK: Give 'er.

Awkward pause, another loud coffee sip.

HONKER: *(Looking offstage.)* I think I see one comin' up the road! Get ready to cheer for em', eh?

HARRIET enters, running. While HARRIET is running, HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK cheer her on, but their shouts of "Yes" should over pronounce the "S" sound so that it sounds like they are hissing at her.

HONKER, GANDER and QUACK: *(Ad-libbing to sound like hissing.)*
Yes!

HARRIET: Oh no, geese! Eek!

HARRIET exits. HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK stand in a moment of shock.

QUACK: Hey, I get the impression that that there racer did not appreciate our cheering?

HONKER and GANDER: Oh yeah, no, for sure.

QUACK: Now, what do you think that's about?

HONKER: Don't know?

GANDER: Don't know?

Awkward pause, another loud coffee sip.

QUACK: Why don't you two pontificate on it and I'll go on a Timmy's run? See you at the halfway point? *(Nodding goodbye.)* Gander.

GANDER: (*Nodding goodbye.*) Honker.

HONKER: (*Nodding goodbye.*) Quack.

HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK grab their lawn chairs and finish their coffees. HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK exit. HARRIET enters. HARRIET runs to the middle of the stage and then runs on the spot to show distance.

HARRIET: And with a hop, skip and a jump, I'm in the lead! This run is going to be a walk in the park!

TOBY enters. TOBY runs to the middle of the stage alongside HARRIET, and they run on the spot, miming the movement of the race.

TOBY: A walk in the park? Please, my own grandma can run faster than you!

HARRIET: (*Over-dramatically, fake offended.*) How dare you bring Nana Shelley into this. That woman is a delight. She makes me carrot cookies.

TOBY: You should go over to her house for tea and get pointers on how improve your speed—

HARRIET: Ooh!

TOBY and HARRIET pick up the pace as they run on the spot. HARRIET pulls ahead of TOBY. To show movement, TOBY falls a few steps back, stops to catch his breath, and then sprints to catch up. Then HARRIET falls a few steps back, gets a determined look on her face, and then speeds up again. This should all happen in the middle of the stage, and eventually they end up side by side again. Upbeat race music can be added to this part of the scene but is not necessary.

HARRIET: There's no way you can keep up, Toby. You might as well go home now! Oh wait, you are already home, HA!

HARRIET exits.

TOBY: Can't keep up? I'll show you!

TOBY exits.

SCENE 5
SQUIRE SQUIRREL

AT START: *SQUIRE enters. SQUIRE is an extremely upset and frantic squirrel. SQUIRE has lost an acorn.*

SQUIRE: Oh! Have you seen him?

SQUIRE immediately starts searching everywhere.

SQUIRE: *(Ad-libbing.)* Have you seen a nut? He's about this high and this wide. Have you seen a nut? He goes by Nut, but sometimes he'll respond to Nutty, have you seen him? Come on Squire, think! If you were a nut, where would you be? You need to think like a nut! *(Getting an idea.)* Become the nut.

SQUIRE takes a nut-like position with eyes closed. This should be very yoga-ish.

SQUIRE: *(In a slow meditative voice.)* I am a nut. Buttery and delicious. I enjoy a light roasting and I live... Nowhere—Argh!

SQUIRE takes on another nut position with eyes closed.

SQUIRE: *(In slow meditative voice.)* I am a nut. I taste delicious with a pinch of salt, and I live... Nope.

SQUIRE takes on another nut position with eyes closed.

SQUIRE: *(In a slow, meditative voice.)* I am a nut. I often hang around baseball games and I live... Argh! Why? This is hopeless. I'll never find him!

SQUIRE throws a little pity party. HARRIET enters. She is in total race mode.

SQUIRE: Good-bye, my sweet little friend! I'm sorry our time together was cut short—

HARRIET: Squire Squirrel! What are you doing? You're lying in the middle of the race route.

SQUIRE: Harriet, ol' friend, he's gone!

HARRIET: Who's gone?

SQUIRE: My nut!

HARRIET: Your nut?

SQUIRE: The one I've been saving! I swear I buried him right here, but now I can't find him.

HARRIET: Oh Squire, I'm sorry to hear that—

SQUIRE: You! You have to help me!

HARRIET: Oh Squire, I'd love to help, but I'm kind of in the middle of something—

SQUIRE: (*Overly dramatic.*) But I'm desperate! Please! I don't know what I'll do if I can't find him. I mean, what is a squirrel without a nut? I don't know who I am anymore? Harriet, who am I?

HARRIET: Okay, okay, I'll help you, but I don't have a lot of time.

SQUIRE: Oh, thank you, thank you! I throw myself at the feet of your mercy.

HARRIET: Too much, Squire, too much. When was the last time you saw your—

SQUIRE: Nutty? (*Getting emotional again.*) That was the cute nickname I gave him—

HARRIET: Squire! Keep it together. When was the last time you saw Nutty?

SQUIRE acts out the next part as if in a cheesy romance novel.

SQUIRE: (*Mood instantly brighter.*) Let me paint the picture for you. It was Thursday last and the sun was shining, the leaves were lush and green, the air was full of summer and promise—

HARRIET: (*A little impatient.*) Get to the nut, Squire.

SQUIRE: I had come across this wonderous forest, and I was instantly drawn to a large tree washing the forest floor with its comforting shade. I lay under the tree's branches resting my back with ease against its strong and tender trunk.

HARRIET: *(Even more impatient.)* Squire, the nut—

SQUIRE: The gentle breeze was ruffling the tree's leaves, like a little tickle. I closed my eyes and felt at peace—

HARRIET: Squire!

SQUIRE: I'm getting there! Can't you see I'm grieving a horrific loss? This is part of my process.

HARRIET: Sorry, Squire, I'm just in a little bit of a rush. Please, keep going.

SQUIRE: So, I closed my eyes, rested my head against the tree. My little tail was swaying this way and that. I didn't have a care in the world when suddenly this thing whacked me right on the top of my head.

HARRIET: Was it Nutty?

SQUIRE: How'd you know?

HARRIET: Call it a hunch?

SQUIRE: It's like the heavens above had opened up and out falls perfection! I mean, I had seen plenty of nuts before, but not like Nutty. *(Starting to cry.)* And now Nutty's gone and I'm alone.

HARRIET: No, no, don't go down the despair road again. Stay with me. So, Nutty fell out of the tree and then what happened?

SQUIRE: I picked him up and I instantly knew that this was love!

HARRIET: And...

SQUIRE: And we could never be parted. *(Getting excited.)* So I buried him in the most special of places. *(Wildly excited.)* Harriet! Harriet! I know where Nutty is!

HARRIET: Well? Don't leave me hanging! Where is he?

SQUIRE: He's where we first met: Under the tree!

SQUIRE rushes over to one of the tree set pieces and pulls out an acorn from behind the tree. SQUIRE hugs him and holds him like a baby.

SQUIRE: Nutty! I found you! I'm so sorry! We'll never be parted again.

Harriet, thank you!

HARRIET: No worries, Squire, I was happy to help. But now I must go. I'm in the middle—

SQUIRE: There must be something I can do for you. Anything, name it... my gratitude knows no bounds.

TOBY enters. He sees HARRIET and SQUIRE talking and stops racing.

SQUIRE: I will climb the highest mountain, swim to the depths of the ocean, I will—

TOBY: Well, well, well, what do we have here? Needed a rest and so soon? Just a little chat with a friendly neighbor while you catch your breath? I knew you'd burn out fast. You took off like a jack rabbit!

HARRIET: At least I have time to chat. You're the definition of slow... poke!

TOBY: *(Laughing.)* Slowpoke? I think the race is taking a toll on your comebacks!

HARRIET: Yes, my mind is a little preoccupied with my victory!

TOBY: Ha! Victories are won on the battlefield, and right now, you're on the sidelines with Squire!

SQUIRE: Hey—

HARRIET: Oooh! Big words from the guy who's only defense is to turtle in his shell.

TOBY: Better than your defense: To freeze in place! Ha-ha! Like that has ever fooled anyone. Not with those giant ears twitching all over the place. Ha!

TOBY exits. HARRIET is left onstage with SQUIRE. HARRIET is a little upset by TOBY'S last comment about her ears, but she tries to shake it off.

HARRIET: *(Calling after him.)* Oh, just keep running, Toby—

SQUIRE: What was that about?

HARRIET: What? Toby and Me? *(Pause, making light of the situation.)*

That's just how we talk. We like to joke around. Don't worry, we're just playin'!

SQUIRE: You guys have an interesting relationship.

HARRIET: Comin' from the squirrel currently cradling an acorn?

SQUIRE: Don't judge! What Nutty and I have is magical!

HARRIET: Right... I gotta go. I have a race to win! See you at the finish line, Squire.

HARRIET exits.

SQUIRE: Come on, Nutty! There's a big wide world out there just waiting for us!

SQUIRE exits.

SCENE 6

RACE PAGE 2

AT START: *HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK enter with their lawn chairs. QUACK is holding a tray of coffee cups. HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK set up their chairs at the side of the race route.*

GANDER: *(Nodding a greeting.)* Quack.

QUACK: *(Handing out the coffee.)* Gander.

HONKER: *(Nodding a greeting.)* Quack.

QUACK: *(Handing over the coffee.)* Honker.

Awkward pause, they all take a loud sip of their coffees.

GANDER: Good weather for race day!

QUACK and HONKER: Oh yeah, no, for sure.

QUACK: Good weather.

HONKER: Good weather.

Awkward pause. They all take a loud sip of their coffees.

HONKER: So, I've been thinkin'...

QUACK: Go on.

HONKER: Maybe that little racer there didn't know we were cheering for her.

GANDER: How you figure?

HONKER: Well, we were just standing at the side of the race, screaming our heads off. Maybe the racer didn't know it was for them.

GANDER and QUACK: *(Thinking it through.)* Yeah, no, for sure.

HONKER: So, I was thinking...

GANDER: Go on.

HONKER: Well, why don't we wave at the racers while we cheer. That way they know we were cheering for them.

GANDER and QUACK: *(Excitedly.)* Oh yeah, no, for sure!

Awkward pause, they all take a loud sip of their coffees.

GANDER: Look, here comes one a runnin' now, better get ready.

HONKER: And this time remember to wave.

QUACK: And cheer!

GANDER: Got it!

TOBY enters. As TOBY runs by, HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK cheer "Yes" like a hiss and wave their arms back and forth. It should look and sound like Canadian Geese attacking.

GANDER, QUACK, and HONKER: Yes!

TOBY: *(Screaming.)* Ah! Canadian Geese, don't come after me!

TOBY exits. HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK stand in a moment of shock.

GANDER: I get the impression that that there racer thought we were trying to attack him.

HONKER and QUACK: *(Agreeing.)* Oh yeah, no, for sure.

GANDER: Now, what do you think that's about?

HONKER: Don't know.

QUACK: Don't know.

Awkward pause; another loud coffee sip.

GANDER: Why don't you two ruminate on it and I'll go on a Timmy's run? See you at the last mile-point? *(Nodding goodbye.)* Quack.

QUACK: *(Nodding goodbye.)* Honker.

HONKER: *(Nodding a goodbye)* Gander.

HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK pack up their lawn chairs and finish their coffees. HONKER, GANDER, and QUACK exit. TOBY enters. TOBY runs to the middle of the stage and then runs on the spot to show distance.

TOBY: And I'm back in the lead. Toby Tortoise: Forestville Town Champion has a great ring to it.

HARRIET enters. HARRIET runs to the middle of the stage alongside TOBY and they run on the spot to show distance.

HARRIET: Town Champion? Ha, in your dreams!

TOBY: You know what they say about dreams—

HARRIET: That they're easily crushed?

TOBY and HARRIET pick up the pace as they run on the spot. TOBY pulls ahead of HARRIET. To show movement, HARRIET falls a few steps back, wipes the sweat from her forehead and then sprints to catch up, then TOBY falls a few steps back, gets a worried look on his face and then speeds up again. This should all happen in the middle of the stage. TOBY and HARRIET end up side by side again. Upbeat race music can be added to this part of the scene but is not necessary.

TOBY: Do you smell that, Harriet? That's the smell of me beating you!

HARRIET: I'm surprised you can smell anything with a nose that flat!
Ha!

TOBY is a little upset about HARRIET'S last comment, but he shakes it off.

TOBY: Laugh now, but we'll see who's laughing at the finish line.

TOBY and HARRIET exit.

SCENE 7

PENELOPE PORCUPINE

AT START: *PENELOPE enters. She is wearing a typical mom outfit with her quills visible. She carries a very large purse, a cellphone, and a large cup of coffee.*

PENELOPE: *(Chanting to herself.)* What time is it? It's Mommy Me Time! Mommy Me Time! Mommy Me Time! *(To the audience.)* Hello everyone! How's the race going? I think I got here just in time.

PENELOPE starts setting herself up. She pulls some items out of her bag: a blanket, her sunglasses, a book, a muffin.

PENELOPE: *(To the audience.)* Can I let you in on a little secret: I don't have to work today and daycare is still open! So... I took the kids to daycare anyway and got myself a little alone time: Mommy Me Time! Oh, I'm looking out in the crowd here today and some of you moms know exactly what I'm talking about. We've all done it. Listen, I have the most lovable porcupette triplets. Do you want to see pictures? I have a few thousand.

(To self.) No! Penelope, resist the urge. Today is about taking time for you.

PENELOPE: *(Continued.)* As I was saying, while I love my girls, sometimes you just need a moment to yourself. And you want to know the first thing I did after I dropped them off? I went to the bathroom: By myself! No little knocks at the door, no little hands under the door, no “Mommy, whatcha doin?” I went pee by myself, and it was glorious! Then I packed a bag, grabbed a coffee, and came here.

But don’t worry, I won’t disturb you anymore. I’ll just sit here and enjoy the peace and quiet.

PENELOPE takes a sip of her coffee and has an over-the-top, loud reaction.

PENELOPE: Oh! Coffee! And it’s still warm! *(Realizing and to the audience.)* Oh sorry. Don’t mind me!

PENELOPE takes another sip and then opens her book and begins to read. She is so impressed with the silence and the ability to read a sentence that she has an outburst.

PENELOPE: Ha! Look, I’m reading! Like an actual book, without pictures. And I only have to read it once. *(Realizing, and to the audience.)* Oh, sorry again. I’m sure you all read, like, all the time. Silently and stuff...

PENELOPE puts the book down and pulls out a muffin from her purse. She stares at it in awe.

PENELOPE: A muffin! *(Takes a bite.)* That I’m eating! And I don’t have to share it with anyone! No one asks for my food! *(Takes another bite.)* I’m eating my own muffin! And I don’t care who hears me: I am eating my own muffin, and it is the greatest thing ever!

PENELOPE collapses onto her blanket in absolute bliss. She lets out a big sigh and pops the last piece of muffin into her mouth. Pause.

PENELOPE: Oh no! (*Sneezes.*) Oh no, no, no, no, no! (*Sneezes again, sits up, and looks at the grass.*) Is this ragweed? (*Sneezes.*) I'm allergic to ragweed. (*Sneezes.*) No, no, no! This can't be happening right now. Not during Mommy Me Time! (*Sneezes.*) I'm sneezing, and I can't stop!

PENELOPE is having an allergic reaction. She starts pulling napkins from her purse to become tissues for her nose. The sneezing becomes more and more violent until PENELOPE lets out one big sneeze that knocks her backward. When she sits up again, the blanket and everything on it is stuck in her quills. DIRECTOR'S NOTE: Place the heavy things like the bag off of the blanket and then have the actor playing PENELOPE hold the blanket to her head as if she was stuck. If you want to get really fancy, you can add Velcro.

PENELOPE: The blanket! My quills. I'm stuck! I can't get it off! This is so embarrassing! I have to get out of here!

PENELOPE, with the blanket still in her quills, hides behind a tree and tries to get herself unstuck. TOBY enters.

TOBY: I'd like to see Harriet catch me now!

PENELOPE: Toby! Thank goodness, a friendly face! I need your help!

TOBY: (*Jogging on the spot.*) Penelope Porcupine? Is that you? Why are you hiding behind a tree?

PENELOPE: Because I'm stuck! (*Sneezes.*) and sick: Allergies.

TOBY: (*Stopping.*) What do you mean stuck?

PENELOPE comes out from behind the tree and shows TOBY the mess she is in.

PENELOPE: I sneezed so hard I got my blanket stuck in my quills! Please, you have to help me!

TOBY: Penelope, I'm really sorry, but I'm kind of in the mid—

PENELOPE: Oh, don't you leave me like this! What would your mother say?

TOBY: But—

PENELOPE: I'm so embarrassed!

TOBY: Maybe someone else—

PENELOPE: (*Breaking down.*) I can't pick up my kids from daycare like this. What about the other moms? I threw my "Mommy Me Time" in their faces at drop-off. The jealousy hung heavy in the air. I can't give them this much ammo. Please, Toby, I really need a friend right now.

TOBY: Okay! Don't worry. We'll get you out of this and then you can head to the pharmacy before pick-up. The other moms will never know.

PENELOPE: Thank you! You are the best! I appreciate you so much right now.

TOBY: But we have to hurry, Harriet can't catch me.

PENELOPE: Harriet? What's going on between you and Harriet?

TOBY: Never mind. Let's focus on you. Now let me see! If you could just sit—

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