

TERRIBLE SKUNK BREATH

By Bradley Walton

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CHARACTERS

*(19 ROLES - 1 Male, 1 Female, 17 Either.
10 actors possible with doubling. Extras possible.)*

JAY / JANIE TENNANT (M/F)	A student who turns into a skunk.
ASHLEY MILLER (M/F)	A student on whom Jay has a crush; eats constantly.
CRAIG / CHRISTIE MINTZ (M/F)	Jay's classmate. Sardonic and practical. Tries unsuccessfully to talk sense into Jay.
DEAN / DEDE JENSEN (M/F)	Ashley's friend.
MR. TENNANT (M)	Jay's dad.
MRS. TENNANT (F)	Jay's mom.
MR. / MRS. FOX (M/F)	A teacher.
JONAH / JO BETH (M/F)	A student.
KRIS (M/F)	A student.
ROBIN (M/F)	A student.
RABBIT (M/F)	A rabbit with allergies.
GENERAL EISENFOULER (M/F)	A skunk, leader of the Skunk Commandos.
FLORAL EISENFOULER (M/F)	General Eisenfouler's daughter; a very young skunk.
ROCKY (M/F)	A Skunk Commando.
SPRIG (M/F)	A Skunk Commando.
TUBER (M/F)	A Skunk Commando.
FOX #1 (M/F)	A fox.
FOX #2 (M/F)	A fox.
TOOTHBRUSH (M/F)	Jay's toothbrush who runs away.

NOTE: The student characters in Terrible Skunk Breath can be any age from upper elementary through high school.

DOUBLING: With the exception of JAY, the 9 human characters can double as the 8 animal characters or the TOOTHBRUSH. MR. or MRS. TENNANT could also double as MR. / MRS. FOX, although a fast costume change would be required.

EXTRAS: There may be additional STUDENTS for the school scenes, as well as additional SKUNK COMMANDOS.

A NOTE ABOUT FLORAL: Using a child in the role of FLORAL is encouraged, but is by no means required.

SCENES

SCENE 1 – The English classroom, before school one Monday morning

Jay, Ashley, Craig, Dede, Kris, Robin, Jonah, Mr. Fox

SCENE 2 – The English classroom, Wednesday morning

Jay, Craig

SCENE 3 – Jay’s house, that night

Jay, Mr. Tennant, Mrs. Tennant

SCENE 4 – The English classroom, the next morning

Mr. Fox, Jay, Craig, Ashley, Dede, Jonah, Kris, Robin

SCENE 5 – Jay’s house, that evening

Jay, Mrs. Tennant

SCENE 6 – The hall at school, the next morning

Dede, Jonah, Kris, Robin, Craig, Jay, Ashley, Mr. Fox

SCENE 7 – The forest, that afternoon

Jay, Rabbit, General Eisenfouler, Sprig, Tuber, Rocky, Fox 1, Fox 2, Floral, Toothbrush

SCENE 8 – Jay’s house, a few days later

Mrs. Tennant, Mr. Tennant, Craig, Jay, Ashley

NOTE: The play can be performed as one act or two acts. If performed as two acts, the break should come after Scene 6. Scenes 7 and 8 would then become Act II, Scenes 1 and 2.

STAGING

Sets can be as simple or elaborate as the production requires. For the original production's classroom scenes, student desks and chairs, along with a teacher's desk and a dry erase board, were positioned on the stage behind the main curtain line. For the scenes set in JAY's house, the curtain was closed and a kitchen table and chairs were set on the apron. Scene 6 was presented bare stage on the apron in front of the closed curtain. The classroom was changed to the forest behind the curtain during scenes 5 and 6. (Alternately, there could be an intermission after scene 6, and the classroom could be changed to the forest then.) The original production used a backdrop of flat trees, hanging leaves, and suggestive lighting, along with a few scattered plants, to represent the forest.

In scene 7, there is a "skunk mobile" in which FLORAL EISENFOULER is pushed around the stage by the SKUNK COMMANDOS. The original production used a large rolling laundry hamper covered in black fabric with a white stripe on each side and a black and white "tail" sticking off the back. Feel free to interpret the skunk mobile as you see fit. The sillier it looks, the better.

COSTUMES

JAY begins and ends the play dressed in contemporary youth clothing. For Scene 5, he requires a skunk tail to stick out the back of his clothing. For Scenes 6 and 7, he requires a skunk costume.

ASHLEY, CRAIG, DEDE, JONAH, KRIS, and ROBIN are dressed as contemporary youths. For the last scene, ASHLEY requires a pig costume.

MR. FOX is dressed as a teacher.

MR. TENNANT is dressed as a grocery store manager.

MRS. TENNANT should be wearing around-the-house clothes.

RABBIT requires a rabbit costume.

GENERAL EISENFOULER, ROCKY, SPRIG, and TUBER require skunk costumes. They may have helmets or other military components added.

FLORAL is a skunk cub. If female, she may have a bow attached to her head or tail. When she takes over the Skunk Commandos, she may put on some kind of military helmet or other bit of clothing.

The two FOXES require fox costumes.

TOOTHBRUSH wears a toothbrush costume.

A NOTE ABOUT ANIMAL COSTUMES AND MAKEUP: These may be very simple or very elaborate, depending on the production's needs. For JAY, it is probably advisable to have a loose-fitting costume that can fit on over top of his human clothes, and if other actors are doubling as both humans and animals, you may want to do the same for them. Likewise, animal makeup, if used, should be something simple than can be applied and removed very quickly.

SOUND EFFECTS

Class Change Bell
Doorbell

PROPERTIES

SCENE 1

Bag of Pork Rinds, Bag of Chips, and Other Food Items – ASHLEY
School Books – JAY, CRAIG, ASHLEY, DEDE, JONAH, KRIS, ROBIN

SCENE 2

School Books – JAY, CRAIG

SCENE 3

Dinner

SCENE 4

Bag of Pork Rinds, Bag of Chips, and Other Food Items – ASHLEY
School Books – JAY, CRAIG, ASHLEY, DEDE, JONAH, KRIS, ROBIN

SCENE 5

Magazine and Coffee Cup – MRS. TENNANT
Bookbag – JAY

SCENE 6

Bag of Pork Rinds, Bag of Chips, and Other Food Items – ASHLEY
School Books – JAY, CRAIG, ASHLEY, DEDE, JONAH, KRIS, ROBIN

SCENE 7

“Skunk Mobile”

SCENE 8

Coffee Cup – MRS. TENNANT

AUTHOR NOTES

There’s a saying...“When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” This play is a prime example of that. Our school newspaper advisor wanted to use the auditorium for a state student journalism conference on the same weekend we always put on the spring drama production that I direct. Our audition dates were set in stone because of the winter musical, and due to prom and AP testing, we couldn’t put on the play any later in the year... only sooner, which would mean a really tight and stressful rehearsal schedule... unless we did a shorter play. I’d been wanting to stage a children’s play for my daughter, but I really hadn’t thought I’d get the opportunity. But in light of the scheduling problem I was facing, an hour-long children’s show (or, as we eventually marketed it, “a play for the whole family”) looked like it would be the perfect solution. My daughter had even already given me a title that I loved and was going to use for a script: “Terrible Skunk Breath.” So that’s what we did. We had a coloring contest in the elementary schools to promote the show, and in the end, we got the best audience turnout we’d ever had for our spring drama production. I was even able to include my daughter in the cast of the play. What started out as a problem turned out to be a great opportunity. We made lemonade. And it was *good* lemonade.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Terrible Skunk Breath premiered April 22-23, 2011 at Harrisonburg High School in Harrisonburg, Virginia. It was produced by Stanley Swartz, directed by Bradley Walton, stage managed by Ama Ansah with tech support provided by Jesse Henninger and Maddy Skiba, and featured the following cast:

JAY..... Chris Pyle
CRAIG / GENERAL EISENFOULER..... Zach McDonnell
MRS. TENNANT / TOOTBRUTH..... Kait Arthur
ROBIN / RABBIT..... Allison McKenzie
MR. TENNANT / MR. FOX / FOX #1..... Christion Tyler Edwards
ASHLEY / TUBER..... Jess Sangabriel
JONAH / ROCKY..... Fernando Gamboa
DEDE / SPRIG..... Daelynn McCleve
KRIS / FOX #2..... Sam Martin
FLORAL EISENFOULER..... Rachel Walton

*For Rachel,
who gave her dad such a great title
that he just had to write a play to go with it.*

TERRIBLE SKUNK BREATH

by
Bradley Walton

SCENE 1

The English classroom, before school one Monday morning

AT RISE: *An English classroom. ASHLEY is seated at a desk, eating a large bag of pork rinds. JAY is sitting at a desk beside ASHLEY and is talking to her, but SHE is focused on her pork rinds and is not paying attention to him. CRAIG is sitting on the other side of JAY. JONAH is asleep at a desk in the back of the room. There may be one or two other STUDENTS in the classroom.*

JAY: I mean, I used to lie awake at nights, wondering why he was even there. He's sort of cool and stuff, but it's not like he actually does anything that's all that important. And then one morning I was struggling to get the last bit of toothpaste out of the tube when it hit me... foreshadowing!

ASHLEY: Uh-huh.

JAY: I mean... what other reason could there be? Put him there at the beginning of the story to hint what's going to happen later. It all adds up. General Grievous is a cyborg—you know, half robot and half living creature. And not only that, he's a cyborg with lung problems and he fights Jedi. Just like Darth Vader—cyborg, lung problems, and fights Jedi. The whole reason he's there is to foreshadow what Anakin Skywalker is going to become at the end of the movie.

ASHLEY: Uh-huh.

JAY: It's pretty fascinating, huh?

ASHLEY: Uh-huh.

CRAIG: Jay?

JAY: Yeah?

CRAIG: What are you talking about?

JAY: *Star Wars.*

CRAIG: *Star Wars?*

JAY: Yeah. *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith.*

(CRAIG and JAY stand and move away from ASHLEY.)

CRAIG: You're talking about *Star Wars*... with Ashley?

JAY: Yeah.

CRAIG: For real?

JAY: Yeah.

CRAIG: Why?

JAY: Because I like *Star Wars*.

CRAIG: And you think she likes *Star Wars*?

JAY: Well, I mean... I don't think she's into it like I am, but—

CRAIG: Jay, nobody's into it like you are.

JAY: There're lots of people who are into it like I am. Deeper than me, even. If you don't believe me, just go look on the Internet.

CRAIG: I don't want to look on the Internet. The last time I did a search for "*Star Wars*" on the Internet, it made me want to take my eyeballs out and soak them in peroxide.

JAY: Really? What'd you see?

CRAIG: Chopsticks that looked like little lightsabers. Venetian blinds with Yoda on them. There was... there was a backpack that looked like Boba Fett's rocket pack. It was just too much.

JAY: Actually, Craig, I have one of those backpacks.

(Beat.)

CRAIG: Do you know any good brain surgeons?

JAY: No. Why?

CRAIG: I really want to forget that I heard you say that, but I don't think it's going to happen without surgery, because it's like somebody just branded the image onto my cerebral cortex.

JAY: Sort of like those toasters that burn a picture of Darth Vader onto your bread?

(Beat.)

CRAIG: I hate you. You know that?

JAY: You tell me that pretty much every day.

CRAIG: And you earn it. Every. Single. Time.

JAY: If it bothers you so much, why do you even talk to me?

CRAIG: I'm kind of a nerd, Jay, but compared to you, I'm positively normal. And the more I hang out around you, the more normal I seem to everyone else by comparison.

JAY: You want to be normal?

CRAIG: I want to be able to pass as normal.

JAY: Normal is boring.

CRAIG: Normal is boring?

JAY: Yeah.

CRAIG: Jay... were you paying any attention at all to your conversation with Ashley?

JAY: Sure. I thought it was fascinating.

CRAIG: No. Not your end of the conversation. The other end of the conversation. Her end. Jay, she wasn't listening to a word you said.

JAY: Sure she was. She kept saying "uh-huh."

CRAIG: Based on where her attention seemed to be focused, I think she was probably talking to her pork rinds.

JAY: No, she wasn't! Ashley's nice! She's never said anything rude to me.

CRAIG: Ashley's never said anything rude because she's always too busy eating.

JAY: She probably has a fast metabolism.

CRAIG: She probably does. I don't know how else she can eat like a pig and never gain any weight.

JAY: Ashley's not a pig!

CRAIG: I didn't say she was. I just said she ate like one. Sooner or later it'll probably catch up with her.

JAY: Don't badmouth Ashley.

CRAIG: I'm not badmouthing her. But I'm telling you, she's not as awesome as you think she is.

JAY: She's gorgeous. And she's always so focused.

CRAIG: She's easy on the eyes. Yes. And she's very focused. But she's only focused on what she's eating.

(CRAIG and JAY look at ASHLEY, who gazes intently into her bag of pork rinds.)

And when she's not eating, you can bet she's focused on whatever she's going to eat next.

JAY: She talks to people.

CRAIG: She talks to people who are not you. She has a social circle. You are not part of it. Whenever you try to talk to her—whatever you have to say—it will always be less interesting than whatever she's stuffing into her mouth, and that is where her attention will shift. You will never provoke a response from her other than "hi," "mm," or "uh-huh."

JAY: Uh-uh.

CRAIG: Uh-huh.

JAY: I refuse to believe that.

CRAIG: She doesn't actually know you're alive.

JAY: Yes, she does.

CRAIG: Prove it.

JAY: Okay. I will. I'll go talk to her again.

CRAIG: Please, no more *Star Wars*.

JAY: Fine. You don't like *Star Wars*? I can talk about something besides *Star Wars*. (*crosses to ASHLEY*) Hey, Ashley.

ASHLEY: Uh-huh.

JAY: You ever read the *Peanuts* comic strips? You know... Charlie Brown and Snoopy and stuff?

ASHLEY: Uh-huh.

JAY: Did you know that the characters aged at different speeds? Like Charlie Brown was four years old to begin with, and eventually he was eight years old and stayed that age, but Linus started out as a baby, and eventually he ended up being like a year younger than Charlie Brown? Bet you didn't know that, huh?

ASHLEY: Mm.

CRAIG: Great job, Jay.

JAY: (*to CRAIG*) I'm not finished. (*to ASHLEY*) That math test yesterday was a killer, wasn't it?

ASHLEY: Uh-huh.

JAY: How'd it go for you?

ASHLEY: Mm.

JAY: Yeah. I feel the same way. Um. Nice weather lately, don't you think?

ASHLEY: Mm.

JAY: Yeah. Well. See ya.

ASHLEY: Uh-huh.

(*JAY crosses to CRAIG.*)

CRAIG: The weather? Seriously? You tried to talk to her about the weather?

JAY: My parents do it all the time.

CRAIG: Who do they do it to?

JAY: Their friends.

CRAIG: And what do their friends say?

JAY: Uh...

CRAIG: Come on. What do they say?

JAY: Well...

CRAIG: Spit it out.

JAY: They say "uh-huh" and "mm."

CRAIG: That's what I thought. So naturally, if talking about the weather generates that kind of response from grown-ups, you figured it would get a completely different response from someone who's not a grown-up.

JAY: It was all I could think of!

CRAIG: Uh-huh.

JAY: Don't you start.

CRAIG: Mm.

JAY: I'm serious!

CRAIG: Okay. I'll quit. But you should too, okay? There's nothing you can do or say to Ashley that's going to make her actually notice you. You might as well give it up before you embarrass yourself.

JAY: I was under the impression I was already embarrassing myself.

CRAIG: You are, but my father always says that no matter how bad things are, they can always get worse. I think that's good advice, and you should take it. Quit while you're ahead.

JAY: But if things can always get worse, then regardless of whatever point you're at when you decide to quit, you'll always be ahead. I never thought of that before. Thanks, Craig.

CRAIG: No. No! That's not what I meant! Don't take the wisdom of my dad and go twisting it into some kind of an excuse to do something really stupid!

(Without stopping their conversation, JAY and CRAIG begin to show signs of noticing a bad smell.)

JAY: I thought that the worse I made myself look, the better you looked by comparison.

CRAIG: This is true.

(DEDE enters from the hallway, followed by KRIS, ROBIN, MR FOX, and possibly other STUDENTS.)

ASHLEY: *(stands)* Oh my gosh, what is that smell?

JAY: Are you talking to me?

ASHLEY: DeDe, what's that stench?

DEDE: Somebody set off a stink bomb in the hallway.

ASHLEY: Great.

(DEDE, ASHLEY, MR. FOX and the other STUDENTS sit down, all reacting in disgust to the smell. JONAH has woken up and noticed the smell as well. JAY appears to be deep in thought.)

CRAIG: What?

JAY: Nothing.

CRAIG: You look like you're thinking.

JAY: No. Don't worry about it.

CRAIG: I'll do my best. You want foreshadowing... that smell in the hall... that's foreshadowing. When a Monday morning starts off

with a stink bomb, it just doesn't bode well for the rest of the week, you know?

JAY: *(Not really paying attention.)* Uh-huh.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 2

The English classroom, Wednesday morning

CRAIG is sitting at his desk, doing school work and waiting for class to begin. JAY enters and crosses to CRAIG.

JAY: Hey, Craig.

CRAIG: Hey, Jay.

(JAY stands near CRAIG as if expecting something. JAY yawns very obviously.)

What?

JAY: Oh, nothing.

CRAIG: No, it's not nothing. It's something. What is it?

JAY: If you have to ask, never mind.

CRAIG: You're trying to drive me crazy, aren't you?

JAY: No.

CRAIG: It's not going to work.

JAY: Forget about it.

CRAIG: I don't care, Jay.

JAY: That's fine. Just give it time.

CRAIG: Give what time?

JAY: The thing that you don't care about.

CRAIG: *(stands)* What exactly is it that I don't care about?

JAY: I thought you didn't care.

CRAIG: I don't.

JAY: Then why are you asking?

CRAIG: Because I want to make sure that whatever it is that I don't care about isn't going to come back to haunt me later.

JAY: Well, that stink bomb on Monday morning got me thinking...

CRAIG: That you were provoked to think about something is bad in and of itself. But the fact that a stink bomb was the thing that made you think whatever it is that you're thinking is incredibly, deeply, very, very troubling.

JAY: Did you notice how Ashley noticed the smell from the stink bomb?

CRAIG: Did *I notice* how *she noticed*... what? Uh... I guess. I mean... I just caught that she noticed it. It was exactly the opposite of how she doesn't notice you. (*Beat.*) Oh, no. No. Jay. What you are up to here?

JAY: I think I figured out a way to get Ashley to notice me.

CRAIG: What, you're going to eat nothing but beans for the rest of your life? Or quit bathing?

JAY: No! Come on, don't be gross. I'm just going to stop brushing my teeth.

(*Beat.*)

CRAIG: You're going to stop...? Jay, how is that not gross?

JAY: Well, I mean it is gross. But it's not as gross as having gas all the time, or uncontrollable body odor.

CRAIG: What, you think you can magically control the flow of stench that comes out whenever you open your mouth?

JAY: That's just it... I *can* control the amount of smell that comes out by opening and closing my mouth.

CRAIG: So are you going to tape a garbage bag to your shirt in case whoever you're talking to bars on you?

JAY: Nobody's going to throw up on me. It won't be that bad.

CRAIG: It'll be bad enough. Jay, come on. What are you thinking? You're trying to get Ashley to notice you by having bad breath! For some reason, I was under the impression that you wanted her to like you.

JAY: I do. But she has to notice me first.

CRAIG: If she notices you because you have bad breath, that's probably not going to make a real good impression.

JAY: At least it'll be an impression! That's more than I've managed so far! Unless you have a better idea!

CRAIG: Yes. I do. Forget the whole thing! Leave well enough alone!

JAY: Craig, if I wanted to do that, then I wouldn't be doing this.

CRAIG: I don't believe this. Okay. Fine. Whatever. It's your mouth, not mine. When were you planning to start this glorious enterprise?

JAY: I started two days ago. I haven't brushed my teeth since Monday morning.

CRAIG: Since...

JAY: I'm surprised you can't tell.

CRAIG: In case you hadn't noticed, I try to keep at least four feet of personal space between me and everybody else. And now I'm really, really glad.

JAY: So when it gets bad enough that you can smell it from four feet away, then I should try talking to Ashley again.

CRAIG: I don't want to be able to smell it from four feet away!
Geez, Jay.

JAY: I was really hoping it would be worse by now. Maybe I should try to speed things along. Do you think my mom would get suspicious if I asked her to fix garlic and anchovies for dinner tonight?

(Blackout.)

SCENE 3
Jay's house, that night

JAY is having dinner with his parents, MR. and MRS. TENNANT.

MR. TENNANT: Jay, do you think you could help me mow the yard this weekend?

JAY: Dad... do I have to?

MR. TENNANT: It'd be nice. You do live here, you know.

JAY: I hate mowing the yard.

MR. TENNANT: It needs to be done.

JAY: Can you at least buy a riding lawn mower?

MR. TENNANT: They're expensive. And the push mower we've got works fine.

JAY: I just hate mowing the yard.

MRS. TENNANT: Your father and I do a lot for you, Jay. You should be willing to help out around the house more.

JAY: I guess. Sorry.

MRS. TENNANT: How was work today, dear?

MR. TENNANT: Not the best. On the plus side, yesterday's business was up from the same day last year, which is always nice. We got the new lighting up for the produce section... that looks a lot better now. And the new cashier we hired seems to be working out pretty well. On the down side... and I'd appreciate it if this doesn't go beyond this table... you know Woody, the new kid we put on the maintenance staff?

MRS. TENNANT: The one with the allergies?

MR. TENNANT: That's the one. I think he's been stealing from the store.

MRS. TENNANT: Oh, that's terrible! Does he have a key to the cash office?

MR. TENNANT: It's not money that I think he's been stealing... it's carrots.

MRS. TENNANT: Carrots?

MR. TENNANT: He eats them. Constantly. He's always chewing on one during his breaks, and when he leaves to go home. Even sometimes when he's on the clock and he thinks nobody's watching. Well, I looked in his lunchbox after he came in this morning, and there wasn't a single carrot there. But he had one during each of his breaks, and I saw him eating one in the stock room at 4:00. I had a quiet chat with each of the cashiers, and he's never paid for a single one that anybody can remember.

MRS. TENNANT: My goodness.

MR. TENNANT: It's sad. He seemed like he had so much potential, but now it looks like he's nothing but a thieving addict. I was going to call him in to my office for a conference, but it was like he'd disappeared. He didn't clock out or anything.

MRS. TENNANT: Well, maybe he won't come back and you won't have to worry about him.

MR. TENNANT: Maybe.

MRS. TENNANT: Jay, how was your day?

JAY: Fine.

MRS. TENNANT: What did you do in school today?

JAY: We started reading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in Mr. Fox's class.

MRS. TENNANT: How do you like it so far?

JAY: It's okay, I guess.

MR. TENNANT: Anything else interesting going on?

JAY: Nah.

(Pause.)

MRS. TENNANT: Jay, is there anything you'd like to tell us?

JAY: Like what?

MRS. TENNANT: Oh, nothing.

MR. TENNANT: Is everything okay at school, Jay?

JAY: Everything's fine. Why?

MR. TENNANT: Well, your mother and I have noticed...

JAY: What?

MR. TENNANT: Your toothbrush...

JAY: What about it?

MR. TENNANT: It doesn't look like it's been touched for the past couple of days.

JAY: You're stalking my toothbrush?

MR. TENNANT: No. But it's right there in the cabinet next to ours.
It's hard not to notice. It's dry. And it's been sitting at the exact same angle since at least Monday night.

JAY: Y'know... it's kind of weird that you're paying that much attention to my toothbrush.

MRS. TENNANT: Jay, we're your parents. It's our job.

JAY: Do you go through my stuff when I'm at school?

MRS. TENNANT: Do we need to?

JAY: No! I mean, help yourself if it'll make you feel better. I'm not hiding anything!

MRS. TENNANT: Are you sure about that?

JAY: *(stands)* What would I be hiding?

MRS. TENNANT: I don't know. You're being awfully evasive and defensive about the toothbrush.

JAY: *(crosses away from the table)* It's an experiment, okay?

MR. TENNANT: What kind of an experiment?

MRS. TENNANT: For science class?

JAY: No, it's like a... a social experiment.

MRS. TENNANT: A social experiment.

MR. TENNANT: And how does this... social experiment... work?

JAY: I stopped brushing my teeth, okay?

MRS. TENNANT: *(stands)* You... what?

JAY: I wanted to see how long it would take for somebody to notice.

MR. TENNANT: Why?

JAY: Do I need a reason?

(MR. and MRS. TENNANT cross to JAY.)

MR. TENNANT: Are you getting picked on? Are you trying to keep bullies away?

MRS. TENNANT: You're not going to stop bathing, are you?

MR. TENNANT: You're not eating extra beans at school, are you?

JAY: No! No! Everything's fine, okay?

MR. TENNANT: If things were fine, you'd be brushing your teeth.

MRS. TENNANT: Is it a girl?

JAY: Mom!

MRS. TENNANT: It's a girl.

MR. TENNANT: That explains it.

MRS. TENNANT: I'll bet she broke your heart and now you're trying to get back at her in some pathetic passive-aggressive way.

See? We understand perfectly.

JAY: Mom!

MR. TENNANT: Just don't go too far with it, okay?

MRS. TENNANT: If your breath gets too bad, you might turn into a skunk.

JAY: Mom, please.

MRS. TENNANT: Well, you might.

JAY: People don't turn into skunks, mom.

MRS. TENNANT: They do if they smell bad enough. It happens all the time.

JAY: No, it doesn't! Dad...

MR. TENNANT: I'd listen to your mom, Jay.

JAY: I have never, ever heard of someone turning into a skunk before.

MRS. TENNANT: Well, then I guess you're just not looking at the right websites.

JAY: What websites?

MRS. TENNANT: If you're going to take that tone of voice, I'm not telling.

JAY: Mom, look. Just because you see something on the Internet, that doesn't mean that it's true.

MRS. TENNANT: And it doesn't mean that it isn't.

JAY: Mom, seriously. They teach us about this stuff at school.

About how to identify websites with bogus information. You wouldn't believe some of the stuff that's out there. I saw a movie site once that said Arnold Schwarzenegger's first acting job was playing "Lucy" in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. (*update reference as necessary*) You have to be careful.

MRS. TENNANT: Good thing this isn't bogus information, then.

JAY: Look, I get what you're trying to do, okay? You think I'm being ridiculous, so you're being ridiculous back at me to try to get me to see how ridiculous I'm being. And I appreciate it. I guess. I mean, it shows that you care about me. And that's... that's really great. But... just... come on...

MR. TENNANT: Shouldn't call your mom ridiculous, Jay. That's not nice.

JAY: Dad... please!

MR. TENNANT: Your mom is giving you good advice, son. You should take it seriously.

MRS. TENNANT: You'll turn into a skunk and your mouth will be so disgusting that your toothbrush will run away, and then you'll *really* be in a pickle.

JAY: Mom... dad... people do not turn into skunks!

MRS. TENNANT: (*patting JAY on the shoulder*) You just keep telling yourself that, dear.

(JAY returns to his seat at the table. MR. and MRS. TENNANT follow.)

MR. TENNANT: (*changing the subject*) So, you're reading *Tom Sawyer*, huh? That was always one of my favorites.

MRS. TENNANT: Jay, did you know that Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Clemens, and that "Mark Twain" wasn't the only pen name that he used?

MR. TENNANT: Would you pass the anchovies, please, honey?

(*Blackout.*)

SCENE 4

The English classroom, the next morning

MR. FOX, the English teacher, is lecturing to his class. JAY, CRAIG, ASHLEY, DEDE, JONAH, KRIS, and ROBIN are all present. There may be other STUDENTS as well. ASHLEY is eating a bag of chips.

MR. FOX: As you all know, Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens. But "Mark Twain" wasn't the only pen name that Mr. Clemens used. Can any of you tell me another name under which Mr. Clemens wrote?

(JAY raises his hand.)

Jay.

JAY: Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass.

(*EVERYONE reacts in disgust to the smell of JAY's breath, coughing, gagging, and leaning away or trying to scoot their desks away. Those closest to JAY react first, and those further away react a second or two later. JAY looks at ASHLEY, who sticks her mouth and nose in her potato chip bag.*)

MR. FOX: That's... correct. Can anyone else tell me what Mr. Clemens wrote under that name?

(*JAY raises his hand. MR. FOX looks searchingly around the room, ignoring JAY and hoping to find someone else to call on.*)

No one? Any guesses? (*Beat.*) I'll give extra credit.

(The bell rings, signaling the end of class.)

Well, that's it for today. Your assignment for tonight is to read the next two chapters.

(The STUDENTS begin to exit. MR. FOX sits down at his desk.)

DEDE: *(giving JAY a dirty look as SHE exits)* Gross.

CRAIG: Hey, Jay...

JAY: Wha—

CRAIG: No. Don't say anything yet.

(CRAIG and JAY cross downstage away from MR. FOX's desk.)

I want you to turn away from me, and I'm going to turn away from you. And then I'm going to ask you a question and hold my breath while you answer. Nod your head if you understand.

(JAY is visibly annoyed, but nods. JAY and CRAIG turn away from each other.)

Obviously you were able to score the garlic and anchovies last night. I'd congratulate you if I wasn't convinced you're such an idiot. How far are you going to go with this not brushing your teeth thing? *(inhales and holds his breath)*

JAY: Until Ashley notices.

CRAIG: *(exhales loudly)* She noticed. I saw her notice. *(inhales and holds his breath)*

JAY: She looked like she was trying not to notice.

CRAIG: *(exhales loudly)* She was trying not to look like she noticed, but she noticed. Trust me. We all noticed. You can start brushing your teeth again. Please. *(inhales and holds his breath)*

JAY: I want her to not look like she's trying not to notice.

CRAIG: *(exhales loudly)* Have your parents caught on to this stunt yet? *(inhales and holds his breath)*

JAY: Yeah. Mom tried to tell me that if my breath got too bad, I'd turn into a skunk.

CRAIG: *(exhales loudly)* That's good advice. You should take it. *(inhales and holds his breath)*

(MR. FOX crosses towards JAY and CRAIG.)

MR. FOX: Shouldn't the two of you be going to your next class?

(JAY jumps in alarm and tries to hide behind CRAIG.)

Are you okay, Jay?

JAY: I... I'm...

MR. FOX: *(recoiling slightly at the smell of JAY's breath)* You look like you want to run away and hide.

JAY: *(calming down)* Kind of. I... I had sort of a panic attack there for a second. But I'm okay now, I think.

MR. FOX: Good. Good. I'll see you tomorrow.

(JAY and CRAIG move away from MR. FOX.)

CRAIG: That was weird.

(As JAY begins speaking, CRAIG reacts in disgust and pinches his nose shut. HE does this for the rest of the scene.)

JAY: It's as if all of a sudden I was afraid of Mr. Fox. Like I thought he was gonna try to eat me or something.

CRAIG: It's what your mom said. Your breath is so bad you're turning into a skunk.

JAY: Craig. Please. Not you, too.

CRAIG: Foxes eat skunks sometimes. You reacted to Mr. Fox like he was a predator just now.

JAY: But he's not a fox.

CRAIG: His name is Fox. Close enough.

JAY: Even if people did turn into skunks, I don't think it would work like that.

CRAIG: Believe what you want. It seems perfectly reasonable to me.

JAY: Are my parents paying you to say this?

CRAIG: I wish. Tell me something, though. How the heck did you know that other name for Mark Twain?

JAY: My mom told me last night. I thought she was kidding, but then she pulled it up on the computer and showed me.

CRAIG: Jay, you need to listen to your mom more. Seriously. You stink. You're probably going to sprout a tail by the end of the day.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 5

Jay's house, that afternoon

MRS. TENNANT is at the kitchen table, looking at a magazine and drinking a cup of coffee. JAY enters, carrying his bookbag from school. HE does not look happy. HE has sprouted a skunk tail. MRS. TENNANT does not appear remotely surprised. SHE looks at JAY and then back at her magazine without saying a word. JAY puts his bookbag down.

JAY: Go on. Say it.

MRS. TENNANT: Nice tail.

JAY: That's not what I meant.

MRS. TENNANT: What did you mean?

JAY: That you told me so. Go on. I deserve it.

MRS. TENNANT: Do you know how hard it was for your father and me to resist the urge to chain you up in the garage and spray Listerine (or another mouthwash) in your mouth with the garden hose?

JAY: I'm kinda wishing now that you would've.

MRS. TENNANT: One of the hardest things about being a parent is trying to give your kids good advice while also giving them the leeway to make mistakes big enough to learn from, but small enough not to ruin their lives.

JAY: Well, I can definitely say that this has been a fascinating learning experience, but the jury's still out on the life ruining part.

MRS. TENNANT: Did the tail come all at once, or did it grow out slowly?

JAY: All at once. During lunch. Right in the middle of the cafeteria. It was kind of embarrassing.

MRS. TENNANT: You should've been embarrassed when you went to school without brushing your teeth the first morning. It would've spared you some grief right now.

JAY: Yeah. Okay, well, I'm going to go brush my teeth.

MRS. TENNANT: Oh, really?

JAY: Yeah.

MRS. TENNANT: You might have a problem with that.

JAY: Why?

MRS. TENNANT: Your toothbrush ran off today.

JAY: What?

MRS. TENNANT: The school nurse called me today after your tail sprouted. I think your toothbrush overheard the conversation and got scared.

JAY: I can't believe the nurse called you.

MRS. TENNANT: She was freaking out pretty hard. I don't really know why, though. Anyone could've seen this coming a mile off.

JAY: What did she say?

MRS. TENNANT: That you had a skunk tail.

JAY: What else did she say?

MRS. TENNANT: That this was unusual.

JAY: Anything else?

MRS. TENNANT: That your breath could be used as a biological weapon.

JAY: And that was the point where my toothbrush ran screaming from the house?

MRS. TENNANT: Yup.

JAY: Very funny. I'm going to go brush my teeth and see if the tail shrinks any.

(JAY exits. MRS. TENNANT resumes reading her magazine and sipping her coffee. After a few seconds, JAY enters.)

Mom, where's my toothbrush?

MRS. TENNANT: I told you. It ran away.

JAY: Mom. Seriously. Please. I'm sorry, okay? You were right and I should've listened to you and you've proven your point and I'm sorry and I'll never do it again so will you please tell me where you hid my toothbrush?

MRS. TENNANT: I didn't hide your toothbrush.

JAY: Mom!

MRS. TENNANT: If your toothbrush is hiding, it hid itself.

JAY: Mom! Tail! I have a tail! And my mouth feels disgusting! I'm surprised you can stand the smell!

MRS. TENNANT: I changed your diapers when you were a baby, so I probably have partial immunity. And I'm serious. I did not hide your toothbrush.

JAY: Okay. Fine. I'll play along. It's hidden, but you didn't hide it.

So tell me this... where do you think it might be hidden?

MRS. TENNANT: Probably somewhere in the woods.

JAY: The woods!?

MRS. TENNANT: That's where I'd go if I was hiding from somebody.

JAY: You hid my toothbrush in the woods?

MRS. TENNANT: You're doing it again.

JAY: Doing what?

MRS. TENNANT: Not listening to me. I thought you said you learned your lesson.

JAY: But...

MRS. TENNANT: Now for the last time, your toothbrush ran away on its own.

JAY: To the woods?

MRS. TENNANT: That part is a guess.

JAY: Any idea where in the woods?

MRS. TENNANT: No clue.

JAY: Would you please go to the store and buy me another toothbrush?

(MRS. TENNANT stands, puts an arm around JAY, and crosses down center with him.)

MRS. TENNANT: Jay, I love you. I really do. And because I love you and I want you to carry something positive away from this mess, I think that you need to take responsibility for getting yourself out of it. So if anyone's going to the store to buy a toothbrush, it should be you.

JAY: Mom, I have a skunk tail!

MRS. TENNANT: I can see that.

JAY: I can't go out in public with a skunk tail!

MRS. TENNANT: You're not getting out of mowing the yard this weekend, if that's what you're thinking.

JAY: How can you expect me to mow the yard at a time like this?

MRS. TENNANT: Because the yard needs to be mowed.

JAY: Mom!

MRS. TENNANT: I don't see why you're making such a fuss.

Everyone at school has already seen your tail.

JAY: And if I mow the yard, more people will see it! And if I go to the store to buy a toothbrush, *even more* people will see it!

MRS. TENNANT: Sometimes we have to make tough decisions.

JAY: I don't suppose there's a 10-gallon drum of mouthwash I can hook the garden hose up to?

MRS. TENNANT: I'm afraid I used up the last of the mouthwash this morning. *(returns to her seat)*

JAY: You did that on purpose, didn't you?

MRS. TENNANT: I love you and I want you to grow and learn and take responsibility for yourself.

JAY: Did you pour it down the sink?

MRS. TENNANT: The sink was very thirsty.

(Beat.)

JAY: Okay then. *(begins to exit)*

MRS. TENNANT: What are you going to do?

JAY: The only thing I can do. Go to bed early and hope I get better by morning.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 6

The hall at school, the next morning

DEDE, JONAH, KRIS, and ROBIN are gathered in the hall outside of MR. FOX's classroom. THEY may be carrying bookbags, holding books, etc.

DEDE: Did you hear about what happened to Jay yesterday?

JONAH: Nobody'll *stop* talking about it.

KRIS: I was there in the cafeteria when he sprouted the tail!

JONAH: Did it rip his pants?

KRIS: I don't know. I didn't actually see it happen. I was just in the cafeteria at the same time.

DEDE: I saw!

JONAH: Did it rip his pants?

DEDE: No, it just kind of shot up out the back all of a sudden.

JONAH: Was he surprised?

DEDE: Yeah, he looked really surprised.

ROBIN: Well, what was he expecting with all the stink coming out of his mouth?

KRIS: Skunk stink doesn't come out of a skunk's mouth, though.

JONAH: No, it comes from under the tail.

KRIS: So if the stink is in his mouth, why is he turning in to a skunk?

DEDE: Because the stink is bad. Like skunk stink. Jay has terrible skunk breath, so now he's turning into a skunk. What else is he supposed to turn into? A gazelle?

KRIS: He could turn into an alpaca. They have bad breath.

JONAH: "Terrible alpaca breath" just doesn't have the same ring to it. Skunks have way more of a reputation for smelling bad than alpacas.

ROBIN: Did it stink when the tail popped out?

DEDE: You mean did it stink more than Jay already stinks? I don't know. There's no way I was getting close enough to find out.

ROBIN: I know what you mean. I saw Jay after lunch and the tail was all soft and cute and fluffy, and I really wanted to touch it and see what it felt like, but I wasn't about to get within breathing distance.

JONAH: Why does his breath smell so bad? Has it always been like that?

DEDE: No. I just noticed it this week.

(CRAIG enters.)

ROBIN: Has he got some kind of disease or something?

KRIS: Do you think it could be contagious?

JONAH: I don't wanna sprout a skunk tail.

KRIS: Is my breath bad?

DEDE: I'm not smelling it for you to find out, so don't ask.

CRAIG: Jay's not sick.

ROBIN: He's not?

CRAIG: He quit brushing his teeth.

ROBIN: What?

DEDE: For real?

KRIS: Why would he do a thing like that?

(JAY enters. HE has transformed into a full skunk, but nonetheless is carrying his school books.)

JAY: Because I'm an idiot.

ROBIN: Holy cow!

JONAH: That's no cow! That's a skunk!

KRIS: That's... that's...

CRAIG: That's Jay.

DEDE: Jay?

JAY: Yeah.

ROBIN: Jay...

JAY: What?

JONAH: You're a skunk.

JAY: I'm an idiot.

DEDE: Okay, yeah. But you're also a skunk.

JAY: Thank you for noticing.

ROBIN: You have sort of like... kitty cat ears.

JAY: Um. Yeah.

JONAH: Craig said you stopped brushing your teeth.

JAY: Yeah.

DEDE: Boy, you are an idiot.

KRIS: Are you an idiot because you stopped brushing your teeth, or did you stop brushing your teeth because you're an idiot?

JAY: Both. *(takes a step towards the group)*

DEDE: Jay, you just stay right there.

JAY: Why?

DEDE: Because you stink.

JAY: Still? *(breathes into his hand and sniffs it)* Man, I gotta find that toothbrush.

(ASHLEY enters, eating, and rushes hurriedly past JAY.)

Hey, Ashley!

ASHLEY: *(hurrying to get away from JAY)* Uh-huh.

JAY: The strangest thing happened to me this week.

ASHLEY: *(nodding her head in agreement)* Uh-huh.

JAY: You don't mind if I still sit next to you, do you?

ASHLEY: *(unable to speak with a mouth full of food)* Mmm...

(MR. FOX enters. JAY is terrified.)

MR. FOX: The bell's about to ring, folks. Time to head into the classroom. *(sees JAY)* All right, you all know that you can't bring pets to school. Especially not a pet... skunk? *(takes a step towards JAY)* Is that... Jay?

JAY: Stay back, Mr. Fox!

MR. FOX: *(breathes into his hand and sniffs)* Do I have it too? Is it catching?

JAY: No, I just... I just... I really need to go find my toothbrush!
(exits)

(Blackout.)

SCENE 7

The Forest

JAY is wandering through a forest, searching for his toothbrush.

JAY: *(calling out)* Here, toothbrush! Nice toothbrush! Come out wherever you are! *(pause)* I can't believe I'm actually doing this. *(calling out)* Here toothbrush! *(to himself)* I feel ridiculous. *(calling out)* It's not that bad! Honest! *(to himself)* Great. Now I'm not just a skunk, I'm a lying skunk. Craig was right. No matter how bad things get, they can always get worse. *(calling out)* Hey, toothbrush! *(to himself)* I don't even believe what mom said about the toothbrush running away. Why am I yelling at the top of my lungs in the middle of woods? *(calling out)* Toooooothbruuush! *(to himself)* Because things really are that bad.

(The following monologue about Star Wars and credit cards is optional and may be used if needed to cover for a costume change for the RABBIT. Or it may be omitted, in which case JAY skips to “How can it possibly get any worse than this?”)

I was gonna go to the store this weekend and check to see if the new *Star Wars* action figures were out. I need that new Clone Trooper! This stinks! Literally! What am I gonna do if I can't change back? I'm never gonna be able to buy any more *Star Wars* stuff for my collection. Unless I order it online. But I don't have a credit card! And I'd bet anything that they don't issue credit cards to skunks! How can it possibly get any worse than this?

(A RABBIT enters.)

RABBIT: Um. Hi.

JAY: What?

RABBIT: Hi.

JAY: Hi?

RABBIT: Yeah. Hi.

JAY: You said hi.

RABBIT: Is that okay?

JAY: You're a rabbit

RABBIT: Yeah. I'm a rabbit.

JAY: You're a rabbit and you said hi.

RABBIT: What? I can't say hi because I'm a rabbit?

JAY: No, you *can* say hi even though you're a rabbit.

RABBIT: Are you feeling okay?

JAY: Not really, no.

RABBIT: Because if you think you're gonna barf or something, I can come back later.

JAY: No... stay. I'm not gonna barf.

RABBIT: Oh. Okay.

JAY: Okay?

RABBIT: Yeah.

JAY: Good.

RABBIT: Are you sure? 'Cause I really don't like barf.

JAY: I'm positive. I'm just... um... having a really bad week.

RABBIT: Well, look, I hate to be the bearer of bad tidings, but if you're not careful, your bad week is gonna get worse.

JAY: Oh really.

RABBIT: You're bothering the other animals in the forest.

JAY: What, with the yelling? I'm sorry. I can stop.

RABBIT: Well, they're not crazy about the yelling, either. But mostly they're upset because you're stinking up the forest.

JAY: I am?

RABBIT: Apparently so. I can't tell myself. I've got allergies. Can't breathe through my nose or smell anything at all. Which is why I'm the one who got sent to give you the warning.

JAY: Warning?

RABBIT: Yeah.

JAY: What warning?

RABBIT: You're not from around here, are you?

JAY: I'm uh... new to the forest.

RABBIT: The skunks around here are very sensitive. Skunks as a species have sort of a bad reputation, you know?

JAY: Oh, I know.

RABBIT: The local skunks, they've done a lot of work to be accepted by the other animals. They even went so far as to make themselves into an army to keep away predators and humans. *Especially* humans.

JAY: A skunk army?

RABBIT: Yeah. The Skunk Commandos. They were established years ago by a skunk named Blight Eisenfouler. He was their first general, and the leadership has passed down through his family for generations. His great grandson, Blight Eisenfouler IV is the general now, and after him, the job goes to his daughter, Floral Eisenfouler. But she's still a kid, so unless the general gets sick or something, she won't be taking over for a while.

JAY: A skunk army... led by a family... of General Eisenfoulers?

RABBIT: If you're a skunk wandering through the forest stinking up the place and bothering the animals, the other skunks aren't going to take too kindly to that, and the Skunk Commandos are going to come after you.

JAY: And do what?

RABBIT: I don't know. But anybody they've ever had to deal with has never been heard from again, so I'm thinking it's probably something you'll want to avoid.

JAY: Um. Yeah. Listen. You haven't seen a toothbrush around here anywhere, have you?

RABBIT: Well, I— *(Pauses and thinks. When HE finally speaks, it's as if HE's hiding something.)* Um, what's a toothbrush?

JAY: You use it to clean your teeth.

RABBIT: I do?

JAY: I mean—humans. Humans use them to clean their teeth.

RABBIT: Oooh—a human thing! Humans are... uh, yeah. So. If you find this... toothbrush thing, what are you going to do with it?

JAY: Brush my teeth.

RABBIT: Why?

(Beat.)

JAY: *(not wanting to let on that HE's not supposed to be a skunk)*

It's something I've always wanted to try. Just one of those wacky human things. It might even help out with the breath.

Plus, it sounds like fun. Ever had a wacky human thing you wanted to try?

RABBIT: Uh...

JAY: I mean, maybe not, you know. You're a rabbit. You probably don't—

RABBIT: No, no. Sure. I know what you mean. Yeah.

JAY: Yeah?

RABBIT: Yeah. I've always wanted to try... um...

JAY: What?

RABBIT: Um... pushing a lawn mower!

JAY: Pushing—why?

RABBIT: Why? Um... well... um... have you ever seen a lawn mower?

JAY: Uh... have you?

RABBIT: Uh... well, there's this house... way over on the edge of the woods. And... yeah. They have a lawn mower. I go over there every week and I watch the human use it. Do you know what it does?

JAY: What?

RABBIT: It makes the grass shorter! It's so incredible!

JAY: Seriously?

RABBIT: Uh... yeah. Sure.

JAY: I just can't imagine any self-respecting person—I mean—animal—wanting to cut grass in a million years. Not that I've ever actually seen a lawn mower or used one or anything. Heh. But I've heard stories.

RABBIT: Oh. Uh... I probably don't have any self-respect, then.

JAY: No. No. I didn't mean—I wasn't trying to insult you or anything.

RABBIT: Oh, no. Of course not.

JAY: We all have our funny little urges, you know. You have lawn mowers. Me, I'm interested in toothbrushes.

RABBIT: Yeah. Sure. Everybody's got their little quirks.

JAY: So... um... have you seen anything around here that you think a human would use to clean their teeth?

RABBIT: Well, earlier today I saw this thing that was long and red
(*or whatever color the toothbrush costume actually is*) and made
out of that unnatural stuff that humans make everything out of...

JAY: Plastic?

RABBIT: Yeah! That! And it had stiff white hair things sticking off
the front of its head.

JAY: That's it! Where was it?

RABBIT: Real close to here. It was going that way. (*points
offstage*)

JAY: Thanks! (*runs offstage*)

RABBIT: (*yelling after JAY*) You know, you shouldn't run! If you get
out of breath, you'll just stink up the forest quicker!

(*GENERAL EISENFOULER, SPRIG and TUBER enter. There may
be additional SKUNK COMMANDOS as well.*)

EISENFOULER: Don't bother straining your voice, rabbit. He's not
gonna hear you.

RABBIT: General Eisenfouler!

SPRIG: That is one nasty smelling skunk.

TUBER: He doesn't really smell like skunk, though, Sprig... do you
think?

SPRIG: No, Tuber... it's just... almost like a human stink.

TUBER: Humans—yuck!

EISENFOULER: You don't think that it's a human disguised as a
skunk, do you?

RABBIT: Human? Heh. No. No humans here. He's definitely a
skunk. I got a good look at him up close. Definitely a skunk.
Definitely.

(*ROCKY, another SKUNK COMMANDO, enters.*)

ROCKY: General Eisenfouler!

EISENFOULER: What is it, Rocky?

ROCKY: A pair of foxes have been sighted in the forest!

EISENFOULER: Don't they know we're busy?

ROCKY: We've got danger on two fronts, General! What are we
going to do? We can't let the rogue skunk stink up the forest and
ruin the good name of skunkdom, but we can't let those foxes
run loose, either!

EISENFOULER: Don't go freaking out on me, Rocky.

ROCKY: I'm not sir, it's just that...

EISENFOULER: It's just that what? That you feel overwhelmed?
That nothing has gone right for you all week? That the world is

throwing everything it's got at you, to see if you'll break? It's a fact of life, my fellow skunks: No matter how bad things get, they can always get worse.

(Two FOXES enter behind GENERAL EISENFOULER and creep up behind him. RABBIT and the SKUNK COMMANDOS try to point out the danger, but EISENFOULER appears to ignore them.)

Rest assured that while you're so busy dealing with everything in front of you, something else will try to sneak up and attack you from behind.

(The FOXES attempt to pounce on GENERAL EISENFOULER, who takes a step forward out of their way. The FOXES collide, fall down, and immediately spring to their feet. Through the rest of his speech, GENERAL EISENFOULER effortlessly fights off the two FOXES without even looking at them. The fight should end with both FOXES unconscious.)

You have to be ready for the unexpected! Don't be surprised! Don't be blindsided! Don't be caught with your guard down! Not ever! You have to be confident! You have to have the strength... the resolve... the willpower... to see it through!

ROCKY: You just... you just... wow! That was amazing.

EISENFOULER: Now let's go deal with this skunk... or whatever he is... and remember, be ready for anything.

(EISENFOULER begins to exit, but trips over one of the FOXES, falls down, and knocks himself out. EVERYONE rushes over to HIM.)

SPRIG: General! General Eisenfouler! Are you okay?

TUBER: Is he okay?

SPRIG: That's what I just asked him, but I don't know, because he didn't answer me!

RABBIT: Is he breathing?

SPRIG: Yeah.

TUBER: He must've hit his head or something!

ROCKY: On what?

SPRIG: I don't know, but it must've been something. He's unconscious!

TUBER: What are we gonna do?

SPRIG: I don't know!

ROCKY: We have to deal with that skunk!

TUBER: We need General Eisenfouler to lead us!

SPRIG: But he can't!

ROCKY: The skunk commandos are nothing without an Eisenfouler!

(FLORAL EISENFLOWER enters. SHE is a very young skunk.)

FLORAL: Daddy?

ROCKY: Floral...

FLORAL: Daddy, come on. Get up. I wanna go watch the cars drive by on the road. I'll bet there's lots of red ones out today.

ROCKY: Floral, Daddy's hurt. But I'm sure it'll be okay.

FLORAL: Daddy's hurt?

ROCKY: But don't be scared okay? You're daddy's very strong.

FLORAL: *(exasperated)* Did he fall down and knock himself out AGAIN? He does this all the time at home! I'm so embarrassed!

SPRIG: He was probably distracted. He was focused very hard on capturing a dangerous animal and he just wasn't watching where he was going.

FLORAL: Daddy was doing his army work?

ROCKY: Yes, he was.

FLORAL: And now he can't?

ROCKY: Not right now. Not until he feels better. But everything will be okay. We'll figure out what to do somehow.

FLORAL: There's army work to do and daddy can't be the leader?

TUBER: It's okay, Floral. Don't be sad.

FLORAL: I get to be the general! Hooray!!!

ROCKY: But Floral, you're—

FLORAL: If daddy can't do it, then it's my job! That's how it works!

ROCKY: Floral, listen... you're just a little girl...

FLORAL: And now I'm the general! The youngest one ever!!!

ROCKY: Maybe just a little too young yet, Floral...

FLORAL: That's General Floral to you, private!

ROCKY: But... but...

SPRIG: Remember what the general said, Rocky. No matter how bad things get, they can always get worse.

ROCKY: *(indicating FLORAL)* And this is a solution?

SPRIG: No. This is worse.

FLORAL: Come on! Let's go!

SPRIG: Floral, we can't leave your dad here with these two foxes!

FLORAL: He can take care of himself.

SPRIG: He's unconscious!

FLORAL: He can still take care of himself. *(exits)*

SPRIG: *(calling after her)* Floral, listen—

TUBER: Oh no.

ROCKY: What do we do?

SPRIG: We go with her. It's what the general would want.

RABBIT: But the foxes?

SPRIG: I think they're out colder than the general. At least, I hope they are.

(FLORAL enters.)

FLORAL: Come on! To the skunk mobile! *(exits)*

RABBIT: To the what?

SPRIG: It's a car her dad made for her. She's really into cars.

RABBIT: Her dad made a car?

ROCKY: Really?

SPRIG: Sort of.

TUBER: That just doesn't seem right. Cars are so... human. Like... lawn mowers.

SPRIG: It's just a phase. She's little. She'll grow out of it. And the general's just being a dad.

ROCKY: We can use it to chase that skunk through the forest! We'll have this mess wrapped up in no time!

SPRIG: Not really, no.

ROCKY: No? What do you mean, no?

SPRIG: You'll see.

ROCKY: Things are gonna get worse now, aren't they?

SPRIG: Yup.

(SPRIG, ROCKY, TUBER and RABBIT exit. EISENFOULER sits up cheerily.)

EISENFOULER: That's my little girl. Gotta start getting her ready to take over for me, and seeing as how this isn't anything dangerous, it should be a perfect first job for her.

(Addressing the two unconscious FOXES, who he begins to drag offstage.)

Just between you and me, though... the stuff she said about me knocking myself out at home all the time... I only pretend to do that when I'm trying to get out of helping her mom clean.

(EISENFOULER exits with the FOXES. The TOOTHBRUSH enters, looks around, and then runs offstage. JAY enters and chases after the TOOTHBRUSH. FLORAL and the SKUNK COMMANDOS enter. FLORAL is riding in a ridiculous-looking, skunk-themed, homemade

“car” that is being pushed by the SKUNK COMMANDOS. RABBIT is with THEM.)

FLORAL: Faster! Go faster! He’s going to get away from us! Come on, guys. This is pathetic! You’re embarrassing me here!

(The SKUNK COMMONDOS push FLORAL and the car offstage. RABBIT exits with THEM. The TOOTHBRUSH enters and exits. JAY enters, breathing heavily, and then exits. RABBIT enters with the SKUNK COMMANDOS, who are still pushing FLORAL in the car.)

My dad could push this thing faster than you, and there’s only one of him and he’s unconscious!

(RABBIT, FLORAL, and the SKUNK COMMANDOS exit. The TOOTHBRUSH enters. IT is about to run offstage when JAY enters and grabs IT.)

JAY: Hah! I got you!

TOOTHBRUSH: No! Let go! You stink! Get away!

JAY: You ran out on me!

TOOTHBRUSH: What was I supposed to do? You smell awful!

JAY: I needed you!

TOOTHBRUSH: I have rights!

JAY: You’re a toothbrush! You don’t have any rights! Now help me clean my teeth!

TOOTHBRUSH: No toothbrush should have to go through what you’re asking me to do!

JAY: I wasn’t asking!

TOOTHBRUSH: Will you let go of me?

JAY: Are you going to run away again?

TOOTHBRUSH: Of course I’m going to run away again!

JAY: Then how am I supposed to get my mouth clean?

TOOTHBRUSH: Go buy a new mouth! Go to the doctor and get a mouth transplant!

JAY: Are you crazy? My parents’ insurance would never cover that!

TOOTHBRUSH: Well, you should’ve considered that before you stopped brushing your teeth and your mouth turned into a toxic death trap!

JAY: I never thought I would actually turn into a skunk!

TOOTHBRUSH: You should’ve listened to your mother!

JAY: That’s what everybody keeps telling me!

(RABBIT, FLORAL, and the SKUNK COMMANDOS enter. FLORAL is still being pushed in the skunk mobile. The COMMANDOS are out of breath.)

FLORAL: Stop... in the name of skunk!

EVERYONE EXCEPT FLORAL: *(looking bewildered by her proclamation)* Huh? What? Did she really just say that?

FLORAL: *(indicating JAY as SHE climbs out of the skunk mobile)*
He's the one, right?

SKUNK COMMANDOS: Yeah. Him. That's the skunk.

RABBIT: Give up! For your own good! Surrender!

JAY: Are these the Skunk Commandos?

RABBIT: Uh-huh.

JAY: And are you... General Eisenfouler? For some reason I thought you'd be older.

FLORAL: Dad's sick. I'm filling in.

JAY: Oh. I hope he's okay.

FLORAL: Thanks.

TOOTHBRUSH: Would somebody please help me out here?

FLORAL: Let that... that... what is that?

RABBIT: I think it's called a toothbrush.

FLORAL: Let that toothbrush go!

JAY: But... but...

FLORAL: Let it go.

JAY: Aw... *(JAY lets go of the TOOTHBRUSH)*

TOOTHBRUSH: Thank you. Thank you so, so much.

FLORAL: You're welcome.

TOOTHBRUSH: Can I go now?

FLORAL: Sure.

TOOTHBRUSH: Thanks.

(TOOTHBRUSH exits. FLORAL crosses to JAY.)

FLORAL: Wow. Your breath smells really bad.

JAY: I know.

FLORAL: Now, what are we going to do with you?

JAY: *(scared)* What are you going to do with me?

FLORAL: Punish you. *(to the SKUNK COMMANDOS)* We need to punish him, right?

SKUNK COMMANDOS: Yup. Uh-huh. That's right.

(FLORAL looks at JAY, then at the SKUNK COMMANDOS, then back to JAY. SHE hasn't a clue what SHE should do now.)

FLORAL: Okay. I'm open to ideas. What seems fair to you guys?

ROCKY: You're the boss.

RABBIT: If you were in his place, how would your dad punish you?

FLORAL: *(thinks for a moment)* Right. Thanks. I got this.

(FLORAL marches up to JAY and jabs a pointing finger into his chest repeatedly.)

You are a bad, bad, bad, bad skunk! You should be ashamed of yourself! Now say you're sorry!

JAY: I'm sorry.

FLORAL: Good. Now think about what you've done, and don't ever do it again!

(Crosses back to the SKUNK COMMANDOS and gets in the skunk mobile, which the SKUNK COMMANDOS begin to push offstage.)

What did he do, anyway?

(FLORAL, RABBIT, and the SKUNK COMMANDOS exit.)

JAY: Aaugh! What am I gonna do now? I can't go home because I'm a skunk! I can't stay in the forest because I'm stinking the place up! I can't brush my teeth because the Skunk Commandos won't let me! You were wrong, Craig! This is it! I'm at the bottom of the barrel! There is no possible way things can get any worse than they are right now!

(GENERAL EISENFOULER enters and marches up to JAY.)

EISENFOULER: You.

JAY: Who? Me?

EISENFOULER: You.

JAY: Who're you?

EISENFOULER: My daughter let you off easy for some reason. I was figuring she'd tie you to a tree, stuff your mouth full of pinecones, and shave the word "stinky" onto your belly with a dead fish. But she didn't, so I guess it's up to me to finish this. I'll bet you think you smell pretty bad, don't you?

JAY: That's what everybody keeps telling me.

EISENFOULER: Well, let me tell you something. You don't know stink. You have no idea what stink is. You've never met stink. But he's a good friend of mine, and I will personally introduce you to him unless you get yourself out of my woods in the next

hour. There's a reason my name is Eisenfouler, and I will spray you so hard your ears will water. Got it?

JAY: Uh-huh.

EISENFOULER: Good. *(exits)*

JAY: *(crying out to no one in particular)* Nobody likes a know-it-all, Craig!

(RABBIT enters.)

RABBIT: You okay?

JAY: No, I'm not okay.

RABBIT: Bummer.

JAY: I just met General Eisenfouler. The grown-up version.

RABBIT: Bummer.

JAY: I have to get out of the forest or he's going to make me smell even worse.

RABBIT: Big bummer.

JAY: So I'm gonna go. Where, I have no idea. Thanks, though. You know, for helping me out. Making that suggestion to the general's daughter.

RABBIT: You're welcome. I'm Woody *(or FERN if female)*, by the way.

JAY: Hey, my dad was working with somebody named Woody. He was talking about him at dinner and he said he...

RABBIT: Does your dad manage a grocery store?

(Both JAY and the RABBIT slap their paws over their mouths, realizing THEY've said more than THEY meant to. Then it registers with each what the other has said.)

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