

The GREAT RACE

By Val R. Cheatham

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SYNOPSIS

It's one of the last days of summer and the morning starts normally for our forest friends. The ants are busy working, the bear wants to stop forest fires, and the grasshopper is doing his usual loafing. Meanwhile the fox, who is flat broke, is picking up a few dollars from the mice Stanley and Oliver by advising them to solve their cat problem by belling him. But when the sly fox learns the Great Race between the tortoise and the hare is about to take place, he devises a scheme to enter the crowd and turn his few dollars into big winnings. Chicken, who thinks the sky is going to fall, is recruited by the fox to help in the charade. Lion supervises the important race with owls to advise. This one-act play with flexible casting is sure to keep young audiences enthralled.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(Flexible cast of 16 or more)

FOX: Sly and crafty; tries to fix the race.

CROW: Brags about self and predicts winning with poems.

CHICKEN: Timid. Afraid the sky will fall.

HARE: Speedy, but awkward and jerky with misspent energy.

STANLEY MOUSE: Wants to bell the cat.

OLIVER MOUSE: Also wants to bell the cat.

BEAR: Wants to be on television and promote fire prevention, carries sign.

GRASSHOPPER: Lazy, but into muuuuuusic.

CAT: Puts bell to good use.

TORTOISE: Slow but sure.

LION: King or Queen of the forest.

1ST OWL: Advisor to the King.

2ND OWL: Also advisor to King.

ANTS: (3 to many) Hard workers and they believe everyone should be as well.

PROPERTIES

Cardboard transistor radio (or updated technology)
Small bundles for Ants
Large sign: "Only you can prevent forest fires"
Envelope with simulated money
Jingling bell on long, colorful strap
Parasol or umbrella
Coin
Simulated money
Poles with "Start" and "Finish" signs attached

COSTUMES

Fox: tail, greased hair with sideburns, leather jacket, cuffed jeans, loafers, white socks.
Crow: black clothes with a sequined shirt and long fringe attached to the sleeves.
Chicken: (if female) carries parasol, poodle skirt, white blouse, bobby socks, saddle shoes, yellow rubber gloves on hands.
Grasshopper: jeans, white t-shirt, open vest and top hat with pipe cleaners attached for antennnas.
Cat: a white, sequined jumpsuit with a tail and ears.
Owls: large, round glasses and fringe wings like the Crow.
Lion: tail and crown.
Stanley and Oliver: suits and ties, derby hats with mouse ears attached.
Tortoise: shell of two large cardboard ovals attached to the sides with spaces for head and feet.
Bear: brown smock and a Smokey Bear hat
Ants: can be portrayed as workers: doctor, farmer, policeman, builder - hard hats, stethoscopes, etc. The one thing alike on each is pipe cleaner antennnas.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: A forest with stump DSC. GRASSHOPPER is sprawled lazily to one side, a transistor radio (or updated technology) held to his ear. He periodically raises a hand and snaps fingers to the MUSIC he hears. ANTS enter in single file, each carrying a small bundle in one arm while the other arm rests on the shoulder in front. They use short, quick steps to move briskly around stage.)

1ST ANT: Hey, that was some picnic!

2ND ANT: Right, and many tasty things lying around to eat.

3RD ANT: Let's hurry back to the YMCA and get these stored for winter.

1ST ANT: Then we can come back and get more.

2ND ANT: Look!

(THEY all stop by bumping into the ANT in front.)

2ND ANT: *(Cont'd.)* That lazy Grasshopper spends his whole day lying around--

3RD ANT: --Just listening to that rocking radio!

GRASSHOPPER: Heyyyyy. I'm not a "Lazy Grasshopper." I'm a be-bop hopper. I'm into muuuuuusic!

2ND ANT: But winter is coming. It will soon be very cold.

GRASSHOPPER: Don't bug me, bug. Just give a listen to my muuuuuusic.

3RD ANT: No! We must store food for winter. What will you eat when snow covers the ground?

GRASSHOPPER: Eat? Heyyyy, I don't need to eat. I got my muuuuuusic.

1ST ANT: Music won't help. If you want to get ahead in this world, you gotta work, work, work!

GRASSHOPPER: Yeah, yeah ... I dig your rhythm, but your lyrics are nowhere, ya hear? Nowhere.

2ND ANT: Come, we're wasting time.

3RD ANT: Right, wasting time.

1ST ANT: And ants...

2ND ANT: ...never waste anything...

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3RD ANT: ...especially time.

(ANTS exit in a hurried, winding, single line. FOX enters.)

FOX: What a rotten, crummy forest! Me, the fox, the coolest and craftiest of all the inhabitants, and I'm flat broke! *(Sits on stump.)*

(BEAR enters carrying a "Only you can prevent forest fires" sign. Moves to CS and points to audience.)

BEAR: Only you can prevent ... ah ... Only you can prevent ... ahhhhhh, prevent ... ahhhhh—

FOX: *(Without looking up.)* Forest fires.

BEAR: Forest fires! Forest fires! If I can learn to get that right, I can be on television! *(Mumbles as exits.)* Forest fires ... forest fires ... forest fires ...

FOX: I don't need much money. Just a few, green bills would get me a start.

(CROW enters jogging in a smooth, but strutting aerobics, shadow boxing, and with each jab he utters a barely audible "pow!")

CROW: Oh, I am the best! I am number one! *(Stops CS.)* I have a poem:

I am the greatest;

I sting like a bee.

I move like a butterfly.

Look out for me!

FOX: Yeah, yeah. Take another lap.

CROW: *(Jogging toward exit.)* Oh, I am the best! I am number one! *(Exits.)*

FOX: Surely there is a way I can get my hands -- er, paws, on some good, hard cash.

GRASSHOPPER: *(Still lounging.)* Heyyyy, man. Forget about money. Get yourself into *muuuuusic*.

FOX: Music! I don't want music. I want that green stuff that folds and crinkles and makes life much easier.

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(OLIVER MOUSE enters with STANLEY MOUSE who is timidly hiding behind him.)

OLIVER MOUSE: Come along, Stanley, there is Mr. Fox right over there.

STANLEY MOUSE: But, Ollie, suppose the cat comes and sees us?

OLIVER MOUSE: The cat is way down by the barn and we are just going over there to see Mr. Fox. We must tarry no longer.

(OLIVER pushes STANLEY on ahead toward FOX. Stanley moves hesitatingly with Oliver still pushing. As they pass the reclining GRASSHOPPER, he shifts position, and Stanley jumps into Oliver's arms.)

STANLEY MOUSE: It's the cat!

OLIVER MOUSE: *(Dropping HIM.)* Don't do that, Stanley. That's not the cat. That's just a grasshopper.

GRASSHOPPER: Heyyyyy, man, I'm not, "Just a grasshopper." I'm a be-bop hopper. I'm into muuuuuusic.

STANLEY MOUSE: Oh, hi ...

OLIVER MOUSE: *(Pulls STANLEY along.)* Pay no attention to him, Stanley. We're here to talk to Mr. Fox. Oh, Mr. Fox

FOX: *(Without looking up.)* Yeah, I'm the Fox. So, what's the squeak, mouse?

OLIVER MOUSE: We're from the Mice Preservation Society. They sent us here because you told them you had a solution to our problem.

FOX: And ...?

STANLEY MOUSE: Our problem is the cat.

FOX: And ...?

OLIVER MOUSE: Oh, yes. *(Nudges STANLEY.)* The envelope. Give me the envelope.

(STANLEY looks in all his pockets before finding the envelope under his hat. OLIVER snatches the envelope with impatience and hands it to FOX.)

End of Freeview

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