

THE LAST TICKET OUT OF THISTLEBERRY THICKET

by Tyler J. Rinne

## Cast of Characters

<u>CURTIS J. MAGPIE:</u>	(M) The not-so humble narrator.
<u>BRIXBY BEE:</u>	(E) A sweet and sassy bumblebee kid.
<u>PUNKIN:</u>	(E) A cute and excitable young garden sprite.
<u>HOP-ALONG ROY:</u>	(M) A young toad that's always overeating.
<u>EMELINE:</u>	(F) Strong-willed and good-humored garden sprite.
<u>MAYOR FLUSTER D. BLUSTERBUCK:</u>	(M) Emeline's constantly-fretting father.
<u>SHERMY SNAIL:</u>	(M) Forgetful but proud mailman.
<u>FOGGY FROGGY FREEMAN:</u>	(M) Cantankerous but caring old frog.
<u>LITTLE TOBIAS TURTLE:</u>	(M) Sweet and slow-moving young turtle.
<u>OSGOOD FRUITS-PICKLE:</u>	(M) Dimwitted but sincere garden sprite.
<u>REVA HEDGEHOG:</u>	(F) Loud, pugnacious and prickly hedgehog.
<u>MS. SPARROW:</u>	(F) Tradition-loving old bird.
<u>DELORES MOUSY:</u>	(F) Member of the Community Committee.
<u>MAXINE MOUSY:</u>	(F) Member of the Community Committee.
<u>BRUNILDA BADGER:</u>	(F) Literally and figuratively short-sighted.
<u>THE THISTLEBERRY THICKET ONE-MAN CRICKET BAND:</u>	(E) Eager but underappreciated music man.
<u>OFELIA FRUITS-PICKLE:</u>	(F) Authoritative mother to Osgood and Cindy-Lou.
<u>CHEEKY CHIPMUNK:</u>	(E) Kind but cowardly chipmunk.
<u>LAWRENCE LIGHTNING BUG:</u>	(M) Entrepreneur with a glowing behind.

<u>FLORENCE FIREFLY:</u>	(F) Another entrepreneur with a lighted backside.
<u>FLAPPY:</u>	(E) A garden sprite.
<u>HUGH:</u>	(M) Impressionable garden sprite.
<u>MRS. MALLORY MALLARD:</u>	(F) A duck that always gets water up her nose.
<u>CINDY-LOU FRUITS-PICKLE:</u>	(F) Purple-loving, drama-desiring sister to Osgood.
<u>SALLY SALAMANDER:</u>	(F) Best friend to Cindy-Lou.
<u>AMANDA SALAMANDER:</u>	(F) Best friend to Cindy-Lou, too.
<u>PJ 'POSSUM:</u>	(E) Prone to play dead; a kid.
<u>HARRIET VOLE:</u>	(F) Best friend to Emeline, traditional and sweet.
<u>BARTY BATWING:</u>	(M) Harriet's beau, an excitable bat.
<u>MS. CINNAMONS:</u>	(F) Caring and wise squirrel schoolteacher.
<u>HAMMY HUMMINGBIRD:</u>	(E) Quick-moving and quick-witted child.
<u>BENNY BEETLE:</u>	(M) Stronger than he looks; brother to Betty.
<u>BETTY BEETLE:</u>	(F) Stronger than she looks; sister to Benny.

Place

Thistleberry Thicket, an overgrown garden.

Time

The Eve of the Harvest Festival, autumn.

ACT I – Scene 1  
“The Train Comes to Thistleberry Thicket”

(It is the night before the rise of the Harvest Moon in Thistleberry Thicket, an overgrown garden in the middle of the country. A cool breeze rustles the reeds and thistles that stand tall to the tiny populace. The night is bright, but something looms dark at its center—a strange rectangle that stands out obelisk-like among nature’s curves and bends.

To the side, a black bird bedazzled by bits n’ bobs flutters in. He twirls a cane and tips his hat to the audience, giving a wry smile. His name is CURTIS J. MAGPIE.)

CURTIS

The moon’s gone fat and bright tonight. He’s stuffed himself all summer long, and now he’s ready to shine cool and golden on tomorrow’s harvest. But before then, he’s got other things to show you and me and everyone in Thistleberry Thicket. The critters and creatures that live there might be small, but big things are about to happen. Let’s take a look. But be real quiet—someone’s coming!

(CURTIS bows out as giggles flutter in, chased quickly on by three children: BRIXBY, a bee; PUNKIN, a red-headed garden sprite; and HOP-ALONG ROY, a toad.)

BRIXBY

C’mon, you slowpokes! We’ve got to do it tonight or never. This whole place’ll be buzzing with activity as soon as the sun comes up!

HOP-ALONG ROY

Slow down, you two! Mother made dragonfly soufflé for dinner and—urp!—I’ve got slosh-belly!

PUNKIN

I can’t wait for tomorrow night!

BRIXBY

And neither can our buried treasure! Get to lookin’, you two!

PUNKIN

Father said I could stay up all night for the whole Harvest Festival this season! We even got invited to the wedding!

BRIXBY

We're all invited to the wedding. Everybody in the Thicket will be there. Big deal.

PUNKIN

There'll be blackberry jam and fried apple fritters and—

HOP-ALONG ROY

Oof...don't talk about food. Please.

BRIXBY

Howzabout we don't talk at all since we're all supposed to be in bed right now?

PUNKIN

Bed? Bed! Father said I could stay out all night tomorrow only if I got plenty of sleep tonight! I've gotta' go home, Brixby!

BRIXBY

Not until we find the treasure! Can you imagine how much Good Luck we can split between us if we find The Lost Lucky Penny?

PUNKIN

When we find it, I'm giving my share to the bride n' groom as a wedding present. A happy nuptial at the Harvest Festival means Good Luck for Thistleberry Thicket for four whole seasons!

HOP-ALONG ROY

(Bent over, hands on his knees.)

Hoo!

BRIXBY

(Rushing over.)

Did you find something, Roy?

PUNKIN

Is it the painted pebble that marks the buried treasure?!

HOP-ALONG ROY

Hoo! Hoo-boy! I think I'm gonna be sick...

(BRIXBY goes back to looking as PUNKIN helps HOP-ALONG ROY sit down on a rock. A sound comes from far-away.)

EMELINE

(Off.)

Hoo!

BRIXBY

(Not looking up from his search.)

Give it a rest, will you?

EMELINE

(Off.)

Hoo!

HOP-ALONG ROY

I didn't—urp—say anything.

EMELINE

(Off.)

Hoo-hoo-hoo!

(All three children look up, wide-eyed and scared.)

PUNKIN

Is that...?

(BRIXBY notices that he is standing in the shadow of the rectangle.)

BRIXBY

(Frightened.)

The—the—the shadow that covers the moon!

PUNKIN

And the hoot that shatters the silence!

BRIXBY

Roy, you called her with your hoo-hoo-hooing!

EMELINE

(Off.)

HOO-HOO-HOO!

BRIXBY, PUNKIN & ROY

It's the Whirlybird Owl!

(The children run off. Silence. Then a rustling, growing closer.)

EMELINE

(Off.)

Hoo! Hoo-hoo! Boo-hoo-hoo!

(EMELINE, a young garden sprite in nightgown and slippers, bursts into the clearing. She covers her face, crying. She falls to her knees and, eventually, wipes her tears with the backs of her hands, sniffing. She cracks a self-deprecating smile.)

My hay fever must be worse than I thought.

(EMELINE stands, dusts off her nightgown, and notices the big rectangle behind her. Unlike the children, she is not scared.)

What's this, now? Has the wedding tent been erected already? Surely my father isn't in such a hurry to marry me off?

(EMELINE puts a hand on the rectangle.)

No...no, it's not a tent at all. It's smooth and flat and quite unlike anything we've ever had in Thistleberry Thicket. But I just can't *see* it...If only the moon would scoot over, I'd have enough light...or if there were a few less branches on The Old Oak Tree...or if the breeze would pick up just enough to blow them out of each other's way...

(There is a whistling of wind. Light is cast over the Thicket.)

That will do nicely, thank you!

(The rectangle is a discarded postcard depicting a red and green train racing across the plains. "To See the WORLD, all you need is a TICKET!" it reads. EMELINE gasps, then puts a hand on the train. She snuffles, leans against the card.)

Oh, there go my allergies again.

(The twinkling wind and the moon's light fade.)

MAYOR

(Off.)

Emeline! Emeline!

(MAYOR FLUSTER D. BLUSTERBUCK stomps onstage. He too is nightgowned and slippared. He wears an ever-present top hat.)

Emeline! Emeline, dear, where *are* you?

(Pacing.)

Oh, what more could go wrong? The Thistleberry Thicket One-Man Cricket Band is demanding more than we can afford to pay! The berries are higher and harder to harvest than ever before! I've come down with my usual spat of indigestion and, to top it all off, tomorrow's bride is nowhere to be found tonight!

EMELINE

(Stepping out of the shadows.)

Never mind that the bride is your daughter...

MAYOR

(Hugging her.)

Emeline! Emeline, dear, you gave me quite a fright! Osgood's mother stopped by the house just now. She was tossing and turning and unable to sleep because she couldn't make up her mind if the linens for the wedding should be marigold or daffodil or cheep-cheep yellow.

(The MAYOR pats himself all over, trying to find the sample swatches to show EMELINE. She removes his hat and pulls the swatches out of it.)

Thank you, my dear. As I was saying: Osgood's mother, insomnia-inspired, wants your linen opinion.

EMELINE

No she doesn't.

MAYOR

Certainly she does, she came right over to—

EMELINE

Oh, alright then. Which is which?

MAYOR

(Cycling through the swatches.)

This'll be the marigold and this'll be the daffodil and, then again, perhaps this is the daffodil and this is the marigold and any one of these could be cheep-cheep yellow, and—

EMELINE

(Replacing her father's cap.)

Father, any one'll do.

MAYOR

Yes, yes, any one will do. But, alas, it is my decision to make. Such is the lot of the mayor—everyone depends on you for this and that and every little thing. We'll go with marigold. I quite fancy it, don't you?

(The MAYOR holds up a swatch for EMELINE to see. She hugs herself and gives him a sad smile.)

Marigold it is, then.

(He turns to go, stops.)



MAYOR (cont'd)

Is anything wrong, my dear? It is my duty, in my capacity as the mayor, to account for the bride's happiness in this special time. Not to mention my, ah, prerogatives as the father of the bride?

EMELINE

No, father. Nothing's wrong. Nothing at all.

MAYOR

Good. Can't say I don't have enough things to worry about without a runaway bride on my hands, much less an unhappy daughter! Good night dear, good night.

(He goes to leave.)

Nice to see that the wedding tent is up already. One less thing to worry about tomorrow.

(Another breeze blows through, whisking the MAYOR'S top hat off and sending it tumbling against the huge postcard, which is once again illuminated by moonlight.)

Dear me, my hat!

(Seeing the postcard.)

And dear me, what is that?!

EMELINE

(Picking up the hat.)

Isn't it wonderful, father?

MAYOR

What a thing! What a grotesque! What an abomination! My dear, this must be the worst Omen of Bad Luck that I've ever seen in my tenure as mayor of Thistleberry Thicket! What'll it bring? A drought? A flood? Another bout of tourist locusts?

(Clutching his stomach.)

Oof, it's certainly bringing me a tummy ache!

EMELINE

Father!

(A beat.)

What if it's not Bad Luck?

MAYOR

Not...not Bad Luck? But what else could it—?

EMELINE

What if it's Good Luck?

MAYOR

Good Luck? With a capital "G" and a capital "L"?

EMELINE

What if it's so much Good Luck that it'll tide us over for four whole seasons? That it staves off the frost until the berry harvest is finished, or that not a single Chipmunk child gets stuck in the highest branches of the Old Oak Tree?

MAYOR

(Mumbling.)

A minor miracle, that would be...

EMELINE

So much Good Luck, father, that we wouldn't even need to have a wedding at the Harvest Festival this season?

MAYOR

(Lost in thought.)

What if? What if, indeed?

(Snapping out of it.)

Not have a wedding?! Giant Gardeners, Emeline, have you gone peach-pit mad?

EMELINE

Just imagine presenting this...this gleaming, shining, opalescent majesty at tomorrow's Festival instead of giving away me, your only child, your only daughter, to that boring, dreary, dopey-eyed Osgood Fruits-Pickle?

MAYOR

The Fruits-Pickles are a fine family and their portion of the berry harvest accounts for nearly half—

EMELINE

Yes, the Fruits-Pickles are fine, but they're not exciting...

MAYOR

Ha! Certainly not! And what a stroke of Good Luck that is!

EMELINE

(Looking down her nose.)

You know I don't feel that way.

(The MAYOR regards his daughter, sighs, and sits on a pebble, taking off his hat and dabbing his forehead with a swatch.)

MAYOR

Yes, Emeline, I know. I know.

EMELINE

Must I get married tomorrow? I don't want to stay here forever, and certainly not with Osgood Fruits-Pickle. I want to see things like that.

(She points at the postcard.)

I want to go Beyond the Wood.

(A beat. The MAYOR places his hat on EMELINE'S head.)

MAYOR

My predecessor gave me that hat on the day he...on the day I became mayor of Thistleberry Thicket. Whoever wears it makes all of the decisions in this little garden.

EMELINE

(Striking the hat from her head.)

I don't want to be mayor! Have you been listening to—?

MAYOR

It's symbolic! I'm being symbolic! Put it back on.

(Cautiously, she does.)

What I'm trying to say, Emeline, is that I leave this next decision up to *you*, as you're currently serving as mayor-for-a-millisecond. We can present this...this...

EMELINE

I think it's called a postcard.

MAYOR

...This postcard at tomorrow morning's Opening Ceremony. But! If it does not go over well, as I anticipate it will not, you, young lady, will marry that boring, dreary...

EMELINE:

Dopey-eyed.

MAYOR

...Dopey-eyed Osgood Fruits-Pickle with nary a glance to the Wood nor the World Beyond it, and nary a pip nor a peep of protest leading up to, during, or after your wedding.

EMELINE

But if the presentation does go well and everyone loves my postcard and sees it for the capital “G,” capital “L” Good Luck that it is?

MAYOR

Then I will consult with the Thistleberry Thicket Community Committee and Osgood’s dear mother about whether or not they would even consider postponing the wedding...indefinitely.

(EMELINE nearly bowls the MAYOR over with a hug.)

MAYOR

Then I assume your mayoral decision is...?

EMELINE

Yes, father! I agree, I agree!

(She springs to her feet and paces, mimicking her father.)

I agree to your proposition and look forward with relish to its resolution, my dear! With relish!

MAYOR

(Slapping his knees, getting up.)

Well alright then. Hat back.

(He extends a hand. EMELINE holds the hat out to him, but snatches it back before he can grab it.)

MAYOR

Now give that back, Emeline! This isn’t funny!

(The MAYOR chases his giggling daughter out of the clearing.)

EMELINE

(Off, mimicking her father.)

This hat is an heirloom and an official article of, ah, community clothing or what-have-you...

MAYOR

(Off.)

Stop that, young lady, or you’ll wake up the entire Thicket!

(Beat.)

Do I really sound like that?

(The clearing, for another moment, is still and silent. A shadow passes overhead. This time, it is swift and sharp, and is accompanied by a piercing “Hoot-Hoot!” that the children and, indeed, the entire village of Thistleberry Thicket fears to hear.)

ACT I – Scene 2  
“A Presentation of Big Bad Luck”

(The next morning. The postcard has been covered by a patchwork quilt. EMELINE stands on a nearby platform, rehearsing her presentation and twiddling a string that will drop the sheet. SHERMY SNAIL, the postman, oozes on.)

SHERMY

Good morning, Emeline! You’re up early!

EMELINE

Big days only get bigger if you start them early!

SHERMY

And today is the big day! The day of the Harvest Festival and of your wedding to Mr. Osgood Fruits-Pickle! The biggest holiday of...wait a minute...today’s a holiday.

(He regards the mailbag strapped to his shell.)

I shouldn’t be working today, should I? Shermly Snail, you’d lose your shell if it weren’t attached!

(He suddenly thinks that he’s lost his shell, feels for it, finds it, sighs.)

Phew.

(FOGGY FROGGY FREEMAN, an old codger, hops on in.)

FOGGY

There you are, postman! I’ve been sittin’ out on my porch for the better part of an hour waiting for my letter! ‘Morning, Emeline.

EMELINE

(Straightening the postcard cover.)

‘Morning, Foggy.

SHERMY

I move as fast as I’m able, plain and simple. And you’ll get your letter just like you always do: when I get to it.

FOGGY

(Beat.)

Can you get to it now?

SHERMY

(He hands FOGGY a letter.)

One letter, addressed to one Foggy Froggy Freeman. Return address: Mr. A. Nonny Mouse. Say, what kind of middle name is “Nonny,” anyhow? And what does that “A” stand for?

FOGGY

Write to ‘im yourself and maybe he’ll tell ya.

(Enter LITTLE TOBIAS TURTLE, moving as slow as the other two.)

TOBIAS

I’ll take my package please, Mr. Shermmy!

SHERMY

Tobias! Salt my stalks, you scared me half out of my shell!

FOGGY

(Exiting.)

Youth today...they just can’t wait for nothin’...

TOBIAS

(Taking a package from SHERMY.)

Oh boy! Maple-Berry Fudge from Auntie Tina Turtle, sent over from Heatherfeather Hedge!

FOGGY

(Still exiting.)

Greedy, every last one of ‘em!

TOBIAS

(Calling.)

You’re welcome to have some if you like, Mr. Foggy!

FOGGY

(Turning back.)

‘Course, some of ‘em ain’t half bad...

(FOGGY follows TOBIAS off and SHERMY continues his route.)

SHERMY

Take care now, Emeline! Can’t wait for the wedding!

EMELINE

(Through a forced smile, to herself.)

You’re gonna have to!

(CURTIS J. MAGPIE enters. More residents of the Thicket filter in, going about their morning activities.)

CURTIS

(To the audience.)

And so bein's another morning in Thistleberry Thicket. Oh, if these folks had any idea what kind of trouble was a-brewin', they'd lock their doors, batten down the hatches, and hide under their corn-cob beds!

(The residents start to notice the quilt-covered postcard. A crowd grows until it is comprised of nearly the entire town, including CHEEKY CHIPMUNK, MRS. MALLORY MALLARD, LAWRENCE LIGHTNING BUG, FLORENCE FIREFLY, two garden sprites named FLAPPY and HUGH, and a few children: PJ 'POSSUM and HAMMY HUMMINGBIRD, among others.)

Lanky and stooped in his corduroy overalls, eating bread and jelly, OSGOOD FRUITS-PICKLE wanders in. He spots EMELINE on the dais and shambles up to her. CURTIS exits.)

OSGOOD

Good morning, Emeline.

EMELINE

Good morning!

(Realizing it is OSGOOD.)

...Osgood.

OSGOOD

I know the groom ain't supposed to see his bride before the wedding, but I think that only counts if she's wearing her wedding dress.

(He looks her over.)

That ain't your wedding dress, is it?

(EMELINE ignores him.)

Heh. Of course it ain't. Anyhow, I brought you some jam n' bread. Made with fresh berries off the family farm. Well, the jam is made with the fresh berries; not the bread. And the berries were fresh last season when we made the jam. And we haven't harvested any berries this season since the harvest won't begin until after the...you know...

EMELINE

I know, Osgood.

OSGOOD

Right. Well, I'll see you at our wedding, then.

(He starts to go, nods to the hubbub that has built up.)

Say, Emeline, what is all this?

(The MAYOR dashes in; he is being badgered from all sides, and not just by badgers. REVA HEDGEHOG, MS. SPARROW, DELORES and MAXINE MOUSY, and BRUNILDA BADGER gripe at him.)

REVA

This is unprecedented, Mayor Blusterbuck!

MS. SPARROW

Subverting the plans of the Thistleberry Thicket Community Committee...

DELORES

Subterfuge 'tis what it is!

BRUNILDA

Not so subtle, in my opinion, Delores...

DELORES

Subterfuge, Brunilda, subterfuge. "Deceit used in order to..."

MAXINE

Unsubtle subterfuge susceptible to subversion, I say!

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

So say we!

MAYOR

You don't say... Ladies, I can appreciate your concern, but—

DELORES

Our appreciation of you is depreciating!

MAXINE

And concerning your lack of concern...

DELORES

It's disconcerting!

REVA

Mayor Blusterbuck, it was agreed upon that the Opening Ceremony entertainment, like always, would be the Thistleberry Thicket One-Man Cricket Band...

(The CRICKET enters, happy and excited to play.)

MAYOR

I'm afraid plans have changed, Reva...

(CRICKET exits, sad and dejected.)

...Per an agreement with the Festival's blushing bride and, ah, my *daughter*, a new entertainment will be presented, presently.

(OFELIA FRUITS-PICKLE, the mother of the groom, enters, followed by her purple-clad daughter, CINDY-LOU.)



OFELIA

Fluster, there you are! I waited for you so long last night that I fell asleep on your settee, but when I awoke this morning you were nowhere to be found, and I'm sure I needn't remind you how important it is that we decide between marigold...

(She notices the crowd.)

...and daffodil...

(She notices the postcard.)

...and cheep cheep...yellow? Fluster D. Blusterbuck, what is going on here?!

REVA

Just what we've been asking, Ofelia!

OFELIA

This is not the décor we agreed upon...is it?

CINDY-LOU

It's certainly not how I'll decorate for my wedding, mother. If I ever have one.

(CINDY-LOU'S friends, SALLY and AMANDA SALAMANDER, console her.)

OFELIA

And I daresay that this thing looks a might bit flat for a wedding tent. Why am I not hearing music? Where is the Thistleberry Thicket One-Man Cricket Band?

(CRICKET enters again, hearing his name.)

MAYOR

I've, ah, given him the day off, Ofelia...indefinitely.

(CRICKET exits again, shaking his head.)

OFELIA

(Taking the MAYOR aside.)

I can understand the...peculiarities of being a bride, Fluster, but don't you think that this is taking it a smidge too far? The Harvest Festival...it's something that Thistleberry Thicket looks forward to for four seasons!

MAYOR

I know that!

OFELIA

And they look forward to it because they know what to look forward to. Because it is the same, season after season after season!

(OFELIA turns to the crowd, shouts.)

Cheeky Chipmunk, what is your favorite part of the Harvest Festival?

CHEEKY

I love the firefly fireworks show!

LAWRENCE

(Tapping CHEEKY'S shoulder.)

Ahem, we prefer "Lightning Bug Lighted Skies."

FLORENCE

We're rebranding! Isn't that exciting?

OFELIA

Flappy and Hugh, what about you?

FLAPPY

Bobbing for berries!

MALLORY

I always get water up my nose! But it's still fun!

HUGH

Bee darts!

BRIXBY

A bullseye wins a free jar of honey!

PJ

My favorite's Roly-Poly Plinko!

HAMMY

I love the Rutabaga Relay Race!

HOP-ALONG ROY

I like watching Woodpecker Woodcarving!

(The gathered crowd erupts into excited babblings.)

OFELIA

You see? But it goes beyond the mere enjoyment of our village. Our children are to be wed! And what happier occasion is there than that? My dear Osgood will finally have a companion on the farm; someone to come home to every evening, without fail. And don't think that I'm thinking only of my son; no, no! From now on, Emeline shall live in domestic bliss! She'll never have to leave the house again!

MAYOR

Ofelia, I'm afraid that's what she's afraid of!

(The MAYOR hustles up to EMELINE.)

Emeline, quickly, before I change my mind! These ladies mind the change...

EMELINE

Just...just another moment to practice my speech, father!

MAYOR

A moment is more than we have at the moment, my dear. The mother of the groom is growing restless.

EMELINE

How do you speak in front of so many people? I never thought I'd be so nervous!

(OFELIA has stormed over to the group of ladies that entered around the MAYOR and they are talking animatedly.)

MAYOR

(Noticing them.)

I'm—I'm a bit more nervous than I expected I'd be, as well.

(Grabbing for the string that controls the drape.)

Come, come, let's reveal this thing and get on with it!

EMELINE

Wait, father! Not just yet!

OFELIA

(Storming up the dais, followed by the Committee.)

Never fear, Blusterbucks—we'll save this day yet!

EMELINE

No, please, I have something I want to say—!

OFELIA

Excuse me, please, out of the way!

(OFELIA pushes past EMELINE, followed by REVA and the others. REVA'S hedgehog spines prick at those she passes. EMELINE and the MAYOR fight over the string.)

EMELINE

Ow! Mrs. Hedgehog! Watch your—

MAYOR

Emeline, let go of the string so that I can—

OFELIA

We'll just take this thing down straightway and—

REVA

Pardon me, everyone! Avoid my backside, if you could—

BRUNILDA

Why are we up here again?

OFELIA

A bit of redecorating and everything will be right as rain!

MS. SPARROW

Oh, don't say "rain" on the day of the Harvest Festival!

EMELINE

(Holding the others off, starting her speech.)

Ladies and gentlemen, birdies and rodents, garden sprites of high spirit—!

OFELIA

The toast comes after the wedding dear; now let me pass—

MAYOR

Emeline, it's time we put this whole thing in the past—

EMELINE

All I've ever wanted to do is see the World Beyond the Wood—

OFELIA

Would you move?!

EMELINE

And go on adventures and—ouch!—go exploring and—really, Mrs. Hedgehog, must you—?

MS. SPARROW

A misuse of mayoral powers if I ever saw one—

EMELINE

I can't be alone in thinking that Thistleberry Thicket can be a bit more than boring—

MAYOR

This is your final warning—

OFELIA

Time to take down this bit of darning—

EMELINE

And that this—ow!—that this is just the ticket—!

(In the struggle, EMELINE, OFELIA, and the MAYOR all tug on the string, toppling over one another and sending the drape billowing down, covering the crowd, who shout and thrash in panic.)

OFELIA

(Struggling out of the heap.)

That certainly wasn't the most delicate way to go about it, but the drapery has been scarpered nonetheless. And, once again, the view in the Thicket is free from any—

(OFELIA sees the postcard, screams, and faints straightaway. The rest of the Committee does the same, in turn. OSGOOD, who was helping residents escape the drape, runs to his mother's side.)

OSGOOD

Mother, just try to breathe. It ain't the fits, is it? Or is it just a spell?

(Beat.)

Then again, which is which?

MAYOR

Just a spat of indigestion, I'm sure.

(OFELIA'S head lolls.)

In any case, Osgood, you should see your mother home straightaway. A good lie-down and a demijohn of dandelion wine should do the trick.

OSGOOD

Does that work for you?

MAYOR

Oh, dear me, no. Nothing works for me.

(OSGOOD takes his mother off.)

EMELINE

(To the MAYOR.)

I saw this going...better.

MAYOR

I'm sorry to say that I didn't.

REVA

(On the dais.)

In light of this terrible occurrence that can only mean four full seasons of Big Bad Luck, as the chairman of the Thistleberry Thicket Community Committee, I so move...

MAYOR

Oh no.

REVA

...That the Harvest Festival be cancelled, forthwith!

EMELINE

Yes!

MAYOR

Reva, dear me, don't do this! We'll start over, begin again! Someone please find the Thistleberry Thicket One-Man Cricket Band!

(Guess who enters, happy again to have a job? CRICKET!)

REVA

It's too late for that!

(Completely crushed, the CRICKET exits once more.)

REVA

However, I fear that simply cancelling the Harvest Festival will not be enough to spare us from this...this...

MAYOR

Postcard.

REVA

This postcard!

MS. SPARROW

(Joining REVA.)

In case of such an emergency, thirteen harvests' worth of supplies have been stockpiled within the Old Oak Tree. It is time that we evacuate our homes...

EMELINE

We're all leaving? We're all going Beyond the Wood?

MS. SPARROW

...and enact The Pre-Existing Extreme Measure of Extenuating Circumstance to Excise Requisite Residents of Thistleberry Thicket, Quickest.

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

So say we!

(The crowd exits amid mumbles and hand-wringing.)

EMELINE

Oh father, this is just what the town needed! A golden ticket to go on a grand adventure, all of us, together!

MAYOR

I'm afraid this is less of golden ticket and more of a last straw. We aren't leaving; we're going deeper in.

(EMELINE is puzzled.)

MAYOR (cont'd)

The Old Oak Tree...it contains our emergency supplies for thirteen harvests. We'll be joining them for just as long.

EMELINE

We're...we're all going to live inside The Old Oak Tree? For...for thirteen...?

(The MAYOR nods.)

No, we can't! How will we plant our gardens and enjoy our picnics? When will we ever see the sun?

MAYOR

We won't.

EMELINE

No. No, there must be something we can do!

MAYOR

Do? Certainly. We can grin and bear it, just as we've always done when Bad Luck strikes! We hunker down and hide!

EMELINE

There must be another way. To spend an eternity cooped up in that musty old Tree...

MAYOR

We tried "another way." This is what happened.

EMELINE

I won't go.

MAYOR

Emeline, you must. We must.

EMELINE

I won't!

MAYOR

(Briefly losing his temper.)

You will!

(Regaining composure.)

I know you meant no harm by all this but...

(He takes off his hat, regards it.)

Sometimes I wish I could simply leave this hat behind for the next poor soul to pick up. If I didn't wear it, I wouldn't have to solve every tiny problem and every...

(Looking around.)

...Giant catastrophe.

(Puts the hat back on.)

MAYOR (cont'd)

Ah, well then...that's my lot, isn't it?

(Exiting.)

It'd be Bad Luck to see another sunrise after this dreadful omen.

(Stopping, turning.)

Emeline, if you could see to it that everyone is packed and ready to move into the Old Oak Tree by nightfall, this old heart would appreciate it.

EMELINE

(Somberly.)

Of course, father.

MAYOR

Ooh! That old indigestion again!

(The MAYOR exits. EMELINE shuffles her feet, gets an idea, grins, runs off.)

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***Hey! That's definitely not the end of the play!***

***So would you like to read more? Great!***

***Just [Contact the Author](#) for the whole script!***