

FANTASTIC MR. FOX
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Anderson/Baumbach

EXT. WOODS. DAY

An apple tree stands alone at the top of a hill. A handsome fox dressed in a corduroy suit leans against it with his arms folded and his legs crossed, chewing on a reed of wild grass. He tucks it into his breast pocket like a cigar alongside two similar reeds and picks an apple off a branch above his head. He takes a bite and spits out a seed. He looks off across a meadow that descends into the valley below.

A female fox strides briskly up the hill. Her coat is a paler, especially beautiful shade of fox-red, and she wears men's trousers and a dark tunic. Fox says as she approaches:

FOX

What'd the doctor say?

MRS. FOX

Nothing. Supposedly, it's just a twenty-four hour bug. He gave me some pills.

FOX

(reassuringly)

I told you. You probably just ate some bad gristle.

Fox brushes the fur on Mrs. Fox's ears with his paws. They walk together along the crest of the hill to a fork in the path. Fox points:

FOX

Should we take the short cut or the scenic route?

MRS. FOX

Let's take the short cut.

FOX

But the scenic route is so much prettier.

MRS. FOX

(shrugs)

OK, let's take the scenic route.

FOX

Great. It's actually slightly quicker, anyway.

Fox throws his apple core away over his shoulder and dances a quick circle around Mrs. Fox, wrapping his arm around her waist extravagantly and making her laugh as they start off down the scenic route.

EXT. FARM. DAY

A rustic cottage surrounded by a small barn, a tin silo, and a rickety windmill. There is a sheep in a little pasture. A sign on a rail says Berk's Squab. Fox and Mrs. Fox watch from the bushes outside a fence.

MRS. FOX

What is a squab?

FOX

You know what a squab is. It's like a pigeon, I suppose.

Fox motions toward the edge of the property.

FOX

Should we go through the hole under the horse fence or climb the rail over the bridle path?

MRS. FOX

Well, I guess the horse fence would be a little safer.

FOX

But the bridle path puts us out right next to the squab shack.

Mrs. Fox hesitates. She fiddles with her paws. She nods nervously. She shakes slightly. Fox looks at her funny.

FOX

What's wrong? You're acting all skittish. Don't worry. I've been stealing birds for a living since before I could trot.

Fox flashes a smile. He says suddenly:

FOX

By the way, you look unbelievably beautiful tonight. You're practically glowing. Maybe it's the lighting.

Mrs. Fox is, in fact, glowing, albeit ever so slightly. She stares at Fox enigmatically. Fox touches his paw to her cheek.

(NOTE: an alternate version of Mrs. Fox will be used for this shot which can be literally lit from within.)

With the speed, grace, and precision of athletes, Fox and Mrs. Fox: dart through a hole under a painted fence, race along a thin trail next to a garage, crawl beneath a window,

creep past a doghouse, and shimmy over a doorway. They dart into a drain-pipe and come out in front of a wooden shed. Fox lifts a loose board. They duck inside. Silence.

Fox and Mrs. Fox come out. Each holds a dead, bloody pigeon in his/her teeth. They start to run away. Fox looks up above them. He stops. He frowns. He takes the pigeon out of his mouth and says curiously, pointing toward the sky:

FOX

What's that? I think that's a fox-trap!
Look at this.

MRS. FOX

Get away from there.

FOX

Is it spring-loaded? Yeah...
(pointing to different spots)
I guess if you come from over there, and you're standing at the door to the squab shack, this little gadget probably triggers the --
(gesturing to Mrs. Fox)
Move out of the way, darling. That's right where it's going to land.

Mrs. Fox runs back to Fox and tugs at his arm.

MRS. FOX

Come on! Stop it! Let's go!

Fox pulls on a little, hanging wire. A chain unrolls rapidly from a pulley, and a steel cage falls slap down on top of him and Mrs. Fox. A small tag on the base of the trap says Badoit et Fils. Fox and Mrs. Fox stand motionless, side by side, in disbelief.

FOX

No, it just falls straight down right here, doesn't it? I guess it's not spring-loaded.

MRS. FOX

I'm pregnant.

Fox stares at Mrs. Fox. He is confused but moved.

FOX

Wow. We're going to have a cub. Honey, that's great news!

Sounds come from around the farm: the dog barks, doors open, lights come on. An alarm bell begins to ring in the distance. Fox and Mrs. Fox look terrified. Mrs. Fox says quietly:

MRS. FOX

If we're still alive tomorrow morning, I want you to find another line of work.

FOX

(quietly)

OK.

CUT TO:

A wide shot of the entire valley. There are thick woods, green and yellow fields, two ponds, a small village, and a river running through the middle.

TITLE:

2 YEARS LATER (12 Fox-Years)

EXT. HOLE. DAY

The entrance to a tunnel under a dirt mound covered with holly bushes.

INT. HOLE. DAY

A small, comfortable kitchen off a living room with two bedrooms behind it. Fox sits at the kitchen table reading a newspaper called the Gazette. His fur has gone grey at the temples, and he now wears a dark, double-breasted, pin-striped suit with a conservative necktie. Mrs. Fox stands at the counter-top stirring something in a bowl with a whisk. She is dressed in a paint-splattered, cream-colored, Victorian-style dress.

INSERT:

A column in the newspaper with Fox's picture at the top of it in a slightly too-debonair pose. The caption reads: Fox about Town with Fantastic Mr. Fox.

FOX

Does anybody actually read my column? Do your friends ever talk about it?

MRS. FOX

(still stirring)

Of course. In fact, Rabbit's ex-girlfriend just said to me last week, "I should read Foxy's column," but they don't get the Gazette.

(more)

MRS. FOX (cont'd)
(yelling into the next room)
Ash! Let's get cracking!

FOX
Why would they? It's a rag-sheet.

Mrs. Fox puts down her bowl and starts slicing a loaf of bread. A small, narrow fox cub comes out of one of the bedrooms wearing white pants and no shirt. His hair is smashed all onto one side sticking up wrong. He is Ash.

ASH
I'm sick.

MRS. FOX
You're not sick.

ASH
I have a temperature.

Mrs. Fox goes quickly over to Ash and puts her paw to his forehead.

MRS. FOX
You don't have a temperature.

Ash turns away and says as he goes back into his bedroom:

ASH
I don't want to go.

MRS. FOX
Hurry up. You're going to be late.

Mrs. Fox goes back into the kitchen and starts making toast and coffee. Fox whispers to her:

FOX
I love the way you handled that.

Mrs. Fox looks at Fox sideways. She says loudly to Ash:

MRS. FOX
Your cousin Kristofferson's coming on the sixth. I want you to be extra nice to him, because he's going through a very hard time right now, OK?

Ash comes back out of his bedroom. He now wears a white cardigan and white socks with his white pants tucked into them. He says aggressively:

ASH
Where's he going to sleep?

MRS. FOX

We're going to make a bed for him in your room.

ASH

I can't spare the space. Put him in Dad's study.

Fox says without looking up from his newspaper:

FOX

Dad's study is occupied by Dad.

Ash goes back into his bedroom. Fox lowers his newspaper. He looks around the room. He says to Mrs. Fox:

FOX

I don't want to live in a hole anymore. It makes me feel poor.

Mrs. Fox stops buttering the toast. She looks to Fox and says softly:

MRS. FOX

We are poor -- but we're happy.

Fox twists his paw in the air, indicating:

FOX

Comme-ci, comme-ça. Anyway, the views are better above ground.

Mrs. Fox nods. She brings Fox a plate of toast and a cup of coffee. Fox takes her paw and says:

FOX

I'm seven non-fox-years old now. My father died at seven and a half. I don't want to live in a hole anymore, and I'm going to do something about it.

Fox kisses Mrs. Fox's paw. He suddenly eats three slices of toast in a second and a half, savagely but neatly. He stands and picks up his cup of coffee.

FOX

Well, I'm off.

Fox throws back the last of his coffee, kisses Mrs. Fox on the back of her neck, grabs his briefcase, tucks his newspaper under his arm, and walks to the door. He shouts cheerily:

FOX
Have a good day, my darlings!

MRS. FOX
(gently)
You know, Foxes live in holes for a reason.

Fox considers this. Ash comes out the bedroom again. He has now added a white cape to his ensemble and is in the middle of brushing his teeth. There is toothpaste all over his mouth. Fox looks puzzled.

FOX
What're you wearing? Why a cape with the pants tucked into your socks?

Ash scowls. He spits toothpaste onto the floor and goes back into his bedroom. Fox says philosophically:

FOX
I guess he's just --
(making a hula-type gesture)
-- different.

Fox whistles sharply with a half-chirp and makes an obscure hand-signal with two of the fingers of his paw and his partial-thumb. He starts to go out but pauses to look down at a folded up section of his newspaper.

INSERT:

A clipping from the real estate section. There is a photograph of a wide, sprawling beech tree at the top of a hill. A caption below it reads:

Tree Living, Great Views, Classic Beech

INT. TREE. DAY

A door opens into a wide, low space with peeling paint. There is an old chair against the wall, a bare light bulb hanging from the ceiling, and a layer of dust over everything. A skinny weasel in a khaki outfit immediately starts in as Fox comes into the living room:

WEASEL
Obviously, it's first growth, indigenous.
Original dirt floor, good bark, skipping
stone hearth --

Weasel is interrupted by a loud banging clank. He and Fox peer into the next room. A heavy-set opossum with a cowlick

tinkers with some pipes under the kitchen sink. He is Kylie. Weasel snaps at him:

WEASEL

What'd I tell you? I'm showing the property. You're not supposed to be here.

KYLIE

(checking his watch)

Oh, cuss. What time is it? I'm sorry.

Weasel sighs. He waves his arm in Kylie's direction and says distractedly, slightly annoyed:

WEASEL

This is Kylie. He's the super.

(aside to Fix)

He's a little --

Weasel makes a fluttering gesture with his paw. Fox nods. He points at a bucket on the floor next to Kylie among bolts, tools, and washers.

FOX

What's in the bucket, Mr. Kylie?

KYLIE

(hesitates)

Just minnows. You want one?

FOX

Certainly. Thank you.

Kylie reaches into his bucket and hands Fox a live, wriggling minnow. Fox swallows it whole. He walks back into the living room. He looks around skeptically.

FOX

It's not exactly an evergreen, is it? Aren't there any pines on the market this side of the river?

WEASEL

(condescending)

Pines are pretty hard to come by in your price range.

FOX

(distracted)

What's that?

Fox crosses to the window. He stares out at three sprawling poultry compounds in the distance. Black smoke pours out of a farmhouse chimney on each property. A sign on a water tower

in the first compound reads Boggis Farms and has a picture of a chicken on it. A sign on a silo in the second compound reads Bunce Industries and has a picture of a goose on it. A sign on a windmill in the third compound reads Bean, inc. (since 1976) and has a picture of a turkey with an apple on it.

Weasel says pointedly from across the room:

WEASEL

May I ask what you do for a living, Mr. Fox?

Fox's eyes narrow as he looks out, entranced, with his mouth slightly open. He says almost inaudibly:

FOX

I used to steal birds, but now I'm a newspaper man.

WEASEL

(pleased)

Oh, sure. I've seen your by-line.

Fox snaps out of his reverie and says suddenly:

FOX

Good afternoon, gentlemen.

Fox shakes hands abruptly with Weasel and starts across the room. Weasel is about to ask something when Fox stops in the doorway, looks back, and says:

FOX

Oh, and Kylie -- thank you for the minnow. It was superb.

Kylie smiles. Fox exits.

EXT. RIVER. DAY

A beaver dam across a bend in a fast stream. A still pond sits above it. There is an entrance tunnel tucked beneath a rock.

INT. BEAVER DAM. DAY

A large room of twig, stick, and mud construction. A card on the door reads Badger, Beaver, and Stoat, L.L.P, Attorneys at Law. An anxious badger sits at his desk reviewing some documents. There is a tape-recorder in front of him. Fox paces the floor with his hands clasped behind his back.

BADGER

Don't buy this tree, Foxy. You're borrowing at nine and a half with no fixed rate, plus moving into the most dangerous neighborhood in the country for someone of your type of species.

FOX

You're exaggerating, Badger.

BADGER

(yelling)

I'm sugar-coating it, man! This is Boggis, Bunce, and Bean! Three of the meanest, nastiest, ugliest farmers in the history of this valley!

An uneasy otter secretary peers in at them from the outer office. Fox looks intrigued.

FOX

Really? Tell me about them.

Silence. Badger sighs. He loosens his tie and settles in.

BADGER

All right...

CUT TO:

A fat man with a huge moustache. He wears a tweed suit which stretches at the buttons so much that they look like they are about to snap off. He holds an 18-gauge shotgun. He stands in front of his farm, which contains row upon row of chicken houses. He is Boggis.

BADGER (V.O.)

Walt Boggis is a chicken farmer. Probably the most successful in the world. He weighs the same as an adult rhinoceros. He eats three chickens smothered with dumplings every day for breakfast, lunch, supper, and dessert. That's twelve in total, *per diem*.

CUT TO:

A tiny man wearing a multi-colored tweed cap. He holds a small carbine rifle. He stands in front of his farm, which consists of several long buildings in rows like a factory. He is Bunce.

BADGER (V.O.)

Nate Bunce is a duck and goose farmer. He owns about 2 million ducks and 500,000 geese. He's approximately the size of a pot-bellied dwarf, and his chin would be under water in the shallow end of any swimming pool on the planet. His food is home-made doughnuts with smashed-up goose livers injected into them.

CUT TO:

A tall, skinny man in a long trench-coat. He holds a Luger pistol. He stands in front of his farm, which is an apple orchard that stretches over thousands of acres. A dozen turkeys stand behind him quietly. He is Bean.

BADGER (V.O.)

Frank Bean is a turkey and apple farmer. He invented his own species of each. He lives on a liquid diet of strong, alcoholic cider, which he makes from his apples. He's as skinny as a pencil, as smart as a whip -- and possibly the scariest man currently living.

CUT TO:

Fox and Badger in Badger's office.

BADGER

The local human children sing a kind of eerie little rhyme about him.

Badger presses a button on his tape-recorder. A recording of a group of school-children plays. They chant in sing-song:

SCHOOLCHILDREN (O.S.)

Boggis, Bunce, and Bean --
One fat, one short, one lean.
These horrible crooks,
so different in looks,
were nonetheless equally mean.

Badger presses stop on the tape-recorder.

BADGER

In summation, I think you just got to not do it, man. That's all.

FOX

I understand what you're saying, and your comments are valuable, but I'm going to ignore your advice.

Badger leaps out of his chair and slams the office door. He points his finger at Fox and screams:

BADGER

The cuss you are!

FOX

(in disbelief)

The cuss am I?

Fox jumps up and points back at Badger, screaming:

FOX

Don't cussing point at me!

BADGER

(screaming)

Are you cussing with me?

FOX

(screaming)

Do I look like I'm cussing with you?

Fox and Badger begin to snarl and snap savagely, knocking into the furniture as they circle around the room pointing in each other's faces. Suddenly, they calm down all at once, sighing deeply. Pause.

FOX

Just buy the cussing tree.

BADGER

OK.

MONTAGE:

Two muskrats in orange moving company uniforms unloads boxes and furniture from a wagon and carries them into the tree. Fox holds open the front door and barks orders at them.

Two muskrats in white painter's uniforms paints the walls of the living room and the trim around the windows with rollers and brushes. Fox stands on the drop-cloth and barks orders at them.

Two muskrats in blue electrician's uniforms work in the kitchen. Mrs. Fox watches over their shoulders and barks orders at them.

Fox holds up a pair of flowered curtains in front of a window. He looks to Mrs. Fox. She stares at the curtains thoughtfully. She raises an eyebrow.

Fox and Mrs. Fox sit in the windowsill looking out at the sunset. Ash stands in-between them. The flowered curtains wave in the breeze. Fox raises a pair of binoculars to his eyes.

INSERT:

A binocular shot of an industrial shack with Boggis Chicken House #1 stencilled on the front of it.

CUT TO:

A fox cub standing in the grass in front of Fox's tree holding a small, Samsonite suitcase. He wears khaki shorts, yellow sneakers, and a blue, short-sleeved, button-down shirt. He is the same age as Ash, but he is taller, leaner, sleeker, and more graceful. He is Kristofferson. A tag around his neck reads: Unaccompanied Minor.

EXT. TREE. DAY

Ash and Kristofferson stand together poised on a high branch over an inflatable swimming pool behind Fox's tree. Ash wears over-sized swim trunks with a pattern of acorns printed on them. Kristofferson wears a professional Speedo with a patch on it that says Swim Team.

Fox sits in the grass eating an apple below. Mrs. Fox paints at an easel beside him. Fox says distractedly, looking up at Fox and Kristofferson:

FOX

He's slightly younger, but he's a cuss of a lot bigger. That's just genetics, I guess. Ash has a littler body-type.

Mrs. Fox ignores this remark. Ash yells:

ASH

Watch this, Dad!

Ash leaps into the air and does a spectacularly awkward back-flip during which he appears to have four arms and three legs randomly attached to his body, flailing wildly. He hits the water by the side of his head and smacks into the surface back-first with a pained yelp. Fox grimaces. He claps mildly.

(NOTE: an alternate version of Ash with four arms and three legs randomly attached to his body will be used for this stunt.)

FOX

Good jump, Ash! Remember to keep your tail tucked!

Fox looks at Mrs. Fox's canvas. It is a picture of the pond and landscape in severe weather with black clouds and lightning bolts. It is signed Felicity Fox. Fox raises an eyebrow.

FOX

Still painting thunderstorms, I see.

Ash climbs out of the pool. Fox looks up into the tree again. Kristofferson steps off the branch and performs a reserved but perfect jack-knife. He enters the water splashlessly. Fox leaps to his feet, applauding with his paws above his head, whistling and hollering:

FOX

Look at that! This kid's a natural! I'm speechless, Kristofferson!

Kristofferson smiles modestly and shrugs. Ash stares at him stonily. Fox turns to Mrs. Fox.

FOX

Plus, he knows karate.

Fox sits back down and opens a copy of the Gazette. Ash says, half to himself:

ASH

Do you think I'm an athlete?

FOX

(without looking up)
What are you talking about?

ASH

Well, you know, I think I'm an athlete, and sometimes I feel like you guys don't see me that way.

FOX

(hesitates)
What's the sub-text here? Is he praying?

Fox points to Kristofferson, who is now sitting Indian-style on the ground meditating. His paws are turned upward with his thumbs touching his index fingers forming a ring. Mrs. Fox squints at him.

MRS. FOX

I think that's yoga.

ASH
 (stonily)
 How long is Kristofferson supposed to
 stay with us?

MRS. FOX
 (discreetly)
 Until your uncle gets better.

ASH
 Right, but roughly how long do we plan to
 give him on that? Double-pneumonia isn't
 even really that big of a deal, is it?

Mrs. Fox stops painting and turns to Ash. She whispers,
 agitated:

MRS. FOX
 As a matter of fact, it is. He's lucky to
 be alive. Now --

ASH
 Right, but --

Mrs. Fox snaps the fingers of her paw. She turns quickly and
 sees Kristofferson staring at her with a wounded look on his
 face. He immediately closes his eyes again and resumes his
 meditating. Mrs. Fox turns back to Ash and says coldly:

MRS. FOX
 Lower your voice, Ash.

EXT. TREE. NIGHT

A knothole-window flickering with lamp-light. Inside, Ash
 sits on a braided rug on the floor of the living room reading
 a comic book called The Adventures of White Cape. On the
 cover, there is a picture of a ferret leaping off a
 motorcycle. Mrs. Fox is in the kitchen in the background
 flattening a hunk of dough with a rolling pin. Kristofferson
 practices tae-kwon-do in the next room.

Fox and Kylie stand in the widow's walk at the top of the
 tree. They smoke pipes. Fox looks off into the distance and
 says mysteriously:

FOX
 Who am I, Kylie?

KYLIE
 (hesitates, confused)
 Who how? What, now?

FOX

Why a fox? Why not a horse or a beetle or a bald eagle? I'm saying this more like as existentialism, you know? Who am I, and how can a fox ever be happy without a -- forgive the expression -- chicken in its teeth?

Kylie hesitates. He says, intrigued:

KYLIE

I don't know what you're talking about, but it sounds illegal.

FOX

Here, put this bandit hat on.

Fox hands Kylie a black ski-cap. Kylie pulls it down over his face. Fox studies it.

FOX

Maybe you're a medium. Take it off for now, and don't wear it around the house.

Kylie takes the ski-cap off. Fox scans the horizon with his binoculars. He says mysteriously:

FOX

And so it begins.

The shot zooms out wide. All sounds slip away except for the rustle of the branches of the tree in the breeze. In the distance, a flame bursts like a torch from a smokestack at Bunce Industries; a spotlight spins from a guard-tower in front of Boggis Farms; and a helicopter circles banking over Bean, Inc.

A high-speed train shoots clacking across the countryside and is gone.

INT. THORN-BUSH. DAY

An elementary school science lab located in the lowest tier of a large bramble. Ash works on a chemistry experiment alongside his lab partner. She is a yellow fox with white spots, just a bit taller than Ash, and she wears a beige dress with flowers on it and barrettes in her fur. She is Agnes. (Her name is embroidered below her collar with brown thread in cursive.) They both have on protective goggles. There is a rack of vials and beakers in front of them filled with substances of every color.

Agnes stares intently across the room while Ash mixes chemicals. He puts out his hand without looking and says like a surgeon:

ASH
Magnesium.

Agnes, distracted, does not respond. Ash says curtly:

ASH
Magnesium!

AGNES
(snapping out of it)
Sorry.

Agnes hands Ash a silver-powder-filled test tube with a pair of tongs. Ash resumes his work. He puts his hand out again.

ASH
Pipette.

Agnes is staring across the room again. Ash says more sharply:

ASH
Pipette!

AGNES
(snapping out of it again)
Sorry.

Agnes hands Ash a glass dropper with a rubber cap. Ash frowns at her for a second. He sets back to work. He puts out his hand again. Agnes is staring across the room.

ASH
Potassium tri --
(suddenly furious)
-- what are you looking at? Agnes!

Ash leans in front of Agnes to see what she is looking at. His heart sinks. He says sadly:

ASH
Oh, no.

At the next table: Kristofferson tinkers with a Bunsen burner at a low flame, smiling pleasantly at Agnes. An overgrown, hulking beaver wearing part of a football uniform comes over and slams a shoe-box full of rocks onto the table. He is Beaver's son.

BEAVER'S SON
Why's your cousin such a wet-sandwich?

KRISTOFFERSON
(uneasy)
I beg your pardon?

BEAVER'S SON
(at a complete loss)
What does that mean?

KRISTOFFERSON
(hesitates)
It means I didn't understand what you
just said. A wet-sandwich?

BEAVER'S SON
(aggressively)
Yeah, a wet-sandwich. He's too short. He
dresses like a girl. He's --
(making a hula-type gesture)
-- different.

KRISTOFFERSON
(coldly)
Are you a bully? You're starting to sound
like a bully.

Beaver's son laughs to himself. He takes a piece of wire out
of the shoe-box.

BEAVER'S SON
Watch this.

Beaver's son sticks the end of the wire into the flame of the
Bunsen burner. It sparks up with a burst of white. He jams it
into the beaker, which explodes, covering Kristofferson and
Beaver's son with silver powder. Their text books smolder and
begin to ignite. Beaver's son laughs again. Kristofferson
mumbles to himself:

KRISTOFFERSON
You've just destroyed the whole
experiment. We'd better extinguish this
magnesium.

Kristofferson leans down under the lab table and comes back
up with a fire extinguisher. He pulls a pin out of it and
points the nozzle.

KRISTOFFERSON
Stand back.

Kristofferson sprays the burning text books with the fire extinguisher. Agnes looks at Kristofferson and says genuinely:

AGNES
I like your ears.

KRISTOFFERSON
(extremely pleased)
Thank you! I like your spots!

AGNES
(pleasantly surprised)
Really? I used to cover them up.

Kristofferson and Agnes both laugh quietly, looking at each other for a curious moment. Ash says desolately:

ASH
You're supposed to be my lab partner.

AGNES
(sadly)
I am!

ASH
(resigned)
No, you're not. You're disloyal.

CUT TO:

Fox's study. A map of the valley with notes and arrows written all over it is spread across a desk. The door is closed with a towel jammed under it. Fox sits in his armchair. Kylie sits in a creaky rocking chair.

FOX
I used to do this professionally, and I was very successful at it. I had to get out of it for personal reasons, but I've decided to secretly do one last big job on the sly. I'm bringing you in as my secretary and personal assistant.

KYLIE
OK!

FOX
(prickly)
This is actually kind of a big deal, so don't just say, "OK!"

KYLIE
OK. Well, thank you.

FOX
 (clearing is throat)
 I'm going to tape this for my records, so
 don't make a lot of sounds -- meaning
 stop rocking.

Kylie stops rocking. Fox presses record on a tape recorder.
 He begins:

FOX
 Master Plan. Phase one. Side A.

CUT TO:

A map of the region. Fox's paw points to the relevant areas.

FOX (V.O.)
 We'll start with Boggis' Chicken House
 #1. His only security is a few old
 hunting beagles and a low stone wall. Now
 a word about beagles: never look a beagle
 directly in the eye. And if --

KYLIE (V.O.)
 (interrupting)
 Why not?

CUT TO:

Fox and Kylie in Fox's study earlier that afternoon. Kylie
 says blithely:

KYLIE
 Beagles aren't so tough.

FOX
 (annoyed)
 Yeah? Well, first of all, one of these
 beagles has chronic rabies, which he's on
 medication for, and if you get bit by him
 you have to get shots in your stomach for
 six months. And, second -- listen, I'm
 not going to justify this to you. Just
 pay attention and stop interrupting me.
 I'm taping this.

EXT. RAVINE. NIGHT

Fox and Kylie shimmy down a steep embankment and cross a
 stream.

FOX (V.O.)
 I picked some blueberries, butterflied
 them with a scalpel, and laced each one
 (more)

FOX (V.O.) (cont'd)
with ten milligrams of high-potency
sleeping powder.

INSERT:

Fox's paws meticulously sprinkle a powdered mickey into a
dissected blueberry and stitch it shut with red thread.

FOX (V.O.)
Enough to tranquilize a gorilla.

CUT TO:

Fox and Kylie in Fox's study earlier that afternoon. They now
smoke their pipes.

KYLIE
How do we make them eat it?

FOX
(smiling, with utter certainty)
Beagles love blueberries.

EXT. BARNYARD. DAY

Seventy-five chickens stand around quietly but anxiously,
darting wildly nervous looks at one another. They eat bits of
grain off the ground.

FOX (V.O.)
Remember: they aren't very smart, but
they're incredibly paranoid -- so always
kill a chicken in one bite.

CUT TO:

Fox and Kylie in Fox's study earlier that afternoon. They now
drink whiskey sours. Fox repeats:

FOX
One bite, get it?

Fox waits for Kylie to respond. Kylie does not. Fox frowns.

FOX
Are you listening to me? I look into your
eyes and I can't tell whether you're
getting anything I'm saying.

Kylie stares at Fox vacantly. He shrugs.

(NOTE: an alternate set of eyeballs will be used for any
shots indicating Kylie's vacant look.)

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT

Ash lies in the top bunk. Kristofferson stands over a low table with model high-speed train on it. He says warily:

KRISTOFFERSON

Do you mind if I slide my bedroll slightly out from under the train set? It's hard to sleep in that corkscrew position.

Pause. Ash says ominously:

ASH

There's a lot of attitudes going on around here. Don't let me get one.

KRISTOFFERSON

(on the defensive)

No, it's only just that my spinal-cord is getting --

ASH

(aggressively)

Sleep wherever you want, pal. Here, take my bed. I'll just crawl under the book-case. Who cares if I get splinters in my ears?

KRISTOFFERSON

(sadly)

Never mind.

ASH

(suddenly)

You going to pout about it? Because I've had it up to --
(indicating a point above his eye-level)
-- here! With the sad house-guest routine.

Kristofferson stares at Ash. Ash stares back at him. Kristofferson sighs. He says quietly:

KRISTOFFERSON

Good-night.

Kristofferson crawls under the low table. Ash flicks off a light-switch on the wall. Silence.

Kristofferson begins to quietly cry. Ash listens, uneasy and concerned. He climbs down the ladder of his bunk bed. He looks under the table. He kneels in front of the train set and presses a button. A tiny bell begins to ring. A miniature

bridge lowers. Kristofferson sadly crawls back out from under the table and kneels next to Ash. They watch together as the train pulls out of the station and begins to circle its tracks.

EXT. MEADOW. NIGHT

Fox and Kylie move swiftly through the tall grass. Fox pauses to sniff the air. He nods.

FOX

A few beagles, as we discussed, but we're ready for that.

Fox and Kylie cross a dirt lane and come out of a shallow ditch. Fox licks the pinky of his paw and holds it up in the air.

FOX

You feel that? The wind's in our faces.

Kylie touches his face with his paw. He nods. Fox and Kylie run along the edge of the ditch. Kylie says casually:

KYLIE

Yeah, back in the old days, didn't they used to do a thing where if somebody saw a wolf, and --

FOX

(startled)

What wolf?

Fox stops in his tracks. His eyes dart about. Kylie looks at him curiously.

FOX

Oh, nothing? Never mind.

Fox and Kylie veer off into shorter grasses. Fox points ahead, regaining his composure:

FOX

Here comes the low stone wall. Not a problem.

Fox and Kylie climb over a low stone wall and find themselves at the base of a chain-link fence eleven feet high.

FOX

This is a chain-link fence, I guess. Did I not remember this? Maybe it's new. Let's pause.

(suddenly angry)

(more)

FOX (cont'd)

What the cuss? Where'd this giant fence come from? We had a master plan!

Kylie motions to a yellow, plywood lightning bolt posted to the fence.

KYLIE

What's this lightning bolt stand for?

FOX

That, I guess, hypothetically, could mean maybe this fence might be electric.

KYLIE

Well, I just hope it doesn't mean thunder. I have a phobia of that.

Fox and Kylie climb a tree and crouch at the end of one of its branches. Fox produces a zip-loc bag filled with blueberries with white thread stitched into them.

FOX

Watch this.

Fox puts a blueberry into the end of a straw and shoots it out into the barnyard.

CUT TO:

The blueberry landing on the ground in front of Chicken House #1. A beagle approaches it and sniffs at it. He eats it. He looks very pleased. He falls over, out cold.

CUT TO:

Fox with an ecstatic expression on his face. He whistles sharply with a half-chirp and makes his obscure hand-signal. He rapidly shoots more and more blueberries across the barnyard. Beagles eat blueberries and fall over, one after another. Fox and Kylie drop down into the barnyard and sprint among the unconscious beagles. Fox whispers excitedly as they run:

FOX

Beagles love blueberries! Didn't I tell you? The master plan's working again!

Fox and Kylie hide behind a shed and peer across the yard. Fox whispers:

FOX

This is the tricky part. One of us's got to jump that barbed-wire, slide under the
(more)

FOX (cont'd)
 tire-spikes, and flip open the fence-
 latch. Who's it going to be?

KYLIE
 (simply)
 Not me.

FOX
 You know who could do this part easily is
 Kristofferson. That kid's like a
 professional, Olympic-level --

KYLIE
 (pointing in another direction)
 Why don't we go around that way? There's
 no obstacles.

FOX
 (pause)
 Yeah. That's better.

Fox and Kylie race through a gap at the end of a tangle of chain-link and barbed wire. They dart up to the door of a building marked Chicken House #1, flip a latch, and duck inside.

Pause. There is an eruption of crazed squawking, screaming, and fighting from inside. The chicken house rumbles. Lights jolt on across the compound. An alarm goes off. Voices yell.

The chicken house door swings open again, and Fox and Kylie emerge among a cloud of feathers. Fox carries five dead chickens, and Kylie has one live one. Fox yells:

FOX
 I said one bite, cuss it!

KYLIE
 I'm trying! I have a different kind of
 teeth from you! I'm an opossum!

Kylie tries to bite the chicken on the neck. The chicken is unharmed. Kylie shrugs. Fox kills the chicken with one quick flick of the jaws. Kylie looks horrified.

KYLIE
 That's so grisly! There's blood and
 everything!

FOX
 (defensively)
 We're killing chickens! There's going to
 be blood in this story! Follow me!

Fox and Kylie dash to the electric fence. They stop in front of it. Kylie looks to Fox.

KYLIE

What's the master escape plan?

Fox hesitates, confused. A gunshot fires from among the chicken houses. Fox shouts to Kylie:

FOX

Follow me again!

Fox and Kylie run back across the barnyard, past the beagles as they begin to wake up and stagger around. Farmhands appear, loading shotguns and running into the confusion. Fox and Kylie race by, unnoticed, among them. They dart into the house through a flap in the back door. The lights are out in the kitchen. They take a moment, breathing hard in the darkness. Kylie shakes his head in disbelief.

KYLIE

Wow. That was amazing. How did we do that? We ran the other way or something.

FOX

Yeah.

KYLIE

What happens now?

FOX

I have no idea.

Fox opens the door-flap a crack. He looks out and sees Boggis opening the front gate to let out his beagles and farmhands, barking and shooting, as they search for the intruders. Fox shouts to Kylie:

FOX

Holy cuss! They opened the gate! Follow me again!

Lightning quick, Fox and Kylie burst out through the door-flap, race across the barnyard, and dart through the open gate. Up the road, Boggis screams furiously as he runs with his pack of beagles and farmhands. Fox and Kylie fly into the bushes. As they race through the underbrush Fox says breathlessly:

FOX

Let's hit the five and dime on the way home! We need to make some fake price tags and wrap these chickens in wax-paper
(more)

FOX (cont'd)
so it looks like we got them at the
butcher shop!

Fox and Kylie howl ecstatically.

INT. KITCHEN. MORNING

Mrs. Fox studies a crayon price-tag labelled \$4 attached to a wax-paper-wrapped parcel. She opens the parcel and holds up a dead chicken by the leg. There is a small metal clip around its ankle. She examines it. She frowns.

Fox comes in, grabs an apple out of a bowl, and starts back out of the room.

MRS. FOX
Where'd you get this chicken?

FOX
(shrugs)
I picked it up at the Five-and-Dime last
night on my way back from --

MRS. FOX
It's got a Boggis Farms tag around its
ankle.

FOX
(hesitates)
Huh. Must've escaped from there before I
bought it.

Fox walks out of the room, leaving Mrs. Fox curiously examining the chicken. He whispers to Kylie out the window:

FOX
Psst! It's Bunce tonight! He's got a
refrigerated smokehouse with --

KYLIE
I thought you said we were only doing one
last big job.

FOX
(hesitates)
We are, but it's -- not done yet. It's a
triple-header.

EXT. FIELD. DAY

Kristofferson stands next to a white ferret dressed in polyester football coaching shorts and a shirt that says Sand-dogs on it. He has very muscular arms and wears a whistle around his neck and a baseball cap. He is Coach Skip.

They watch a group of small animals playing a complicated game in the meadow.

KRISTOFFERSON

Coach, we don't have whack-bat where I'm from. What're the rules?

COACH SKIP

(surprised)

There's no whack-bat on the other side of the river?

KRISTOFFERSON

No, we mostly just run grass sprints or play acorns.

COACH SKIP

Hm. Well, it's real simple: basically, there's three grabbers, three taggers, five twig-runners, and the player at whack-bat. The center-tagger lights the pine-cone and chucks it over the basket, and the whack-batter tries to hit the cedar-stick off the cross-rock. Then the twig-runners dash back and forth until the pine-cone burns out, and the umpire calls "hot box". Finally, at the end you count up however many score-downs it adds up to and divide that by nine.

KRISTOFFERSON

(immediately)

Got it.

COACH SKIP

Go in for Ash.

(shouting)

Substitution! Ash, come out! You need a breather.

Ash runs over to the sidelines. He is drenched in sweat and slightly hyperventilating.

ASH

I still feel good, Coach! Let me finish this eighth!

COACH SKIP

(gently)

No, come on. Step out. Let's go.

Ash jogs out glaring at Kristofferson as he races in. He stands next to Coach Skip, catching his breath.

ASH
Am I getting better, Coach?

COACH SKIP
(pause, with feeling:)
Well, you're sure as cuss not getting any worse.

ASH
(encouraged)
Really? You think I could end up being as good as my dad if I keep practicing?

COACH SKIP
Your dad? Your dad was probably the best whack-bat player we ever had in this school.

Coach Skip points at a trophy case in the window of a thorn bush behind them. There is a small statue of Fox in a position ready to swing a sort of oar with spikes on it. A plaque below it reads Designated Whack-Batter, M.V.P. The statue is surrounded by trophies and medals.

COACH SKIP
You don't want to compare yourself to that, do you?

ASH
Yeah, but I think I have some of the same raw natural talent, don't you?

COACH SKIP
(determined)
You're improving. Let's put it like that.

There is a shout from the field. Ash and Coach Skip watch as Kristofferson receives a pitch from Beaver's son and cracks a line-drive blasting the pine-cone into a little wooden stick balanced on a rock and knocking it spinning over the heads of all the other little animals. He takes off full-speed and hurdles a stump while three rabbits sprint around in various zig-zags and the others chase after the flying stick. A moment later an umpire's voice cries: "Hot box!" Kristofferson runs back into position and shouts along the way:

KRISTOFFERSON
Divide that by nine, please!

Coach Skip looks stunned. He says in disbelief:

COACH SKIP

Holy cuss! That's the first time this kid's ever swung a whack-bat? He really is your father's nephew, isn't he?

Ash looks taken aback. He says coolly:

ASH

Not by blood.

COACH SKIP

(surprised)

No?

ASH

He's from my mother's side.

Ash nods. He spits on the ground and watches the game silently. He sees Agnes standing further up the side-line. She holds a sign with a red "K" painted on it. Ash frowns and points at it.

ASH

What's that stand for?

AGNES

(hesitates)

Huh? It's for -- pep.

ASH

(coolly)

It's a K.

AGNES

(shrugs, gently:)

We're going steady.

Silence. Ash nods. He says reluctantly:

ASH

Well, I shouldn't say anything. You'll learn soon enough.

AGNES

(suspicious)

Learn what?

Ash sighs. He shrugs. He leans over and whispers in Agnes' ear.

INT. DINING ROOM. EVENING

Ash, Kristofferson, and Kylie sit at the children's table eating dinner. Next to Ash, there is a small, slightly beaten-

up statue of a fox with his front legs raised in the air holding a medal above his head. Kylie points at it.

KYLIE

What's that?

ASH

This? Nothing. Just some old trophy I won for being an athlete.

Fox and Mrs. Fox sit at the adults' table. Fox guzzles down a last sip of wine and says with his mouth full of food:

FOX

I'm supposed to cover this book party at some animal's nest in a tobacco field down the hill, so me and Kylie are going to hop over there and give it a whirl. Don't wait up.

Fox pulls his napkin out of his collar, drops it on the table, and stands up. Mrs. Fox asks coolly:

MRS. FOX

What's the book?

FOX

(hesitates)

Some memoir. I'll get him to sign you a copy.

Fox kisses Mrs. Fox on the cheek. She looks at him suspiciously.

FOX

Dinner was --

(doing a little gesture)

-- pitch-perfect.

EXT. WOODS. NIGHT

Fox and Kylie walk among the trees. They are dressed in their prowling outfits.

FOX

I spotted a couple of broken burglar bars underneath the back door to Bean's secret cider cellar.

KYLIE

We're breaking into Bean's house?

FOX
(hesitates)
Cellar.

KYLIE
Where he lives?

FOX
(hesitates)
Where he keeps the cider.

ASH
(brightly)
Below where he lives.

Ash, dressed in his own prowling outfit, is walking with Fox and Kylie. Fox stops short:

FOX
Where'd you come from? Go back to the tree and do your homework!

ASH
I want to help you steal some cider.

FOX
(angrily)
We're going to a book party! And keep your mouth shut about any cider, because no one ever said that! Get out of here!

ASH
But Dad --

FOX
But nothing! You're going to get me in a lot of trouble! Besides you're too little and un-coordinated.

The three animals stand in silence for a minute. Fox points to his tree. Ash spits on the ground. He turns and starts back home. Fox shakes his head.

FOX
Where the cuss does that kid get off? Can you believe that? How'd he get tipped off? You think he's going to tell on us?

Fox turns to Kylie. Kylie looks back at him vacantly.

FOX
Before we go any further, from now on can you give me some kind of signal once in a
(more)

FOX (cont'd)
 while just so I know any of this is
 getting through to you?

Pause. Kylie makes a slight motion with his paw. Fox
 hesitates.

FOX
 Was that it? OK.

KYLIE
 (pointing)
 There's another one.

Fox looks back quickly. He seems simultaneously relieved and
 agitated. He looks around nervously.

FOX
 Ah. Good. You made it.

Kristofferson comes out of the bushes and uneasily approaches
 Fox and Kylie.

FOX
 Anybody see you?

KRISTOFFERSON
 I don't think so.

FOX
 Here, put this bandit hat on.

Fox hands Kristofferson a black ski-cap.

EXT. BARNYARD. NIGHT

Fox, Kylie, and Kristofferson (all wearing black ski-caps
 pulled down over their faces) dart across the yard and around
 the back of Bean's farmhouse. Kristofferson says as they run:

KRISTOFFERSON
 I must say, I'm pleased to be invited,
 but I'm not sure I should be doing this,
 Uncle Foxy!

FOX
 Why not?

KRISTOFFERSON
 Because I don't like to be dishonest with
 people!

FOX
 Well, just keep your mouth shut, and it
 won't be a problem!

KYLIE

Yeah, but I don't think he should come with us, either.

FOX

(annoyed)

We're not taking a vote!

Fox climbs onto a garbage pail and pulls open a window shutter. He jiggles a bent burglar bar. Kylie looks around nervously.

KYLIE

You know, one time this wolf I saw --

FOX

(irritated)

What's with all the wolf talk? Can we give it a rest, for once?

INT. BEAN'S SECRET CIDER CELLAR. NIGHT

A vast, damp, gloomy cellar with hundreds of glass jars stacked from floor to ceiling. Each jar is marked Cider. Gauges and monitors glow on valves and vats, and a trap-door stands propped open over a vault in the floor filled with apples. Fox, Kylie, and Kristofferson come inside and quietly drop to the brick floor. Kylie whispers:

KYLIE

Look at all this apple juice.

FOX

(sternly)

Apple juice? Apple juice? We didn't come here for apple juice. This is some of the strongest, finest alcoholic cider money can buy -- or that can even be stolen. It burns in your throat, boils in your stomach, and tastes almost exactly like pure, melted gold.

A match strikes in the darkness. Fox and Kylie look around the room frantically. On the highest shelf, peering out from behind a huge jar, they see an enormous rat in a striped shirt with a lit match in his claw. A tag stitched onto his breast pocket reads Bean Security. He puts the flame in his mouth to snuff it out and holds the matchstick in his teeth. He is twice as long as a fox, extremely greasy, and moves like a beatnik.

He takes a draw from a small rubber tube inserted in the neck of his cider jar. He says with a slightly sinister New Orleans accent:

RAT
 Y'all are trespassin', now. Illegally.
 'Round these parts, we don't take kindly
 to cider poachers.

Fox and Rat stare at each other. Fox says, finally:

FOX
 You've aged badly, Rat.

RAT
 You're gettin' a little long in the
 tooth, yourself, partner.

Rat spins around and hurls himself scuttling over a shelf,
 down the wall, and through the air onto the brick floor at
 Fox's feet. He flicks open a switchblade and brandishes it.
 He hisses.

Kylie shrieks. He darts away and jumps into a bucket of
 apples. Fox takes an old-fashioned boxing stance.
 Kristofferson strikes a karate pose behind him.

RAT
 How's your old lady doin'?

Kylie peers out from the bucket nervously. Fox circles Rat
 slowly while Kristofferson flanks him.

FOX
 Do you refer to my wife?

RAT
 She was the town tart, in her day. Wild
 and foot-loose and pretty as a mink
 stole. She was a crème brulée -- until
 you made an honest woman out of her, Mr.
 Fox.

Kylie says, intrigued, from the bucket:

KYLIE
 Is that true?

FOX
 (annoyed)
 Of course, not. I mean, certainly, she
lived. We all did. It was a different
 time. Let's not use a double-standard.
 She marched against the --

KYLIE
 But town tart?

FOX

Shut up.

Rat lunges at Fox with his switchblade. Fox dodges nimbly. He cocks an eyebrow and smiles:

FOX

That was close, Rat. Be careful.

RAT

Oh, I'm as careful as a --

A door at the top of the stairs opens suddenly with a loud creak. Fox and Rat freeze. Kristofferson jerks a sheet of wax-paper out from under Rat's feet. Rat trips backwards and falls into the vault in the floor. The trap door slams shut over him. Kristofferson races over to Kylie and jumps into the bucket with him. Fox zooms up a shelf and hides behind a cider jar.

Mrs. Bean comes swiftly down the stairs and walks straight over to the shelf where Fox is hiding. She carries a meat cleaver and a rolling pin.

MRS. BEAN

How many jars should I bring up, Franklin?

Bean answers from upstairs:

BEAN (O.S.)

I don't know. Two, I guess.

Mrs. Bean grabs the two jars directly next to the one Fox is hiding behind and tucks them under her arm. Fox tenses his body. He shivers slightly. A graze of the red fur of his arm sticks out barely from behind his jar. He reaches out gingerly and presses it down. Mrs. Bean hesitates.

MRS. BEAN

You drank three yesterday, though.

BEAN (O.S.)

All right, take three.

Mrs. Bean grabs Fox's jar and pulls it off the shelf, looking away at the last instant. Fox's eyes freeze wide open in a state of shock. His body is contorted into a yoga posture vaguely the shape of a cider jar. Mrs. Bean looks toward the stairs with her back to the shelf.

(NOTE: an alternate version of Fox's body contorted into a cider jar yoga posture will be used for this shot.)

MRS. BEAN

No, three's too many. It's unhealthy.
You're anorexic. I'll bring two.

Mrs. Bean puts the jar back onto the shelf in front of Fox. Fox relaxes slightly. Mrs. Bean grabs Fox's jar away again. Fox's eyes freeze wide open. Mrs. Bean says reluctantly:

MRS. BEAN

But maybe, just in case --

The trap door rattles slightly as Rat scratches at it trying to free himself. His muffled voice shrieks furiously but faintly from beneath the floor-boards. Bean says encouragingly from upstairs:

BEAN (O.S.)

Yeah, in case I get real thirsty and --

MRS. BEAN

(definitively)

No, two's plenty.

Mrs. Bean puts Fox's jar back onto the shelf and walks away to the bottom of the stairs. She stops. She looks back curiously. She scans the corners of the room. She turns away, goes up the stairs, and closes the door. Kylie says in the darkness:

KYLIE

Oh, my cuss. That was like a scene out of
a --

The door opens again. Bean himself stands silently in the dark at the top of the stairs. He lights a cigarette. Silence. He shuts the door.

CUT TO:

Fox, Kylie, and Kristofferson running away from Bean's farmhouse rolling jars of cider in wicker baskets with wheels. Kylie and Kristofferson look badly shaken. Fox whispers excitedly:

FOX

What'd I tell you? This kid's a natural,
am I right?

A gunshot rings out taking us to:

EXT. BEAN'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Bean sits in an armchair in the dark at the far end of his porch sipping on a glass of cider moonshine. Boggis and Bunce

sit across from him eating goose-liver doughnuts and sliced chicken sandwiches. Bean says warmly:

BEAN

It's so good of you to come. Lovely to see you. You're both looking splendid. How've you been, Walter? In good health, I trust?

Boggis starts to answer, but Bean interrupts:

BEAN

Nathan? All's well?

Bunce begins to speak, but Bean continues:

BEAN

Wonderful.

Bean takes a long pull from his glass. He winces and smiles. Pause.

BEAN

Any fox problems?

Silence. Boggis and Bunce suddenly erupt, wildly agitated and emotional:

BOGGIS

Are you joking?

BUNCE

It's horrible.

BOGGIS

We're miserable.

BUNCE

He's laughing at us.

BOGGIS

It's humiliating.

BUNCE

We're furious.

BOGGIS

I don't even want to talk about it.

Bean nods. He lights a cigarette.

BEAN

Yes. I thought perhaps we ought to kill him.

Boggis and Bunce both look slightly puzzled. They hesitate.

BOGGIS

Well, that seems rather obvious.

BUNCE

We've tried. He's too sneaky.

BEAN

(thoughtfully)

Ah, right. Of course. He's very clever, isn't he? Quick and sly. Might be quite difficult, I suppose --

Pause. Bean suddenly leaps to his feet, pulls a 9mm Luger out of his coat pocket, and fires behind his back, over his shoulder, and between his legs -- shooting out all the light bulbs. The porch goes dark. Bean flicks on a flashlight and points it in his two colleague's faces. They look scared. He says darkly:

BEAN

-- but I've already figured out where this fox lives, and tomorrow night we're going to camp in the bushes, wait for him to come out of the hole in his tree, and shoot the cuss to smithereens. How's that grab you, fellas?

Boggis and Bunce hesitate. They nod and murmur their approval.

INT. FOX'S TREE. NIGHT

Fox and Kylie come quietly into the half-lit kitchen dressed in their prowling outfits. They walk to the door.

MRS. FOX

Another book party?

Fox and Kylie turn around, startled. Mrs. Fox sits on a stool in the darkened pantry.

FOX

Woah! I didn't see you. Sitting in the dark over there. Yeah, no. Actually, there's a fire. I just got the call. They said maybe it's arson? I got to interview the marshall and see what's --

MRS. FOX

Kylie, is he telling the truth?

KYLIE
 (freaking out)
 I don't want to be put in the middle of
 this.

FOX
 (pause)
 Thanks, Kylie.

Across the room, Mrs. Fox sees Kristofferson standing in the doorway wearing his black ski-cap. She looks puzzled, then angry. Kristofferson looks uneasy. Mrs. Fox turns to Fox and says darkly:

MRS. FOX
 Why's he wearing that bandit hat?

FOX
 (hesitates)
 His ears were cold. He's not with us.
 (to Kristofferson)
 Go back to bed.

Kristofferson quickly turns away and runs back upstairs. Mrs. Fox's eyes narrow.

MRS. FOX
 If what I think is happening is
 happening --
 (ominously)
 -- it better not be.

CUT TO:

Boggis, Bunce, and Bean waiting crouched in the bushes. Bean licks his finger and holds it up to test the direction of the wind. He nods, points to his nose, and gives a thumbs-up to Boggis and Bunce.

EXT. FOX'S TREE. NIGHT

Fox pokes his head up out of his hole. He sniffs once. He moves an inch forward and stops. He sniffs again. He waits a moment and listens. He steps out of the hole and says stonily:

FOX
 Nice job covering for me. Next time
 try --

A twig snaps. Fox freezes.

CUT TO:

Boggis, Bunce, and Bean frozen in the bushes.

CUT TO:

The branches of the trees as the wind suddenly changes its direction.

CUT TO:

Fox on high alert. He rapidly sniffs the air three times in a row. He turns to a confused Kylie and says, panicking:

FOX

All three!

Fox and Kylie spin around and dart back into the hole as Boggis, Bunce, and Bean open fire wildly from the bushes. A barrage of bullets and buckshot rips into the tree-bark. Silence.

Smoke from the three guns floats upward in the night air. Boggis, Bunce, and Bean approach the tree. Bean shines his flashlight on Fox's hole.

In the circle of light on the ground lies the tattered, blood-stained remains of Fox's tail. Bean picks it up and holds it in the air in front of Boggis and Bunce.

BEAN

We got the tail, but we missed the fox.

Bean takes out his walkie-talkie and says into it:

BEAN

Petey! Sorry to wake you. Can I trouble you to dash out here right away with, shall we say, three shovels, two pick-axes, 500 rounds of ammunition -- and a bottle of apple-cider.

INT. FOX'S TREE. NIGHT

Mrs. Fox licks the stump of Fox's tail and mends it with gauze and medical tape. She looks furious. Kylie and the Fox cubs watch, concerned. Ash says dismissively:

ASH

It'll grow back, won't it?

KYLIE

(shaking his head)

Tails don't grow back, except for lizards.

FOX

(miserably)

Tails don't grow back. I'm going to be tail-less for the rest of my life.

ASH

Well, anyway, it's not half as bad as double-pneumonia, right?

(pointing to Kristofferson)

His dad's got one foot in the grave and three feet on a banana peel. That's a lot worse than --

Kristofferson hurls an acorn violently onto the floor. It ricochets off a wall and into a teacup. Everyone falls silent. Kristofferson turns away.

KRISTOFFERSON

Excuse me, everyone. I'm going to go meditate for half an hour.

Kristofferson walks out of the room. Mrs. Fox looks at Ash and says angrily:

MRS. FOX

You've got twenty-nine minutes to come up with a proper apology.

Ash turns to Fox. He crosses his arms in front of his chest and stares grimly. He suddenly explodes, half-sobbing, in a rage:

ASH

Where's my bandit hat? Why didn't I get shot at? You think I'm no good at anything? Well, maybe you're right! Thanks!

Ash storms out of the room. Fox looks shocked. Kylie shrugs.

KYLIE

I told you not to bring him.

Kylie walks out of the room.

CUT TO:

Fox lying in bed staring at the ceiling in the dark next to Mrs. Fox.

FOX

Why the cuss didn't I listen my lawyer?
At this point we'll be lucky if we can
(more)

FOX (cont'd)
flip this tree for half of what we've
already sunk into it.

Fox flips over onto his stomach.

FOX
I won't be able to sleep on my back for
six weeks -- and on my stomach I feel
congested. Why the cuss didn't I listen
to my lawyer?

MRS. FOX
(bitterly)
Because you don't listen to anybody.

FOX
(sitting up suddenly)
What was that?

MRS. FOX
(pause)
What? I said --

There is a quiet scraping sound from above. Fox jumps out of
bed. He hollers:

FOX
Wake up! Everybody! They're digging us
out!

There is a scrunch and then a loud thump from above. Mrs. Fox
looks at Fox intensely:

MRS. FOX
They'll kill the children!

FOX
(steely)
Over my dead body, they will.

MRS. FOX
(angrily)
That's what I'm saying! You'd be dead,
too, in that scenario!

FOX
(angrily)
Well, I'm arguing against that!

MRS. FOX
(screaming)
What are you talking about?

FOX
 (screaming)
 Why are you yelling at me?

KYLIE
 (agonized)
 Stop! Stop! Stop!

Fox and Mrs. Fox turn quickly to Kylie standing in the doorway with a red blanket wrapped around his shoulders. Ash and Kristofferson stand behind him. They look terrified. Kylie shouts in a pained voice:

KYLIE
 You say one thing, she says another, and
 it all changes back again!

The point of a shovel pierces the ceiling. Everyone looks up and stares in shock. Fox suddenly leaps across the room with a wild energy, scrambles halfway up a wall, and throws over two chairs.

FOX
 I've got it! There's not a moment to
 lose! Why didn't I think of this before?

MRS. FOX
 Think of what?

FOX
 (steely)
 We've been trapped before.
 (at the top of his lungs)
 DIG!!!

CUT TO:

Everyone digging furiously. Dirt flies everywhere. The shot booms down into the ground, among the roots of the tree, through buried pebbles, layers of soil, and subterranean mineral deposits.

TITLE:

1 HOUR LATER

The shot stops at the bottom of a dark hole deep, deep underground. Mrs. Fox lies on the floor, breathing heavily, with a lit lantern at her side. The cubs are sprawled out around her. Kylie leans in the corner with his shirt off tied around his waist. Fox stands up and clears his throat. Everyone looks at him.

FOX

I think it's time for me to give us a pep talk and explain some things.

(commencing a speech)

A very long time ago --

MRS. FOX

May I have a word with you privately?

FOX

(hesitates)

Well, we're in a hole. Where --

MRS. FOX

Just on the other side of this mineral deposit. Follow me.

Fox reluctantly follows Mrs. Fox through a crack in the bedrock and into a small air-pocket with glittering quartz walls. She wheels on Fox:

MRS. FOX

I'm going to lose my temper now.

FOX

(pause)

When?

MRS. FOX

Right now.

FOX

(pause)

Well, when --

Mrs. Fox scratches Fox across the face, slicing a quick sliver into his fur. Fox cringes away with his paws up protectively. He lowers his paws. His eyes fill with tears.

(NOTE: the scar in Fox's fur never grows back.)

Mrs. Fox takes a deep breath. She says:

MRS. FOX

Twelve fox-years ago, you made a promise to me while we were caged inside that fox-trap that, if we survived, you would never steal another chicken, goose, turkey, duck, or squab, whatever they are. I believed you. Why did you lie to me?

FOX
 (simply)
 Because I'm a wild animal.

MRS. FOX
 You're also a husband and a father.

FOX
 (pained)
 I'm trying to tell you the truth about myself.

MRS. FOX
 I don't care about the truth about yourself.

Fox looks down at the ground. He nods and tries to contain his emotions. Mrs. Fox watches him coldly.

MRS. FOX
 This story is too predictable.

FOX
 (surprised)
 Predictable? Really? What happens in the end?

MRS. FOX
 (quietly)
 In the end, we all die -- unless you change.

Mrs. Fox walks out of the air-pocket. Fox stands alone in silence.

EXT. FOX'S TREE. DAY

The next morning. There is a large hole in the side of the hill, under Fox's tree. The ceiling to the living room has been completely removed. Boggis, Bunce, and Bean stand half-underground with their heads sticking out of the hole, breathing hard, with dirty shovels over their shoulders.

Pause. Bean takes out his walkie-talkie and says into it:

BEAN
 Petey! Good morning. Run down to the rentals department over at Malloy Consolidated and place an order for, shall we say, one Mighty Max, one Junior Spitfire, and a long-range Tornado 375 Turbo. For immediate delivery.

CUT TO:

Three yellow and black, murderous, brutal bulldozer digging-tractors with Malloy Consolidated painted on the sides of them. They make a terrible, high-pitched growling noise and spit black grease and smoke.

Boggis, Bunce, and Bean stand among the tractors nodding giddily to each other. They scramble into the drivers' seats and begin ripping into the hillside. Bunce sits on a dictionary to see over the dashboard.

CUT TO:

Fox, Mrs. Fox, Kylie, Ash, and Kristofferson digging frantically.

CUT TO:

The tractors grabbing huge chunks of earth and tossing them into the meadow. Boggis, Bunce, and Bean, drunk with digging, laugh manically as the controls of their tractors.

INSERT:

A temperature gauge with its needle pushing the limits of the red.

INT. HOLE. DAY

Fox, Mrs. Fox, Ash, Kristofferson, and Kylie dig crazily. Fox tries to talk to Ash cheerily as they dig:

FOX

Ash, are you mad at me? I understand if you are, and I'm sorry. I never would've involved your cousin if I realized you would feel this way. It was only ever just because he's kind of a natural, and --

(with a sudden burst of admiration)

I mean, look at him dig!

Ash looks. Kristofferson is, in fact, a remarkable digger.

FOX

Anyway, I'm sorry your feelings --

ASH

I'm going to put dirt in my ears.

Ash quickly makes two ear-plugs out of mud and continues digging. Fox sighs.

DISSOLVE TO:

The hill with half its earth dug out from under the tree. The tree still stands precariously above the wild tractors.

DISSOLVE TO:

The hill now razed with the fallen, old beech tree laying on its side as the tractors dig deeper.

DISSOLVE TO:

The tractors almost completely below ground in a deep crater. A crowd of neighbors and local press from the town has gathered and watches as the tractors stop digging and rumble up out of the crater. The motors go quiet. Boggis, Bunce, and Bean climb down from their tractors. They look angry and tired.

INT. HOLE. NIGHT

A deep cavern with walls made of knotted roots and vines. Fox, Mrs. Fox, and Kylie lie exhausted on the floor in one corner. Ash and Kristofferson lie in another. Kristofferson says quietly in the dark:

KRISTOFFERSON

I don't have beagle ticks, by the way.

ASH

(overly puzzled and defensive)

Me, neither. Whoever said --

KRISTOFFERSON

Apparently, that's what you've been telling everyone. Beagle ticks and pelt lice.

ASH

(deeply offended)

I never said that, and you're misquoting me -- or somebody is -- but I'm going to get to the bottom of it.

KRISTOFFERSON

(troubled)

Look, Ash, we may or may not ever see the light of day again, but I really like Agnes, and I think she likes me.

ASH

(shrugs)

Great. She's a free agent. What do I care?

KRISTOFFERSON

(sternly)

Well, then why're you dead-set on --

ASH

(suddenly)

Can I ask you a question?

KRISTOFFERSON

(pause, stiffening)

You may.

ASH

What's the point of sitting on the floor with your legs twisted into a pretzel talking to yourself for an hour and forty-five minutes? It's weird.

KRISTOFFERSON

(uneasy)

My father and I first started practicing meditation together when I was --

ASH

Yeah? Well, I'd worry more about what that does for your reputation than whether or not you have beagle ticks or not.

KRISTOFFERSON

(stony)

I don't. Nor pelt lice.

In the opposite corner, Fox says to Kylie:

FOX

One of those slovenly farmers is probably wearing my tail as a necktie by now.

KYLIE

You're paranoid, Foxy.

CUT TO:

Mrs. Bean sitting in her kitchen watching television next to an extremely skinny, freckled twelve year-old boy. The boy points at the screen and laughs to himself:

FRECKLED BOY

Look at Dad's tie.

INSERT:

The television set. Bean is on-screen with an Action 13 reporter. He wears a fox-fur necktie.

CUT TO:

The reporter confronting Bean:

REPORTER

Farmer, correct me if I'm misreading the data, you've successfully destroyed the scenery, but the alleged fox remains at large. What will you three prominent farmers do now?

BEAN

Well, Dan, I can tell you what we're not going to do. We're not going to let him go.

EXT. HILL. DAY

Boggis, Bunce, Bean, Earl Malloy, and two men dressed in orange and yellow striped jumpsuits with Klubeck Blasting and Obliteration stitched into the pockets peer over the top of a sand-bag embankment. The three tractors are parked behind them. Petey approaches, running, and jumps the sand-bags to crouch down next to the farmers. Silence. Bean cranes his neck up over the embankment, curious. He frowns.

There is a gigantic explosion.

CUT TO:

Boggis, Bunce, Bean, Earl Malloy, and the Klubeck brothers standing in the center of blast crater. It looks like a meteor has smashed into the hill. They all stare down into a tiny hole that continues downward into the darkness from the bottom of the crater.

Bean is wildly frustrated.

BEAN

How many men have we got? Boggis?

BOGGIS

Thirty-five.

BEAN

Bunce?

BUNCE

Thirty-six.

BEAN

And I've got thirty-seven. That's --

Bean whispers rapidly to himself as he makes a quick calculation.

BEAN

-- a hundred and eight altogether.

Bean says loudly into his walkie-talkie:

BEAN

Petey! Drop everything and assemble all hundred and eight members of our entire three combined work-forces. We're going to starve them out and then kill them -- starting in, shall we say, fifteen minutes.

CUT TO:

That night. A helicopter with a Bean, inc. decal on the side of it circles the crater scanning the dark terrain with a searchlight. There are tents, trucks, and 108 men gathered around the perimeter. They sit on bricks and logs and are armed with bats, pistols, rifles, shotguns, bows and arrows, and hatchets.

EXT. CAMP. NIGHT

There is a full moon. Lanterns glow in the farmers' tents. A group of farmhands sit around a campfire next to the crater. One of them cooks a chicken on a spit. Another sits on a log playing a banjo. He is Petey. He sings:

PETEY

'Bout a handsome little fox
 Let me sing you folks a yarn.
 Hey, diddle-dee, doddle-do, doodle-dum!
 'Twas a splendid little feller
 Full of wit 'n' grace 'n' charm.
 Say, zippy-zee, yappy-yo, google-gum!

The shot moves past the leathery faces of the other farmhands as they listen: amused, moved, hungry, tired, charmed, annoyed, whistling, playing a jew's harp, trying to sing along but not really knowing the words, etc.

PETEY

Like any little critter needin'
 Vittels for his littl'uns,
 Well, he stole, and he cheated,
 And he lied to survive.

(more)

PETEY (cont'd)

Doodle-dum, diddle-die, doddle-diddle-
doodle-dee!
Zippy-zo, zippy-zay, zippy-zappy-
zoopy-zee!

(this verse is spoken.)

Let me take a little tick now
To color in the scene:
'Cross the valley lived three yokels
Name of Boggis, Bunce, and Bean.

(back to singing:)

Now these three crazy jackies
had our hero on the run.
Shot the tail off the cuss
With a fox-shootin' gun.

But that stylish little fox
Was as clever as a whip.
Dug as quick as a gopher
Who was a hyper-ack-a-tive.

Now those three farmers sit
'Twhere there's a hole 'twas once a hill.
Hey, diddle-dee, doddle-do, doodle-dum!
And as far as I can reckon
They're a-settin' up there still.

(slowly)

Way, zippy-zee, yappy-yo, google --

BEAN

(interrupting)

What are you singing, Petey?

Petey stops short. Everyone turns quickly and sees Bean standing over them in the darkness with his Luger in one hand and a cigarette in the other. Petey looks nervous.

PETEY

I don't know. I was just kind of making
it up as I was going along...

Petey trails off. Bean shakes his head. He looks highly irritated.

BEAN

That's just weak song-writing! You wrote
a bad song, Petey!

Bean throws his cigarette into the campfire. He storms away. Petey turns to the other farmhands. Everyone looks uncomfortable.

TITLE:

3 DAYS LATER (18 Fox-Days)

CUT TO:

Morning in the farmers' camp. The cook flips an egg on a skillet. He puts it on a plate with bacon and hands it to Bunce. Bunce asks:

BUNCE

How long can a fox go without food or water?

CUT TO:

The exhausted foxes and Kylie underground. Kylie says quietly:

KYLIE

Well, I can only answer as an opossum, but I don't think I can last more than another couple of hours before I get completely dehydrated and starve to death.

ASH

What's that?

Ash points. Everyone looks. A tiny hole appears in the wall at the end of the tunnel. Dirt crumbles out of it -- and a bit of metal catches a glint. Fox and his family watch, frozen. A breath of air blows into the tunnel.

The flame on Mrs. Fox's lantern flickers once and goes out. Ash starts:

ASH

Dad?

FOX

(whispers sharply)
Not a sound!

Silence. There is a sudden, loud scabbling noise. A match strikes. Fox touches it to Mrs. Fox's lantern-wick.

The tiny hole in the wall has become a large one. Badger stands in front of Fox with his law partner Beaver, Beaver's son, a medium-sized mole, and a grey field mouse with a bandana tied in a "do-rag" style around his head. Badger has a spoon in his hand. Fox and Badger erupt at each other, screaming simultaneously:

FOX

You scared the cuss out of us!

BADGER

(pause)

A lot of good animals are probably going
to die because of --

(screaming)

-- you!

Fox looks taken aback. He falls silent. Badger continues:

BADGER

We've been digging in circles for three
days. Half the woods've been obliterated.
Nobody can get out. Right now my wife's
huddled at the bottom of the flint-mine
with no food, no water, and twenty-seven
starving animal brats!

Fox looks around the room at the entire gaunt, dirty,
emaciated assembly. Everyone stares at him angrily. He
swallows. The mole says softly.:

MOLE

I just want to see a little --

(suddenly crying)

-- sunshine.

FOX

(puzzled)

But you're nocturnal, Phil. Your eyes
barely even open, on a good day.

MOLE

(enraged)

I'm sick of your double-talk. We have
rights!

CUT TO:

Beaver's son looming over Ash and Kristofferson in a muddy
alcove on the side of the tunnel. He pokes Ash in the chest
with the finger of his paw.

BEAVER'S SON

We don't like you, and we hate your dad.
Now grab some of that mud, chew it in
your mouth, and swallow it.

ASH

(scared and disgusted)

I'm not going to eat mud!

BEAVER'S SON

Cuss, yeah, you are.

Beaver's son grabs a handful of mud, smashes it into Ash's mouth, and forces his jaws up and down in a chewing motion. Ash coughs and splutters. Kristofferson frowns. He takes off his shoes with his feet. He says with a quiet ferocity:

KRISTOFFERSON

Don't do that.

Beaver's son looks to Kristofferson. He looks down at Kristofferson's feet.

BEAVER'S SON

Why'd you take your shoes off?

KRISTOFFERSON

So I don't break your nose when I kick it.

Kristofferson kicks Beaver's son in the face, karate chops his neck, elbow-jabs him twice in the gut, and flips the enormous youth over his shoulder and into the mud. Beaver's son gets up, crying, and walks out of the alcove.

Ash watches blankly with mud all over his mouth as Kristofferson puts his shoes back on.

ASH

I can fight my own fights.

KRISTOFFERSON

(simply)

No, you can't.

CUT TO:

Badger and Fox facing each other at the end of the tunnel. Badger says aggressively:

BADGER

Those farmers aren't going to quit until they've got you and every member of your family nailed upside-down to a bloody stick with your eyes gorged out.

FOX

(freaked out)

This is getting a little too personal.

Badger waits for Fox to continue. Fox stares into space.

FOX

Give me a minute.

Fox turns and walks away. He faces the wall of the tunnel. He sits down on a rock. Everyone watches him uncertainly. They look at each other. Badger starts to say something, but Kylie cuts him off sharply:

KYLIE
(sharply)

Shh!

Badger falls silent. Fox sits with his chin on his paw, lost in concentrated thought. He stands up. He nods repeatedly and begins to pace. His eyes dart from one spot to another. His paws move abruptly around in the air drawing lines and shapes. He freezes and looks straight up at the ceiling of the tunnel. He snaps the fingers of his paw and looks to the others. He says with a cautious excitement:

FOX
I've got an idea.

BADGER
(tentatively)
What is it?

FOX
It could be a good one.

BEAVER
(pointedly)
Lay it on us.

FOX
It might save our lives.

KYLIE
(exasperated)
Say the idea!

Fox looks down at Ash, who stands beside him with mud still on his mouth. He nods. He says suddenly:

FOX
All right! Let's try it!

Fox runs over to Mrs. Fox:

FOX
Go to the flint-mine. Tell Mrs. Badger, Rabbit's ex-girlfriend, *et al.* that help is on the way.

MRS. FOX
(skeptically)
Is help on the way?

Fox grips Mrs. Fox's paw. He looks into her eyes and says intensely:

FOX
I sure as cuss hope so.

Mrs. Fox detects a special, familiar, inspired light in her husband's eyes at this moment. She nods. She hands Ash the lantern. She straightens the neck-line of his cape, licks the mud off Ash's snout, and says to him suddenly:

MRS. FOX
I know what it's like to feel different.

ASH
(worried)
I'm not different, am I?

MRS. FOX
We all are --
(points to Fox)
-- him especially -- but there's
something kind of fantastic about that,
isn't there?

ASH
(sadly)
Not to me. I'd prefer to be an athlete.

Mrs. Fox smooths-back Ash's fur. She scrambles away down Badger's tunnel. Fox looks after her abstractly. Ash wants to cry but does not. Fox turns to the others.

FOX
Gentlemen, this time we must dig in a
very special direction.

Fox feels the walls with his paws. Everyone watches attentively.

FOX
I got to kind of feel out the vibe.

Fox stops. He points slightly downwards and due south. He says with quiet anticipation:

FOX
Begin.

Everyone sighs and reluctantly starts digging -- slowly but intently.

CUT TO:

The diggers one hundred yards later. Fox suddenly whistles and raises his fist.

The diggers stop digging. Fox feels the ceiling with his paws. He knocks something hard. It sounds hollow. He looks at the others with a funny expression and raises an eyebrow.

Fox carefully pushes up a floorboard. It creaks loudly. They all duck down and wait. Nothing happens. Fox pushes up a second floorboard. He cautiously pokes his head up through the gap. He lets out a shriek of excitement and whispers excitedly down to the others:

FOX

I've done it! I've done it, first time!
Come up and see where you are, my
darlings!

INT. SHED. NIGHT

Everyone scrambles up out of the tunnel and stands in the middle of Boggis' Chicken House #1. The room is teeming with chickens, which stare at them nervously. There are black chickens, white chickens, brown chickens, and one that combines all three colors. Fox whispers:

FOX

I hit it slap in the middle! Do you get
how incredible this is?

Everyone looks dazed and wild. Fox whistles sharply with a half-chirp and makes his obscure hand-signal.

MONTAGE:

Fox and the other diggers tunnel under the silo in front of Bunce Industries. They carry dead, black chickens. Cows eat grass in the pasture above.

Fox and the other diggers comes out of a hole in the floor and dance an ecstatic jig in a great storeroom lined to the ceiling with plucked ducks and geese. Smoked hams and sides of bacon dangle from the rafters.

Fox and the other diggers tunnel under the windmill in front of Bean, inc. They carry dead chickens, ducks, geese, ham, and bacon. Sheep eat clover in the field above.

Fox and the other diggers comes out of a hole in the floor and dance an ecstatic jig in a corrugated plastic and metal pen among dozens of gobbling turkeys.

Fox and the other diggers race dancing ecstatically back through the complex network of tunnels carrying dead

chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, bacon, flour, salt, sugar, jars of cider, and a portable television set.

INT. FLINT-MINE. DAY

The flint-mine is a large but cozy space with stone walls, a dirt floor, a small kitchen, and a fireplace. There are rows of cots, sleeping bags, boxes, blankets, and suitcases for all the refugee animals. All the animals have gathered together and drink cider cocktails while small rabbits, skunks, and field mice set the table. The room is festooned with garlands. A well-dressed mole smoking a pipe plays the piano.

The shot moves to Weasel, who stands in the corner talking with Beaver.

WEASEL

What am I going to do? I'm going to hold him to the terms of the contract. It's not my fault they uprooted it.

The shot moves alongside a table of small rabbits and badgers setting places for dinner. It moves past a kitchen where Rabbit works briskly with Mrs. Fox and Mrs. Badger preparing a feast. It stops at Fox standing in front of a fireplace talking with Badger.

BADGER

I can imagine how painful, even just emotionally, that must be for you.

FOX

(uneasy)

Well, you know, it's not the end of the world.

Ash approaches carrying a tray with two cups of punch on it. He serves Fox and Badger while they continue their conversation.

BADGER

Oh, but, Foxy, how humiliating! Having your whole tail blown clean off by a --

FOX

(cooly)

Can we drop it?

Ash bristles. His eyes narrow. He distractedly thrusts the tray out to Fox. Fox takes the tray with a puzzled look on his face. Ash walks away in a trance. He goes over to Kristofferson and Agnes standing at a punch-bowl serving each

others cups with a ladle. Ash grabs Kristofferson by the sleeve. Agnes looks startled. Ash says forcefully:

ASH

They say you're a natural. True or false?
Answer the question.

KRISTOFFERSON

True, I guess.

ASH

Correct. Get out of here, Agnes. I need a private word with Kristofferson.

KRISTOFFERSON

(taking exception)

Just a minute. She doesn't have to --

AGNES

(coolly)

I don't mind.

Agnes walks quickly away. Kristofferson looks upset.

ASH

I just had a brainstorm for something fantastic I've got to do -- and I can't do it alone.

KRISTOFFERSON

I'm not interested.

ASH

Hear me out.

KRISTOFFERSON

No, thanks. I think foxes from your side of the family take unnecessary risks.

ASH

Only because they got guts in their blood --

(motioning to him and Kristofferson)

-- and so do we. I was bit rude to Agnes, wasn't I? I'll say something nice to her in a minute.

Ash sighs. He starts to refill Kristofferson's cup again. Kristofferson suddenly puts his paw over the brim. Ash hesitates. He and Kristofferson lock eyes. Kristofferson says finally:

KRISTOFFERSON

What's the brainstorm?

ASH
 (pause)
 In a nutshell?
 (like Clint Eastwood)
 We're going to steal back my dad's tail.

Kristofferson raises an eyebrow.

EXT. CAMP. DAY

A large fire truck drives up to the destroyed hill with firemen hanging off the back and sides. It parks among the tractors and tents. The chief, in a white helmet, goes over to Boggis, Bunce, and Bean waiting at the mouth of the pit. A patch on his sleeve says O.W.F.R.P.F. Farmhands and firemen circle around.

CHIEF
 Who's got me a donation for the Old
 Wounded Fireman's Retirement Pension
 Fund?

Bean pulls a yellow check out of his inside pocket.

BEAN
 Right here.

INT. FLINT-MINE. DAY

Candles glow all around. Everyone is seated at the long dining room table, and a magnificent feast with every variety of fruit, meat, vegetable, and roasted bird has been laid out in front of them. They tear into their meals, eating and drinking ferociously. Crumbs, juices, blood, and bones fly into the air. Jaws snap and chew. There is no conversation.

Badger suddenly stands and rings a knife against his cider glass. Everyone looks up, taking a breather from the frenzy of eating. Badger clears his throat.

BADGER
 Well, it took a total catastrophe for all
 of you to finally take me up on my offer
 to have you over to the flint-mine for
 dinner, but I guess we have --

FOX
 (interrupting)
 I'm sorry. Maybe my invitation got lost
 in the mail. Does anybody know what this
 badger's talking about?

Everyone laughs. Fox sits at the opposite end of the table with a crooked smile on his face.

FOX
 But Clive's right --
 (standing up)
 -- in all seriousness --
 (aside, to Badger)
 -- excuse me, B.

Fox raises his cider glass. Badger reluctantly sits back down.

FOX
 I guess we do have those three ugly,
 cusshole farmers to thank for one thing:
 reminding us to be thankful and aware of
 each other. I'm going to say it again.
 (gesturing expansively)
 Aware.

Badger whispers to his wife:

BADGER
 Foxy cuss-blocked my toast, man.

CUT TO:

The hole where Fox's tree once stood. The dead tree lies on its side. A fireman slides a thick hose deep into the tunnel. He looks behind him and nods.

FIREMAN #1
 Ready.

The shot moves backwards along the hose, past seven more firemen signalling to each other with: a thumbs-up, a snap, a fist in the air, a swirl of the fingers, a peace symbol, an A-OK, and a hook-'em Horns. The shot continues past Boggis, Bunce, and Bean helping to hold the hose in position. Boggis growls. Bunce hisses. Bean snarls. The shot arrives at a pump on the side of the fire truck connected to a tanker with Bean's Alcoholic Cider printed on the side of it. The chief points:

CHIEF
 Let her rip.

A fireman cranks a huge wrench on a steel nut. A pressure gauge shoots to maximum. The fire truck and hose begin to vibrate loudly.

CUT TO:

Ash and Kristofferson crouched under a drain-cover pushed just-open next to a refrigerator. They peer out across a bright, clean, white kitchen. Silence.

KRISTOFFERSON

I don't feel safe.

ASH

That's because we're not. You should probably put on your bandit hat now. Personally, I don't have one, but I modified this tube sock.

Kristofferson puts on his black ski-cap, and Ash puts on a yellowish sock with orange stripes and eye-holes cut out of it. Kristofferson says earnestly:

KRISTOFFERSON

We look good.

ASH

(nodding)

Now where would you keep a prized tail, if you collected them, if that was your hobby?

KRISTOFFERSON

(pause)

I'd probably hang it over the mantelpiece.

ASH

(impressed)

Good. In fact -- what's that smell?

Ash and Kristofferson sniff the air. Across the room, they spot a plate of perfect, golden cookies on a counter-top with a step-ladder in front of it. They look at each other. They look around the quiet, empty room. They dart out, leaving the drain-cover propped-up, and race over the linoleum. They climb the step-ladder and stop at the plate. Ash swoons and says rapturously:

ASH

Ever tasted one of Mrs. Bean's famous nutmeg-ginger-apple-snaps?

Kristofferson shakes his head. He and Ash gather more cookies than they can possibly carry, eating as they collect them. Crumbs go everywhere. Kristofferson pauses. Ash looks at him curiously. Kristofferson points to a television set with the sound turned off in the corner.

Bean's interview is being replayed. At the bottom of the screen it reads Earlier This Week. Ash looks furious.

A door opens and closes on the other side of the kitchen. Ash and Kristofferson spin around, petrified, and see:

Mrs. Bean setting her keys and loose change onto a table. Ash and Kristofferson panic silently. Mrs. Bean does not appear to notice them. She walks out of the kitchen into the nest room. Ash and Kristofferson pocket and few more cookies and start to go -- and then Mrs. Bean walks back into the kitchen holding a fishing knife. Ash and Kristofferson scream, drop the cookies, and fly down the step-ladder.

CUT TO:

Fox in mid-toast:

FOX

I've stepped on some toes and alienated a few of you over the past few days -- there's even been talk of some kind of idiotic legal action -- but is it wrong for me to suggest we might've done worse than having an incredible banquet in a beautiful flint-mine surrounded by our favorite animals? Yes, our homes have been demolished -- but look at each other. Here we are. Wow. Now I've already had too much to drink, and I'm feeling sentimental, but I'm going to say something, anyway, which nobody wants to admit, but I think is probably true: we beat 'em. We beat those farmers, and now we're triumphantly eating their roasted chicken, their sizzling duck, their succulent turkey, their *foie gras de* --
(suddenly)

Where'd the boys go? Ash? Kristofferson?

(to Mrs. Fox)

What am I hearing again, baby? What's happening? Am I still paranoid?

There is a low, distant rumbling which rapidly builds to a deafening roar. Everyone waits, frozen. A single drop of water drips from the ceiling into Badger's water glass. Fox sips it. He looks puzzled.

FOX

Cider?

A wild deluge smashes into the room flooding the flint-mine and tunnels with a blasting current that sweeps everyone and everything away chaotically.

CUT TO:

The entire party of well-dressed animals and their plates, furniture, chickens, etc. shooting down the tunnel with the rushing cider. Fox, helpless, holding his breath, looks to

the others underwater: Badger shakes his head in disgust; Rabbit makes a fierce grimace; Mole bares his teeth ferociously; Beaver rants angrily with bubbles coming out off his mouth; and Kylie stares ahead vacantly, holding his nose.

Fox turns sadly to Mrs. Fox. She looks terrified.

INT. SEWER SYSTEM. NIGHT

The flood blasts out of a wide pipe rocketing the animals into a murky, brick cavern with drainpipes on all sides and three inches of black water on its floor. Fox picks himself up, dazed and scared, and looks around at his soaked friends and their families.

FOX

What the cuss just happened? Something with cider. That was dangerous. Is anyone hurt?

BADGER

(furious)

We're all hurt! My entire flint-mine just got demolished!

BEAVER

(enraged)

We're suing you again!

FOX

Let's do a head-count! Everybody pick a buddy!

Each animal turns to his neighbor and establishes their buddy relationship. Fox looks wildly agitated as his eyes dart about, searching. He shouts:

FOX

Where'd the boys go? Ash? Kristofferson?

Ash's voice cracks on the other side of the cavern:

ASH

I'm here.

Everyone turns to see Ash standing at the mouth of a smaller pipe. He looks devastated and terrified. Fox points to him.

FOX

Ash! Who's your buddy?

ASH

(freaked-out)

Kristofferson, but I lost him!

FOX
You lost him? Where were you?

ASH
(starting to cry)
We went for the tail!

FOX
(uncomprehending)
The what?

ASH
Your tail! The neck-tie!

FOX
(shocked)
Oh, my cuss! You're wearing a fake bandit
hat! What'd you do?

Fox hesitates. He suddenly yells desperately:

FOX
Kristofferson!

Fox sprints around the cavern, splashing, digging, and ducking in and out of tunnels as the others join his frantic search. Ash follows him. Their voices sound pained as they shout:

FOX/ASH
Kristofferson! Kristofferson!
Kristofferson!

CUT TO:

The three farmers standing next to the fire truck. Bean holds a soaked, half-conscious Kristofferson up in the air by the tail. Kristofferson is quietly crying.

BEAN
Wrap this wet, little mutt in a newspaper
and put him in a box with some holes
punched in the top.

INT. SEWER SYSTEM. NIGHT

Everyone has gathered together. They are all in a state of shock. Fox turns to Mrs. Fox beside him. She has her arms around Ash, whose face is buried in his hands. Fox says dismally:

FOX
Your brother's going to kill me, if he
survives his double-pneumonia.

Beaver runs into the brick cavern out of a drainpipe, shouting:

BEAVER

There's only one way out of this sewer, but the manhole cover's closed, and there's a station-wagon parked on it -- which means we're permanently stuck down here.

BADGER

(bitterly)

You still think we beat 'em, Foxy?

Everyone turns to Fox and stares at him coldly. Fox tiurns away and disappears into a dark pipe. Mrs. Fox follows him. Ash looks to Agnes. She stands alone on the far side of the sewer with tears all over her face.

CUT TO:

Fox and Mrs. Fox standing on a ledge near a cement waterfall. Fox says quietly:

FOX

Badger's right. These farmers aren't going to quit until they catch me. I shouldn't have lied to your face. I shouldn't have fallen off the wagon and started secretly stealing chickens on the sly. I shouldn't have pushed these farmers so far and tried to embarrass them and cuss with their heads. I enjoyed it, but I shouldn't have done it -- and now there's only one way out. Maybe if I hand myself over and let them kill me, stuff me, and hang me over their mantelpiece --

MRS. FOX

(icily)

You'll do no such thing.

FOX

(quietly)

Darling, maybe they'll let everyone else live.

Mrs. Fox stares at Fox. She says desolately:

MRS. FOX

Why'd you have to get us into this, Foxy?

FOX

I don't know, but I have a possible theory. I think I have this thing where I need everybody to think I'm the greatest -- the quote-unquote fantastic Mr. Fox -- and if they aren't completely knocked-out, dazzled, and kind of intimidated by me, then I don't feel good about myself.

Mrs. Fox shakes her head and turns away. Fox continues:

FOX

Foxes traditionally like to court danger, hunt prey, and outsmart predators -- and that's what I'm actually good at! I think, at the end of the day, I'm just --

MRS. FOX

(quietly)

We're wild animals.

Fox smiles sadly and nods. He shrugs.

FOX

I guess we always were. I promise you: if I had all this to do over again, I'd have never let you down. It was always more fun when we did it together, anyway.

Mrs. Fox has tears all over her face. Fox kisses her. He whispers in her ear:

FOX

I love you, Felicity.

MRS. FOX

I love you, too, but I shouldn't have married you.

Mrs. Fox turns and walks away. Fox stares after her. He goes over to Ash.

FOX

Did I ever tell you about the time I learned we were going to have a cub?

ASH

In the fox-trap.

FOX

Right. We were at gun-point, and your mother --

ASH
-- says she's pregnant.

FOX
Let me tell it, OK? I had no idea how we were going to get out of this jam, and then it hit me: what do foxes do better than any other animal?

ASH
Dig.

FOX
You're stepping on my lines.

ASH
Keep telling it.

FOX
So we dug. And the whole time I put paw over paw, scooping dirt and pebbles with your mother digging like crazy beside me, I kept wondering: who is this little boy going to be?

ASH
Or girl.

FOX
Or girl, right -- because at that point we didn't know.

Fox grabs Ash by his shoulders and looks him in the eye.

FOX
Ash, I'm so glad he was you.

Fox hugs Ash tightly, holds him for an instant, then let's go.

FOX
It's not your fault -- it's mine.

Fox climbs into an exit pipe. He turns back to the group.

FOX
Good-bye.

Fox looks across the cavern to Mrs. Fox standing with her back to him. She turns to face him. Her eyes are burning. Fox smiles sadly. He races away down the drain-pipe. Everyone watches him disappear. Badger hesitates. He addresses the group uncertainly:

BADGER

I guess we should probably split into a certain number of groups and start doing something, right?

CUT TO:

Badger carrying a lantern leading Ash, Mole, and two small rabbits down a drainpipe. Badger calls out:

BADGER

Kristofferson? Hello? Can you hear us?

Rat's voice echoes in the darkness:

RAT

They got the boy.

Everyone stops short. Rat drops into the pipe from an overhead drain ahead of them. He says ominously:

RAT

Nothin' down here but rusty bottle-caps and drainin' water.

BADGER

(frozen)

Who's got him?

RAT

The farmers three. They want to trade the son for his poppa.

Rat flicks a folded letter through the air. Badger catches it. He opens it. Kylie looks over his shoulder. Badger frowns.

BADGER

Why'd they write this in letters cut out of magazines?

KYLIE

To protect their identities.

(on second thought)

Oh, right, but then why'd they sign their names? Plus, we already knew who they were because they're trying to kill us.

INSERT:

A ransom note written in letters cut out of magazines and pasted onto a piece of paper. Badger reads out loud:

(more)

KYLIE (cont'd)
Mr. Fox, we have your son. If you
ever want to see him alive again --

A voice calls out in the darkness:

ASH (O.S.)
You took the wrong fox.

Everyone turns. Ash stands behind them in silhouette.

ASH
I'm his son.

RAT
(pause)
I can see the resemblance.

In an instant, Rat grabs Ash by the tail, picks him up off the ground, swings him in the air, and flings him away twenty feet down the drainpipe. Badger looks stunned.

Ash sits in a puddle in a stupor. Rat races toward him down the tunnel. He leaps into the air with his claws out, his teeth bared, and a canvas bag held open like a net. As he is about to seize upon Ash -- he is suddenly jerked backwards and spun around.

Rat is face to face with Fox. Fox strikes his old-fashioned boxing stance. He draws back and throws a hard punch, nailing Rat square in the jaw. Rat staggers, stunned. He swings his switchblade, cutting Fox across the chest.

Fox touches the wound and looks at the blood on the fingers of his paw. He looks to Rat. Rat holds up his wrist and shows Fox a child's plastic digital watch with miniature footballs, baseballs, and soccer balls on it. He says strangely:

RAT
I've still got it.

FOX
(frowning)
What'd you just say?

RAT
I said I've still got the watch, Mr. Fox.
She never asked for it back.

A frozen moment. Fox springs forward and clamps his jaws onto Rat's throat. Rat tumbles over backwards. Fox pins him to the ground with his teeth in Rat's neck. Rat kicks and bucks and struggles, but Fox holds him fast. Rat goes limp. Fox releases him.

Everyone slowly gathers around Fox and Rat. Ash kneels next to his father. Fox cradles Rat in his arms. Rat whispers:

RAT

The boy's locked in an apple crate on top of a gun-locker in the attic of Bean Annex.

FOX

(sadly)

Would you have told me if I didn't kill you first?

Rat smiles sickly. Blood drips from his mouth. His voice creaks:

RAT

Never.

FOX

(shaking his head)

All these wasted years. What were you looking for, Rat?

Fox wipes the blood from Rat's chin. Rat mutters.

ASH

He's trying to say something, Dad.

Fox leans his ear close to Rat's mouth. As quiet as a mouse, Rat whispers:

RAT

Cider.

Fox nods. He looks around the drainpipe. He cups his paw into the pool of murky water and holds it to Rat's lips.

FOX

Here you are, Rat. A beaker of Bean's finest secret cider.

Rat's slivery, scratchy, long, pink tongue laps up a taste of the black liquid. He licks his lips and says faintly:

RAT

Like melted gold.

Rat's eyes turn into X's. He is dead. Ash stands up.

ASH

He redeemed himself.

FOX
 (shrugs)
 Redemption? Sure.

Fox swallows and says hopelessly with tears in his eyes:

FOX
 But, in the end -- he's just another dead
 rat in a garbage pail behind a Chinese
 restaurant.

Ash puts his hand on Fox's shoulder. Fox lays Rat gently onto the sewer floor. He stands up and turns to the rest of the group. Badger claps his paws together.

BADGER
 Well, I suppose we should --

FOX
 (interrupting)
 Excuse me, again, B. The search party's
 been cancelled. We're replacing it with a
 go-for-broke rescue mission. You two
 little rabbits run tell the others.
 (yelling)
 Now, go!

The two little rabbits scurry away down the drainpipe. Badger walks with Fox and Ash.

BADGER
 What was he saying about that wristwatch?
 I didn't get what he was talking about.

Fox hesitates. He shrugs and says with a sad nostalgia:

FOX
 Just some old back-story.

INT. SEWER SYSTEM. NIGHT

The entire community of animals has reconnoitered in the brick cavern. Fox stands on a large spigot and addresses the group. He has a bandage on his chest.

FOX
 In a way, I'm almost glad that flood
 interrupted us, because I don't like the
 toast I was giving. I'm going to start
 over.

Fox pantomimes raising a long-stemmed glass.

FOX

When I look down this table with the exquisite feast set before us, I see: two terrific lawyers, a skilled pediatrician, a wonderful chef, a savvy real-estate agent, an excellent tailor, a crack accountant, a gifted musician, a pretty good minnow fisherman, and possibly the best landscape painter working on the scene today.

As Fox describes them, the shot cuts to: Badger and Beaver; Mrs. Badger; Rabbit; Weasel; an especially small, waifish field mouse; Mole; Kylie (who looks slightly offended); and Mrs. Fox, respectively.

FOX

Maybe a few of you might even read my column from time to time. Who knows? I tend to doubt it.

(dramatic pause)

I also see a room full of wild animals.

Everyone stares at Fox curiously, skeptical but intrigued. Fox points at them:

FOX

Wild animals with true natures and pure talents. Wild animals with scientific-sounding Latin names that mean something about our D.N.A. Wild animals each with his own strengths and weaknesses due to his or her species, and also -- well, I guess these things usually have a lot to do with the parents, too, as we all know. Anyway, I think it may very well be all the beautiful differences among us that just might give us the tiniest glimmer of a chance of saving my nephew and letting me make it up to you for getting us into this crazy whatever-it-is. I don't know. It's just a thought. Thank you for listening. Cheers, everyone.

Fox motions with his imaginary glass and pantomimes drinking it. A few of the others reluctantly pantomime drinking. Fox finishes his glass and pantomimes throwing it on the floor. He makes a smashing-glass sound. Kylie shouts:

KYLIE

Let's eat!

Everyone turns to Kylie uncertainly. Kylie hesitates.

KYLIE

What? I'm just playing along with the --

FOX

(forcefully)

All right! Let's start planning! Who knows shorthand?

Pause. Badger points to his otter secretary. She is Linda. Fox darts over to her and grips her by the arm.

FOX

Linda! *Lutra Lutra!* You got some dry paper? Here we go!

Fox, highly energized, moves among the group, touching their shoulders and patting their backs.

FOX

Mole! *Talpa Europea!* What do you got?

MOLE

(hesitates)

I can see in the dark?

FOX

(exhilarated)

That's incredible! We can use that! Linda?

LINDA

(taking shorthand)

Got it.

FOX

Rabbit! *Oryctolagus Cuniculus!*

RABBIT

I'm fast.

FOX

You bet your cuss you are! Linda?

LINDA

(taking shorthand)

Got it.

FOX

Beaver! *Castor Fiber!*

BEAVER

I can chew through wood.

FOX
Amazing! Linda?

LINDA
(taking shorthand)
Got it.

FOX
Badger! *Meles Meles!*

BADGER
Demolitions expert!

FOX
(confused)
What? Since when?

BADGER
Explosions, flames, things that burn!

FOX
Demolitions expert! OK! Linda!

LINDA
(taking shorthand)
Got it!

Fox's cheeks and forehead are beaded with perspiration. He screams insanely:

FOX
Weasel! *Mustela Nivalis!*

WEASEL
Stop yelling!

Fox snaps his fingers, kicks a rock, and throws his arm into the air. He whistles sharply with a half-chirp and makes his obscure hand-signal.

FOX
All right!

Fox points to the various cubs and pups.

FOX
Ash, you get these little kids organized and put together some kind of a K.P. unit or something to keep this sewer clean. It's good for morale.

ASH
(eagerly)
Done!

Ash turns to Agnes and asks, aside:

ASH
What's K.P?

AGNES
I think it means janitors.

Pause. Ash spits on the floor. The field mouse shoves his way to the front of the crowd. He makes a fist with his paw.

FIELD MOUSE
I want to go with you, too! I want to fight!

FOX
(pause)
Good. Fabulous! *Microtus Pennsylvanicus!*
Do you do that, in fact? Are field mice violent?

FIELD MOUSE
Not particularly.

Kylie tugs at Fox's sleeve. Fox turns to look at him. Kylie says shyly:

KYLIE
I didn't get a job yet -- or a Latin name. What's my strength?

Fox raises an eyebrow. He thinks of something:

FOX
Listen, you're Kylie. You're an unbelievably nice guy. Your job is really just to... be available, I think. I don't know your Latin name. I doubt they even had opossums in ancient Rome.

Kylie puts his hands in his pockets and scowls.

INT. SEWER SYSTEM. NIGHT

Mrs. Fox puts the finishing touches on a vast mural painted on the longest, tallest wall of the brick cavern. She stands on a ladder. Her sleeves are rolled up, and she is splattered with twelve different colors of paint. She looks down to Fox standing below with an entourage of Kylie, Badger, Linda, and Rickity. The animal children mop and scrub in the background. Ash stands leaning against a push-broom watching his parents.

Fox surveys the mural. It is highly detailed, filled with the textures of the landscape, and decorated with images of

flowers, leaves, acorns, etc. It is signed Felicity Fox. Fox opens his arms wide and shouts:

FOX
It's stupendous. Where's us?

MRS. FOX
(pointing to a spot)
Right here.

FOX
Paint an X.

INSERT:

The bottom of the map. Mrs. Fox's paw paints a red X and puts a circle around it.

The shot zooms out to reveal the entire valley -- no longer a painting on the brick wall. Lighting strikes at the horizon. Dark clouds loom over the three farmers' compounds. It looks exactly like one of Mrs. Fox's paintings of a landscape in a rainstorm. Bean's helicopter circles the area.

EXT. HILL. NIGHT

A bicycle messenger with a head-lamp rings his bell as he approaches the farmers' camp. He stops in front of Bean and hands him an envelope. Bean tears it open and unfolds the letter inside.

INSERT:

A note written in letters cut out of magazines and pasted onto a piece of paper. It reads:

Dear Farmers Boggis, Bunce, and Bean,

I have no alternative but to agree to your terms. Move the station wagon and open the manhole cover below the foot of the drainpipe next to the cobbler's shop and meet me there today at 10 A.M. sharp. I will hand myself over to you in exchange for the boy's safe return.

Cordially,
Mr. Fox

Bean frowns. He studies the letter. He shows it to Boggis and Bunce.

BEAN

Why'd he write this in letters cut out of magazines?

BUNCE

(shrugs)

I don't know, but you did the same thing.

BEAN

(uneasy)

I don't trust this guy. Anyway, set up the ambush.

INT. ATTIC. DAY

The top floor of Bean Annex. The room is filled with boxes of Christmas ornaments, old sports equipment, two stained mattresses, and a broken birdcage. Cobwebs hang from the rafters below the sloped roof.

Kristofferson pokes his nose out between the slats of a padlocked apple crate on top of a gun locker in the corner. He is blindfolded, and his paws are bound. He is shivering. He clears his throat and calls out politely:

KRISTOFFERSON

Could I have a cup of water, please?

Kristofferson waits for a reply, but no one answers. He whistles to himself for a minute. He clears his throat again. He calls out:

KRISTOFFERSON

Excuse me! Excuse me?

Silence.

INT. DRAINPIPE. DAY

A cement conduit with an iron grating above it. A fast stream of sewer water runs along its side. Fox walks briskly down the pipe followed by his entourage and Ash. Their steps echo loudly.

FOX

Synchronize your clocks. The time is now --

Fox looks at his wrist. He is wearing Rat's plastic, digital, sports-themed wristwatch.

FOX

-- nine forty-five A.M.

Everyone checks their watches. Badger points at Fox's wrist.

BADGER

Is that Rat's watch?

FOX

(vaguely)

No. Originally, no.

(pause)

Well, OK, here's the back-story: when I was a teenager I spent a summer working as a bar-back at a jazz pub called Django's where Rat played horn down near -- can I tell this another time? We should stay focused on what's happening right now.

EXT. STREET. DAY

An old craftsman looks out from the window of Ferguson Cobblers as he taps little nails into the heel of a loafer. A station-wagon with wood-grain side-panels and a flat tire sits parked on a manhole cover in front of the shop. Boggis, Bunce, and five armed farmhands watch as Bean monkeys with a slim-jim until he gets the car door jimmied.

Bean hops inside. He starts the engine, puts his arm over the top of the seat as he looks back out the rear window, and throws the station-wagon into reverse. The farmers clear out of the way as Bean backs up off the manhole cover.

Boggis and Bunce stick tools into the manhole cover and lift it open.

INSERT:

Rat's watch. It is now 10 A.M.

CUT TO:

Six armed farmhands on the roof of the Nag's Head Tavern.

CUT TO:

Seven armed farmhands in the bushes behind Sweetings Bakery.

CUT TO:

Eight armed farmers in the window of Harrison Travel.

CUT TO:

The Action 13 reporter and camera crew in an alley next to St. John's Coin-op Laundry.

EXT. STREET. DAY

Boggis, Bunce, and Bean crouch behind the open doors of a pick-up truck with three beagles. Boggis checks his carbine. Bunce loads his shotgun. Bean cocks his Luger. Fox's voice hollers from deep inside the manhole:

FOX (O.S.)
Did you bring the boy?

BEAN
Of course, we did! Say something, kid!

Bunce presses play on a tape recorder. Kristofferson's voice comes over a loudspeaker:

KRISTOFFERSON'S VOICE
Excuse me! Excuse me?

Bunce presses stop.

CUT TO:

Fox and his entourage at the bottom off the manhole. Fox scoffs. He smiles and shakes his head.

FOX
Come on! That doesn't sound anything like him! It's amateur night in Dixie!

Badger rapidly slaps two pieces of flint together. A bit chips off, and sparks fly from the break. He blows on some kindling. He takes a pinecone out of a basket.

EXT. STREET. DAY

A ribbon of white smoke rises out of the manhole. The three farmers watch curiously as it thickens and turns black. Bean frowns.

BEAN
What the cuss is he burning?

A blazing pinecone shoots out of the manhole and flies through the air, over the farmers' heads. It lands in a trash can and lights some rubbish on fire. A man with a dart in one hand and a mug of ale in the other comes out of the Nag's Head and pours his beer into the trash can. The fire goes out.

The three farmers laugh smugly. Bean shouts:

BEAN

Is that all you've got, Mr. Fox?

Twenty-seven blazing pinecones shoot out of the manhole and hit: a wood-pile on the roof of the Nag's Head, a box of pastry wrappers in the bushes behind Sweetings, a stack of brochures in the window of Harrison Travel, a hay bale in the bed of the pick-up truck, Boggis, Bunce, Bean, and a crate of cam-corder batteries next to the Action 13 camera crew, which explodes. Farmers scatter, grabbing hoses, yelling, and tamping out the flames as the beagles bark, yelp, and scramble in the confusion.

Rabbit darts out of the hole and races up the street. Six farmers chase after him, firing their weapons.

INT. SEWER SYSTEM. DAY

Down in the brick cavern, Mole listens to a tin can attached to a string. He says urgently as he makes notations in a ledger:

MOLE

Twenty-eight pinecones fired! Twenty-two targets hit!

Mrs. Fox, standing on her ladder, paints black checks quickly on the street in her mural. The stolen, portable television set sits in the corner, tuned into Action 13's coverage of the chaos in the street.

CUT TO:

Rabbit running full-steam out of the village being pursued by the six farmhands. He hurdles an empty Coke bottle lying on its side in the road.

EXT. STREET. DAY

Badger jumps out of the manhole and throws more blazing pinecones at farmers, trucks, parked cars, doors, windows, and the Action 13 camera crew. Seven farmhands chase him down a cobblestone lane.

Weasel and Beaver climb out with straws in their paws and start firing blueberries toward the disoriented beagles. The beagles eat blueberries. They fall over. Eight farmhands chase Weasel and Beaver up a wooded path.

Rickity, the field mouse, bounds out of the hole and leaps into the fracas. He fires a rubber band at Bunce off a paperclip. It snaps Bunce in the corner of his eye. Rickity lets out a little whoop.

There is a small explosion and a burst of flames blasts from the manhole. Fox and Kylie jump out and run over to a vehicle with a tarp over it parked in front of Paddington Automotive. Fox whips off the tarp, revealing a miniature motorcycle with a sidecar.

CUT TO:

Fox driving the motorcycle with Kylie in the sidecar. They both wear helmets and goggles. Thunder rumbles in the distance. Kylie sinks lower in the sidecar. He shouts to Fox over the sound of the motor:

KYLIE

Are you scared of wolves?

FOX

Scared, no! I have a phobia of them!

KYLIE

Well, I have a thing about thunder!

FOX

(annoyed)

Why? That's stupid!

Ash pokes his head up from the rear compartment of the sidecar. He also wears a helmet and goggles. His white cape flutters behind him. He shouts:

ASH

I don't like needles!

Fox and Kylie look to Ash in disbelief. Fox says furiously:

FOX

Where'd you come from again? How'd you get in the sidecar? I feel like I'm losing my mind!

Fox slams on the brakes and squeals to the side of the road. He points at Ash.

FOX

Get out.

ASH

(frustrated)

You're not giving me any opportunity to prove myself to you.

FOX

(furious)

What? Ash, this isn't the National
(more)

FOX (cont'd)
Theatre production of Fantastic Mr. Fox!
This is really happening!

ASH
(with a flicker)
You can't think of it that way, Dad. You
got to think of it like this:

Ash stares off into space with a dreamy look. He paints the picture with growing drama:

ASH
It's the bottom of the seventh eighth.
The last whack-batter steps up to the
whack-basket. The grabbers and taggers
watch from the tall grass. The twig-
runners watch from the short grass. The
center-tagger winds up and chucks the
pine-cone with all his might, literally
on fire, and right down the middle --

FOX
(interrupting)
But you're terrible at whack-bat.

Ash looks stricken. Fox hesitates.

FOX
I don't mean that as a criticism. Whack-
bat metaphors never sound --

Ash slams his fist on the side of the motorcycle. He spits on the ground. Kylie shrugs.

KYLIE
We can't just leave him by the side of
the road, anyway.

FOX
(sighs)
I guess not.

Fox guns the motor angrily and steers toward a small mound of dirt. They jump it like a ramp, fly over a ditch, and skid back onto the road.

INT. HELICOPTER. DAY

A pilot with a red moustache and a South African accent flies Bean's chopper. He wears a Bean, inc. patch on his shoulder. He shouts into the microphone connected to his helmet:

PILOT

I've got a fox on a motorcycle with a littler fox and what looks to be an opossum in the sidecar riding north on farm lane seven. Does that sound like anything to anybody?

Bean's voice responds over the radio:

BEAN (O.S.)

Red, it's Franklin Bean! Turn around, get the cuss back here, and pick us up on the A.S.A.P!

EXT. BEAN'S COMPOUND. DAY

Mounds of barbed-wire and cement road-blocks encircle the main gate of Bean, inc. Surveillance cameras scan the area. Watch-towers loom above. Lightning bolt symbols cover the walls.

A small, iron door next to the gate has Deliveries painted above it. It swings open. An old man comes out and props it open with a broom. He rolls a small dumpster filled with plastic bags of trash and pushes it around the corner.

Fox, Kylie, and Ash race through the doorway discreetly on their miniature motorcycle. The old man comes back rolling the dumpster. He takes away his broom and shuts the door.

EXT. BEAN ANNEX. DAY

A white-washed brick pile three stories tall sits apart from the other structures on the farm. The doors to its courtyard are made of iron and painted yellow. Written along the roof is Bean Annex.

Fox, Kylie, and Ash park behind a crate. Fox pours a bucket of apples over the motorcycle to camouflage it. They run to the courtyard doors. Fox climbs onto Kylie's shoulders and tries the knobs. They are locked.

FOX

Kylie, you got a credit card?

KYLIE

(digging in his pockets)

Sure.

FOX

(impressed)

See, this is what I was saying about how good you are at just being available for whatever --

Kylie hands Fox a World Traveler Titanium Card. Fox frowns.

FOX

A Titanium Card? How the cuss did you qualify for this?

KYLIE

(shrugs)

I pay my bills on time. I've always had good credit.

Fox examines the card with mild resentment. He picks the lock easily but seems surprised by his success. He whistles sharply with a half-chirp and makes his obscure hand-signal. Kylie frowns.

KYLIE

Wait a second. What's this thing you do? The whistle with the clicking sound.

Fox hesitates. He searches for some poetic words, then suddenly just says bluntly:

FOX

What do you mean? That's my trademark.

Fox repeats his trademark routine. Kylie looks slightly annoyed. Fox opens the doors.

The courtyard has high walls and a gravel floor. On one side, there are ten trash cans, a stack of newspapers, and a compost heap. On the other side, there is an old, rusted, broken-down tractor and a new one. By far the largest, fattest, toughest beagle yet lies sleeping in the middle. White foam froths around its mouth as it breathes heavily. Its collar is hooked to a thick chain. A tag around its neck reads Spitz.

Fox, Kylie, and Ash stop in their tracks. The beagle opens his eyes. Fox turns to Kylie.

FOX

Give me a blueberry.

KYLIE

(surprised)

What?

FOX

(furious)

You forgot the blueberries?

KYLIE
 (defensive)
 You never said anything about --

FOX
 Of course, I did! I wrote it on your paw!

Kylie looks at his palm. Pause. He looks away sheepishly. Ash says quietly:

ASH
 What's that white stuff around his mouth?

KYLIE
 (squinting)
 I think he eats soap.

Fox sees an amber, plastic pharmacy bottle on a shelf above some bags of fertilizer. It's reads:

Drug: Phenomoxylcarbobytol, 10 mg
 Name: SPITZ
 Breed: BEAGLE
 For: RABIES (chronic)
 Other: Take with meat, do not operate heavy machinery

Fox frowns. He says grimly:

FOX
 That's not soap.

KYLIE
 (hesitates)
 Well, then why does he have that bubbly --

FOX
 He's rabid. With rabies. I've heard about this beagle. You two go ahead while I distract him.

Fox begins to move his hands in a circular, hypnotic pattern. He whispers sharply:

FOX
 Go!

Kylie and Kristofferson run away across the courtyard.

EXT. ROOF. DAY

Bean's helicopter lands on top of the Nag's Head. Fires smolder and farmers continue to chase around after animals in the village streets below. Boggis, Bunce, and Bean, leaning

over and holding onto their hats, run to the chopper and climb inside. They take off.

CUT TO:

The street below. The orange Badoit et Fils van screeches into the melée. The old man and his son jump out. They open the side door and start unloading stacks of metal cages.

INT. ATTIC. DAY

Kristofferson sits on the floor, huddled in the corner of the apple crate. There is a clanking sound from above. He looks up.

A trap door in the ceiling creaks open. Kylie and Ash look inside, down at Kristofferson.

KRISTOFFERSON

Who's that?

EXT. ROOF. DAY

Kylie grimaces as he pulls and twists at a chicken-wire screen over the trap door. Ash's shadow crosses over him. He says quietly:

ASH

I can fit through there.

Kylie looks up to Ash. The sun shines behind him and his cape ripples in the breeze. Kylie squints.

KYLIE

Hm?

ASH

(mysteriously)

You want to know why?

KYLIE

(puzzled)

Why?

ASH

(defiantly)

Because I'm little.

Ash thrusts out his hand to Kylie:

ASH

Give me that shoelace.

CUT TO:

The rabid beagle. He stands up. Fox takes a cautious step toward him. He holds out the back of his paw for the beagle to sniff.

FOX

I feel like there's a tenderness in your eyes, isn't there?

Fox takes another step. The beagle watches him calmly.

FOX

Yes, I'm right. You're a good boy. A little lonely, maybe, but --

Fox takes another cautious step.

FOX

-- but terribly sweet. Hello, there, boy. Is your name Spitz? That's German, isn't it?

CUT TO:

Ash lowering himself into the attic with three different-colored shoelaces tied together and belted around his waist. He holds the shoelace and keeps a paw behind his back like a mountaineer. His feet touch down on the shelf. He runs to the apple crate and whispers urgently:

ASH

It's me. I'm rescuing you.

KRISTOFFERSON

(hesitates)

I've got mixed feelings about that.

ASH

(sadly)

I don't blame you.

Ash jiggles the padlock. He says earnestly:

ASH

Can you give me a karate lesson real quick?

KRISTOFFERSON

(long pause)

OK. Stand like this.

Kristofferson stands up with his bound paws clasped in front of him. Ash mimics this.

CUT TO:

One minute later. Kristofferson continues Ash's karate lesson:

KRISTOFFERSON
Position yourself on the balls of your feet. Close your eyes.

Kristofferson stands lightly poised with his elbows out. He closes his eyes. He says mystically:

KRISTOFFERSON
You weigh less than a slice of bread.

CUT TO:

Three minutes later. Kristofferson continues Ash's karate lesson:

KRISTOFFERSON
Now for a rudimentary version of the cyclone chop. First, you need to get a running start, which, obviously, I can't do in here, then, as you arrive at the destination of the chop --
(demonstrating)
-- lean and thrust into the point of contact, paw remains open and straight, then withdraw instantaneously. Remember, it's the pull-back that matters. The pull-back --
(demonstrating)
-- generates the force of the impact.

ASH
(immediately)
Got it.

Ash makes an aiming, practice chop toward the padlock. He nods, confident.

ASH
Yeah, I'll just chop this right off.

Ash turns and walks ten paces away to the far end of the shelf. He recites a quick mantra and takes a deep breath. Kylie watches from above. He says excitedly:

KYLIE
He's going to do it!

Kylie looks down to Fox in the courtyard below. He frowns.

KYLIE

I thought he said you never look a beagle
in the eye.

CUT TO:

Fox arriving directly in front of the beagle. He reaches out to gently pet him and says coaxingly:

FOX

Why, you're just as sweet as a --

Fox and the beagle lock eyes. The pupils of the beagle's eyes contract then completely disappear, and the whites turn bright red. Fox's eyes open wider than their sockets.

The rabid beagle erupts ballistically, attacking like an enraged maniac. His chain rips out of the cement. Fox screams like a grandmother, sprinting frantically around the courtyard as the rabid beagle, frothing, roaring, and snapping, tries desperately to kill him.

CUT TO:

Ash screaming at the top of his lungs as he sprints toward the apple crate:

ASH

Ki-ya!

Ash's socks slip on the surface of the shelf. He somersaults twice through the air and bounces his head off the side of the apple crate. He rebounds and lands upside down, half-unconscious. Kristofferson stands uncertainly with his hands gripping the bars of the cage. He says quietly:

KRISTOFFERSON

Did you chop it?

The cage tips slowly backwards and falls off the shelf. Ash looks horrified. Kristofferson braces himself. The apple crate hits the floor and shatters into pieces.

CUT TO:

Kylie on the roof. He looks shocked. Fox pops up from below in a sudden burst. He moves erratically, disoriented. He looks down into the courtyard at the rabid beagle, which continues to pitch an insane fit, running in circles after its tail. Kylie looks concerned.

KYLIE

You OK?

Fox, panting and dripping with sweat, stares at Kylie vacantly. He makes Kylie's signal.

(NOTE: a second set of alternate eyeballs indicating Kylie's vacant look will be used for Fox in this shot.)

CUT TO:

Ash coming to. He picks himself up and runs to the edge of the shelf, shouting:

ASH
Kristofferson! Kristofferson!

Ash looks down at Kristofferson sprawled on his back in the wreckage of the apple crate. Kristofferson says, dazed:

KRISTOFFERSON
I'm OK!

Ash kneels down on the table. He says desolately with his voice cracking:

ASH
I'm sorry.

Kristofferson shrugs his shoulders while still lying on his back on the floor.

KRISTOFFERSON
That's OK. You were just trying to unlock the apple crate.

ASH
(struggling with the words)
No, I mean I'm sorry about --

KRISTOFFERSON
(realizing)
Oh, you mean from before. The apology you owed me which you never actually said.

ASH
Right. I'm grumpy. I spit. I wake up on the wrong side of the bed. I'm just --
(making a hula-type gesture)
-- different, apparently -- but it won't happen again, Kristofferson. I'm sorry.

Kristofferson nods sadly. He takes a deep breath. He nods again.

KRISTOFFERSON
That's OK, too.

EXT. YARD. DAY

Fox, Kylie, Ash, and Kristofferson come around the side of the building. They run to their motorcycle, outside the courtyard doors. They freeze.

The front gates to the compound are closed and bolted. Bean's helicopter waits on top of the vegetable garden with its rotar-blades whirling. Boggis, Bunce, and Bean stand in front of Bean Annex with their weapons drawn.

Fox sees his tail around Bean's collar. His eyes narrow. His jaw sets. He says to himself with growing emotion:

FOX

Your tractors uprooted my tree. Your posse hunted my family. Your gunmen kidnapped my nephew. Your rat insulted my wife -- and you shot off my tail.

(steely)

I'm not leaving here without that neck-tie.

Bean smiles his sickly smile. Fox smiles back defiantly. Kylie looks utterly baffled. Ash says mystically:

ASH

I weigh less than a slice of bread.

FOX

(hesitates)

What?

ASH

I'll be right back.

Ash runs. Fox, Kylie, and Kristofferson watch, shocked, as Ash sprints back to the courtyard doors. The three farmers open fire at him. Fox, Kylie, and Kristofferson duck and take cover behind a hay-bale.

Ash dodges bullets. He jumps off the balls of his feet with his arms out over a sprinkler-pipe and swings like a gymnast onto a clothesline, then flies through the air doing another of his spectacularly awkward four-armed and three-legged back-flips. He lands on the handle of one of the courtyard doors and screams:

ASH

Ki-ya!

Ash cyclone-chops the doorknob. The lock clicks. Ash's eyes light up.

Ash drops to the ground. He digs a hole and burrows into the dirt as bullets fly everywhere. He breathes in through his nose and out through his mouth. Fox watches with his jaw hanging open.

The courtyard doors smash apart and the rabid beagle tears out into the vegetable garden growling, foaming, and thrashing crazily. The farmers shriek and scream and run around, panicking, with their guns blazing.

Fox, Kylie, Ash, and Kristofferson jump onto their motorcycle. The beagle rips the tail from Bean's neck, shreds it, chews it up, and swallows it. Fox deflates for an instant, then recovers. He looks to Ash on the back of the motorcycle, behind him, with his hands around Fox's waist. He says with the deepest affection and respect:

FOX

Ash, that was pure, wild animal craziness. You're an athlete.

Ash swallows. He beams. Fox hands him a white ski-cap with lightning bolts and stars on it.

FOX

Here, put this bandit hat on.

Ash puts on the ski-cap. He tilts it rakishly at a slight angle. Fox kick-starts the motorcycle.

FOX

Goggles!

Fox guns the motor and races across the farm. Boggis, Bunce, and Bean scramble onto the roof of a car port with an old, white Mercedes convertible under it. The snarling beagle barks and snaps below them. They watch as:

Kristofferson snaps the demolished tail off the ground at speed and quickly ties it to the motorcycle's antenna. Fox steers toward a broken apple cart at the edge of the property. He guns the motor and yells:

FOX

Holy swearing cuss!!!

Fox races the motorcycle up the apple cart, into the air, and over the concrete barricade. They land in the middle of the road, skidding, and speed off down the hill.

CUT TO:

Boggis, Bunce, and Bean watching from the roof of the car port while the beagle continue to bark at them crazily. Bean says into his walkie-talkie:

BEAN

Petey! Bring us a ladder, please.

INT. SEWER SYSTEM. DAY

Mrs. Fox sits anxiously at the bottom of her ladder. Badger, Weasel, Rickity, the two small rabbits, and the others sit, exhausted, in the dark cavern, passing a jar of cider. Mole interrupts:

MOLE

Stand by!

Everyone looks to Mole. Mole is holding the tin can with the string attached to it to his ear. He nods and says urgently:

MOLE

I just intercepted a high-frequency radio signal with the can --

(gestures with the tin can)

-- and I think they're on their way home!

Mrs. Fox jumps up, embraces Mole, and kisses him on the snout. Mole blushes.

CUT TO:

Rabbit still running full-steam back into the village being pursued by the six farmhands. He comes to the manhole where they started and darts into it. The six farmhands stop at the manhole and look down. They go straight to the Nag's Head, walk inside, and close the door behind them.

EXT. ROAD. DAY

Fox, Kylie, Ash, and Kristofferson ride down a country road. Kylie sees something across the meadow. He says warily:

KYLIE

Don't turn around!

FOX

What?

Fox turns around. A huge, wild, grey wolf with ice-blue eyes stands on a rock fifty feet away from them. Fox slams on the brakes. The motorcycle slides to a halt.

FOX
 Where'd he come from?
 (loudly)
 Where'd you come from? What are you doing
 here?

Pause. Fox points toward the wolf:

FOX
Canis lupus!

Fox points to himself:

FOX
Vulpes Vulpes!

The wolf does not answer. Fox, Kylie, Ash, and Kristofferson watch idling from the motorcycle.

FOX
 I don't think he speaks English or Latin.
 (loudly)
Pensez-vous que l'hiver sera rude?
 (aside)
 I'm asking if he thinks we're in for a
 hard winter.

The wolf shakes his head. Fox nods.

FOX
 He doesn't seem to know.

Silence. Fox shouts to the wolf with a strange hitch in his voice:

FOX
 I have a phobia of wolves!

The wolf does not answer. It breathes heavily with its mouth open. Its teeth are long, sharp, and yellow. Its tongue hangs out, and its eyes are wild. Fox looks back at it with the identical expression for a minute, mesmerized -- then Fox closes his mouth and his eyes soften.

Fox raises his paw in the air. The wolf blinks a few times. It raises its paw in the air. It turns away and trots off into the woods. Fox says wistfully:

FOX
 What a beautiful creature. Wish him luck,
 boys.

Fox guns the motor. Gravel spits from under the spinning tires, and they tear off down the road.

TITLE:

THREE DAYS LATER (2 1/2 Fox Weeks)

Boggis, Bunce, and Bean sit silently in folding metal chairs around the manhole in front of Paddington Automotive. Boggis's carbine rests across his lap. Bunce's shotgun hangs from a strap over his shoulder. Bean cleans his Luger. The television reporter stands next to them in front of his cameraman. He reports:

REPORTER

These three, in this reporter's opinion, obsessed farmers remain convinced the fox in question will eventually reappear.

(to Boggis)

Why?

BOGGIS

(obviously)

Because foxes aren't meant to live in a sewer.

BUNCE

(sharply)

They're refugees.

BOGGIS

All they have to eat down there is --

BUNCE

Trash!

BEAN

(darkly)

And not much of it.

REPORTER

Thank you, farmers. For Action Twelve, this is Dan Peabody.

The shot booms down into the ground, below the street, through layers of cement and cobblestone. It descends past Badger and his family having dinner in a nicely furnished drain-pipe, past Rabbit and his family watching the stolen, portable television set in a well-appointed cement tunnel, past Beaver and Mrs. Beaver hosting Mole and Weasel for cocktails in a tasteful sewer-conduit.

The shot stops in a small chamber adjacent to the brick cavern. The walls are filled with electrical cables, wires, pipes, and a large, new mural which depicts the Fox's former view of the valley as seen from their tree with a *trompe l'oeil* window-frame around it. It is signed Felicity Fox.

Ash, Kristofferson, and Agnes sit Indian-style meditating on a braided rug. Mrs. Fox works mixing paints and turpentine at an easel in the corner. There is an armchair with a folded-up copy of the Gazette on its cushion in the center of the room under a glowing lamp. Classical music plays on a radio.

INSERT:

Fox's newspaper column with a new picture of him at the top of it. He now looks only slightly debonair, but significantly more ferocious, with his teeth partly bared. The caption reads: Fox on the Prowl with Fantastic Mr. Fox.

Fox swings his head into the room from a tunnel. He says gently:

FOX
My darlings?

Everyone looks to Fox. He signals them to follow him.

INT. DRAINPIPE. NIGHT

The cement conduit with the iron grating above it. Fox and the others walk briskly down the pipe. Mr. Fox's slightly repaired but still severely damaged tail has been attached to the seat of his trousers with a metal clip and a safety-pin.

ASH
Where are we going?

FOX
Nobody knows.

ASH
We were in the middle of a meditation practice.

FOX
Watch your step.

Fox takes everyone through an opening and starts climbing a metal ladder. He says theatrically:

FOX
Let's see, now. Where does this lead?

MRS. FOX
Oh, no, Foxy. It's filthy.

FOX
Keep a good grip, everyone.

ASH

This better be worth it.

FOX

I think I see a little sliver of light.
What's this? Is that a door?

MRS. FOX

You're a terrible actor, Foxy.

KRISTOFFERSON

Do you smell something? Is that --
(sniffs twice)
-- freon?

FOX

Shh. I'm going to crack open this trap
door and see if something's on the other
side. I highly doubt it, though. There's
probably just more sewer.

Fox clears his throat. Pause.

FOX

You know, wouldn't it be surprising if --

ASH

Open it.

Fox pushes open the trap door and crawls out. Everyone
follows him.

INT. SUPERMARKET. NIGHT

Fox and the others stand in the middle of an aisle at the
center of a large grocery store. To their left is the
refrigerated section of milk, eggs, meat, fish, and cheese.
To their right are canned goods, breakfast cereal, laundry
detergent, rice, pasta, and condiments. The lights are half-
dimmed, and a metal grate is closed over the front windows.
There are no people. Fox says casually:

FOX

Hey, look! There's a whole, enormous,
glorious, gigantic supermarket up here!

Ash and Kristofferson seem dumbstruck. Fox raises an eyebrow
and smiles at Mrs. Fox. She puts her arm around his shoulder.

MRS. FOX

You really are kind of a quote-unquote
fantastic fox.

FOX

(shrugs)

I try.

(to the others)

Get enough to share with everybody, and remember: the Rabbits are vegetarians, and Badger supposedly's allergic to walnuts -- although I personally think maybe he just doesn't like them.

CUT TO:

Fox and Mrs. Fox walking down the cereal and cookies aisle drinking apple juice from little junk-food punch-boxes.

FOX

I guess now that Kristofferson's dad's already down to single-pneumonia and getting better, he'll be going home soon, huh?

MRS. FOX

Actually, when he spoke to me from the hospital, he said he was already talking to Weasel about real-estate availabilities down in our sewer system.

FOX

Oh, really? Well, now's the time to buy.

Kylie comes around the end of the aisle pushing a shopping cart filled with jars of jelly, jam, olives, pickles, and honey, plus three loaves of bread, Band-Aids, toothpaste, and a carton of strawberry ice cream. He does a kick step and a clap. He stares at Fox, waiting.

Fox stares back at Kylie but shows no reaction. Kylie repeats the kick step and the clap. Still nothing from Fox. Kylie starts to do his routine again. Fox interrupts:

FOX

OK. I get it. Is that your trademark?

Kylie hesitates. He shrugs and says casually, looking around the room with a false appearance of distracted curiosity. He smiles crazily. Fox turns back to Mrs. Fox. He notices something and stops. He stares at her strangely. She is glowing. She hesitates. She shrugs.

MRS. FOX

I'm pregnant again.

FOX

(stunned)

I think we're -- both glowing this time.

Fox and Mrs. Fox ares, in fact, glowing.

(NOTE: alternate versions of both Mr. and Mrs. Fox will be used for this shot which can be literally lit from within.)

Ash, Kristofferson, and Agnes join them, all holding their own junk-food punch-boxes. Ash has grape juice all over his face and shirt. He looks deeply moved by what he has just overheard. He says gently:

ASH

Do another toast, Dad.

FOX

(hesitates)

OK. Let's see. Let me just think up a little wording...

Fox collects his thoughts. He steps up onto a soap-box. He takes a deep breath. He begins:

FOX

They say all foxes are slightly allergic to linoleum -- but it's cool to the paw. Try it.

Mrs. Fox, Ash, Kristofferson, Agnes, and Kylie walk in place testing the temperature of the floor with their toes. They look slightly pleased. Fox continues:

FOX

They say my tail needs to be dry-cleaned twice a month -- but it's now fully-detachable. See?

Fox unclips his tail from his trousers and holds it up for everyone to examine. He clips it back on. He looks to Ash, Kristofferson, and Agnes and says gently:

FOX

They say our tree may never grow back -- but, one day, something will.

Ash, Kristofferson, and Agnes look sad but hopeful. Fox motions to various food-products on the shelves and says broadly:

FOX

Yes, these Crackles are made out of synthetic goose, and these Giblets come
(more)

FOX (cont'd)
 from artificial squab, and even these
 apples look fake -- but at least they've
 got stars on them.

Fox holds up one of the apples Bean genetically invented (it has little green asterisks all over it). He throws it away over his shoulder. He smiles and shrugs.

FOX
 I guess my point is -- we'll eat tonight,
 and we'll eat together, and even in this
 not particularly flattering light, you
 are without a doubt, the five-and-a-half
 most wonderful wild animals I've ever met
 in my life. So let's raise our boxes.

Fox, Mrs. Fox, Ash, Kristofferson, Agnes, and Kylie all raise their junk-food punch-boxes. Fox says slowly:

FOX
 To our --
 (with a hint of bittersweet mortality)
 -- survival.

They all sip loudly from their little straws at some length for about fifteen seconds. Pause. Fox looks to Ash and asks uncertainly:

FOX
 How was that?

ASH
 (softly)
 That was good. That was a good toast

Everyone breaks out giddily dancing an ecstatic jig. Kylie waltzes the cart in circles. Kristofferson dances with Agnes. Fox spins Mrs. Fox and Ash together.

CUT TO:

A wide shot of all sixteen aisles of the supermarket stacked with boxes, cartons, cans, bottles, bags, and jars of every possible variety of food. A sign across the ceiling reads Boggis, Bunce, and Bean Consolidated Supermarket. The family of foxes and all their friends continue to dance at the distant end of the center aisle.