

Going...Going... Gone

By

Gary A. Poe

Contact:

Gary A. Poe

1660 Ocean Avenue, Suite #7

Santa Monica, CA 90401

(310) 749-9242

garypoe@windowsonourwaters.org

OR

Cynthia Sainte Marie Lawrence

3101 Link Road #114

Lynchburg, VA 24503

(434) 941-9640

lawrence.cynthia@gmail.com

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Cast of Characters

THE GUIDE – MALE (50-ish – a little scatterbrained)

THE KIDS (Between 10-12 years old):

ALEX – FEMALE

BRENDAN – MALE

CARI – FEMALE

Note: Each character's gender is arbitrary. The kids are portrayed by adult actors whenever possible.

Playwright's Note:

Going...Going...Gone grew out of the curricula taught by the Windows-On-Our-Waters Environmental Education Program based in Santa Monica, California. This play was first produced in 2005 by the Oldcastle Theatre Company in Bennington, VT.

While the play as it appears here mentions Lynchburg, Virginia, Blackwater Creek, the James River and Chesapeake Bay, the place names can and should be changed to include places for any region in which the play is being performed, which will make the problems addressed in the play more identifiable and personal to the members of the audience. This is true, because the problems this play deals with are, unfortunately, universal.

Gary A. Poe
Santa Monica, CA

SCENE I

The actors enter. Cari is carrying a large coffee table book and is showing it to the others. They Ad Lib about the book. Then:

ALEX

Let me see.

CARI

Here's a picture of a gargoyle.

ALEX

A whatgoyle?

CARI

Gargoyle.

BRENDAN

Like every morning I gargoye with mouthwash?

CARI

(Sarcastically)

Yeah...like that! You....

(The actors become inaudible as the Guide enters. He is invisible to the actors).

GUIDE

Good morning, boys and girls. How are you this morning? *(An audience response is desirable here.)* Don't mind those kids behind me. We'll get to them later. Hey, can you keep a secret? Are you sure? Are you positive? Are you absolutely, without a doubt and furthermore, one hundred per cent not kidding around? *(The audience should be quite responsive by now.)* Great! *(Pause)* I wish I had a secret to tell you...Let me see...Here's one: The capital of Virginia is Lynchburg. You didn't know that, did you? See it's a very well-kept secret. *(If the audience corrects him)* What? It's Richmond? Richmond, VA? Never heard of it. Just kidding. I was testing you. And you did very well. I'm proud of you. *(If the audience does not correct him)* I'm just kidding. It's Richmond. And that's not a very good secret, is it? Well I just thought of a **real** secret...don't tell anyone: Mr./Mrs. *(Insert principal's name)* has a pet lightening bug (s)he keeps in a jar by his/her bed. *(The secret may be anything as long as it does not embarrass the principal.) (There should be audience reaction to this "secret.")*

That's not true. I made that up. But, and now I'm not kidding...I **do** have a secret to tell you. These kids you see up here with me...They can't see you and they can't hear you. And they can't see or hear **me** unless I want them to. Watch this. Actually I hate to do this because they're really into that book and reading is so important. *(Off on the first of many tangents to follow)*. As a matter of fact I just finished a book about butterflies. Did you know that every year, Monarch butterflies migrate south from Canada thousands of miles to spend the winter in Mexico? These butterflies have never been to Mexico before so how do they know where to go? I don't know. But they do. **and...***(Stops himself)* I'm getting off track here I'm afraid. Where was I? Oh, yeah! I was mentioning that **reading** is a great thing...**But** *(Points to the actors)* **watching** someone reading...not so much. Let's have some fun. They can't see me.

(The Guide proceeds to circle the other actors. Still invisible to the others he taps Alex on the shoulder, making it appear as if Brendan did it.)

ALEX
(To Brendan)

Cut that out!

BRENDAN

Cut what out?

ALEX

Cut out tapping me on the shoulder.

BRENDAN

I didn't tap you on the shoulder.

ALEX

Well, don't do it again!

BRENDAN

Whatever.

(The Guide knocks Cari's hat off, making it appear as if Brendan did it.)

CARI
(Starts chasing Brendan)

What did you do that for?

BRENDAN

Do what?

CARI

You knocked my hat off.

BRENDAN

You're crazy.

CARI

Well somebody knocked my hat off.

BRENDAN

It wasn't me. *(To Alex and Cari)* What's wrong with you two?

(The Guide now moves behind and blows in the ears and faces of the others. They all make sounds and gestures as if they were walking through spider webs. Alex and Cari either exit or go upstage on opposite sides of the playing area. They are not part of the following between the Guide and Brendan)

BRENDAN

Those guys are nuts! I'm glad they finally left. *(He carefully and sneakily takes a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket and, making sure that nobody is watching, he takes out a cigarette and begins to light it.)*

(The Guide suddenly becomes visible to Brendan, towers over him in a very menacing way and speaks with the scariest voice anyone has ever heard.)

GUIDE

And just what do you think you are doing, young man?

BRENDAN

(Lets out a scream and cowers on the floor trying to hide the cigarettes)
Please don't hurt me! I'm not doing anything!

GUIDE

Oh, really? What have you got in your hand?

BRENDAN

Nothing. I got nothing!

GUIDE

You **have** nothing.

BRENDAN

That's what I said.

GUIDE

You said, “I **got** nothing.”

BRENDAN

Same thing.

GUIDE

Oh, I beg to differ.

BRENDAN

What?

GUIDE

I beg to dif...I don't agree. Correct grammar would call for you to say, “I **have** nothing,” or “I **have got** nothing,” or “I **haven't got anything.**” What **you** said makes you sound, um, well, not so smart.

BRENDAN

Jeez. Okay then. **I haven't got anything.**

GUIDE

(Becoming very threatening)

That's better. But...Once again, I beg to dif...I disagree, my foul-smelling, yellow-toothed, little prevaricator.

BRENDAN

Prevalligator? What's that?

GUIDE

(Laughing)

I said, “**prevaricator**” not “**prevalligator.**” It means...It's someone who...*(Not laughing now)* Well, there's no nice way to put it... You are a liar!

BRENDAN

What do you mean?

GUIDE

You are not telling the truth, you are fudging the facts, you are fabricating fibs, you are being less than honest. Get the picture? We need to address the cigarette issue.

BRENDAN

What cigarette issue?

GUIDE

Come now. I saw the pack. I saw you getting ready to light up. I saw you hide the pack. I saw everything. I see everything. And, unfortunately, I **smell** everything, too. Like the smoke on your clothes. You can't fool me. So don't try.

BRENDAN

Well, what do you care if I smoke or not?

GUIDE

Because I've seen what smoking does to people. I've seen a woman breathing through a hole in her throat. I've seen people pulling tanks of oxygen behind them with tubes stuck in their noses, just so they could breathe. I've seen a young man no longer able to climb a flight of stairs. I've seen people die. I happen to think that you, my friend, have potential. You read books. I don't want to see you (*With emphasis*) **die**.

BRENDAN

You're scaring me.

GUIDE

Good. Maybe that will get you to use a little common sense. Think about what you are doing when you smoke...You are taking some dried leaves and holding them with your lips and **then**...think about it...you're setting them on fire! And **then**...this is just unbelievable to me...as these leaves start smoking you take that smoke and suck it into your lungs! Are you nuts?

BRENDAN

No.

GUIDE

Well, I'm not so sure.

BRENDAN

Everyone's doing it.

GUIDE

No one is doing it! No one with any sense anyway. Did you know that the smoke you so joyfully breathe into your body contains hundreds of toxins?

BRENDAN

Toxins?

GUIDE

Poisons!

BRENDAN

Oh. (*Pause*) Hundreds?

GUIDE

Yes. And what's more, when you light up that cigarette, you are forcing other people to inhale that smoke, that disgusting, horrible-smelling, stinky, cancer-causing smoke. It's called "second hand" smoke. Excuse me if I don't want to breathe any of your hand-me-downs.

BRENDAN

Gee.

GUIDE

Do you think it's fair for you to poison other people, just because **you** want to smoke?

BRENDAN

No.

GUIDE

I think you're beginning to see the light. Let me ask you something.

BRENDAN

Okay.

GUIDE

When you are finished with your "smoke," what do you do with the butt?

BRENDAN

I throw it away, I guess.

GUIDE

Throw it away? Really?? Out of sight, out of mind, is it? Do you throw it far away, or far, far away? Just where is this "**away**"?

BRENDAN

Er...

GUIDE

I'll tell you, there **is** no "**away**". And there is no one to pick up after you, either. A cigarette butt can last five to ten years in the environment. And to a bird, they look like something to eat. And when that bird eats that butt, those poisons get eaten, too. And it's "Bye-bye, Birdie!"

BRENDAN

Wow...

GUIDE

(Responding to a thunder clap or some other SFX)

Well, I've got to be going. There are some other kids I've got to scar...er, talk to. So, I leave it up to you... You can light up when I'm gone or...do the smart thing and get rid of

those butts. I won't be coming back, so I'll never know...As I say, it's up to you. Good bye. *(He becomes invisible to Brendan)*

BRENDAN

Hey! Wait a sec. Now where did he go? *(He takes out the pack of cigarettes and looks at it for a while, trying to decide just what to do. Finally he crumples it in his fist and puts it in a trash can.)*

GUIDE

(Suddenly appears)

Good boy!

BRENDAN

Hey! I thought you said you were leaving and wouldn't know what I did.

GUIDE

Well, I guess I can be a bit of a...prevalligator, too, sometimes. I've got an idea.

BRENDAN

What?

GUIDE

How would you like to come with me while I go see what your friend Alex is up to?

BRENDAN

Sure. But...I don't know...you're a stranger.

GUIDE

You are absolutely right. I am so proud of you. I'll tell you what. I'll wait for you here while you go ask your Mom if it's okay. But hurry up. I haven't got all day.

BRENDAN

Okay. I'll be right back. *(He exits and almost immediate reappears)* She said it'd be okay.

GUIDE

Are you sure? That was pretty quick.

BRENDAN

Yeah. I know. And she said something I didn't really understand...something about there being a few more scenes to do...

GUIDE

She is so right. Come on...Let's go.

END OF SCENE

SCENE II

Alex becomes active now and enters the playing area. She's got four plastic bags full of groceries. She starts unpacking them and is mumbling and grumbling as she does so.

ALEX

It's not fair! I always have to unpack the groceries by myself. My nerdy brother never helps me. Says it's girl's work. He only helps when my Mom and Dad make him. He's such a pest. I guess that's what little brothers are: pests. They were born to pester people. *(Alex places three of the empty bags into the fourth empty bag and starts to throw them in the trash can.)*

The Guide sneaks up behind Alex. Brendan is with the Guide, but Alex can't see him. Very quietly the Guide gets closer and closer to Alex.

GUIDE

(Into Alex's ear)

Boo!

ALEX

(Startled, screams)

Who are you? Where did you come from?

GUIDE

(Menacingly)

Just what do you think you're going to do with those plastic bags, young lady?

ALEX

Get away from me! Who **are** you? Don't come near me! Help! *(Alex runs around the playing area followed by the Guide. All of a sudden she runs into Brendan.)* What are you doing here?

BRENDAN

Take it easy. Calm down. It's okay. He's a friend of mine.

ALEX

Some friend. Scaring little kids like that.

BRENDAN

I said take it easy. He's okay

ALEX

You sure are testy.

BRENDAN
(*To the Guide*)

I quit smoking.

GUIDE
(*Smiles broadly at Brendan and turns to Alex*)

I apologize. It's part of my personality. I've been trying not to be so scary, but it's a hard habit to break...and, to tell you the truth, it's kind of fun...scaring people. I remember one time, I was just a little guy, and I went to the library to scare the librarian. It's amazing what you can do with some peanut butter and a feather duster – got in a **lot** of trouble that time. (*He stops.*) Well, um, I'll finish that story some other time. (*Pause*) If I may?

ALEX
What?

GUIDE
Ask you that question again.

ALEX
Okay.

GUIDE
(*Getting scary again*)
Just what do you think you are going to do with those plastic bags, young lady?

ALEX
You're scaring me.

GUIDE
Oh, right. I'm sorry.

ALEX
Well, that's okay, I guess. To answer your question: I'm going to throw them away. Why?

GUIDE
(*Again in a menacing manner*)
Throw them away! Throw them away! (*As before*) Are you going to throw them far away or far, far away? (*To Brendan*) Brendan?

GUIDE and BRENDAN
(Together)

There is no away!

ALEX
Well, it's too much trouble to recycle them.

GUIDE

Too much trouble? I'll tell you what trouble is, young lady. Trouble is the big old red-tailed hawk with a plastic bag caught in his talons trying to fly. It's like dragging an open parachute behind him. It is very exhausting. And to make matters worse, the bag, flapping in the wind, makes so much noise that the element of surprise is lost. The mice scurry away; the snakes slither away; the lizards, er, liz away. And because of that that poor old hawk can't make a living. He starves to death...all because your plastic bag is (*Mocking Alex*) "too much trouble to recycle."

ALEX

I'm sorry. I had no idea.

GUIDE

(*Continuing*)

Trouble is the beautiful sea turtle mistaking **your** plastic bag that was (*Again mocking Alex*) "too much trouble to recycle" for a jelly fish – which happens to be the turtle's favorite food and (*Going off on another tangent*) actually we **should** call a sea jelly, not a jelly fish, because it's not a fish, is it? No. And the same thing goes for star fish. They are not fish either and we have started to call them sea stars. You know the Spanish name for the sea star is **estrella del mar**, star of the sea. Not a word about fish.

BRENDAN

Um, mister...you're kind of getting off the point.

ALEX

"Kind of?"

GUIDE

Oh, yeah. Now where was I? Oh, yeah. I was talking about scaring the librarian...

BRENDAN

Noooo.

GUIDE

Oh, right. I was talking about....

BRENDAN

(*Drawing out the words*)

Plastic ba...

GUIDE

(*Dawning on him*)

Bags! Plastic bags! And, er...

ALEX

Sea turt...

GUIDE

Sea turtles! Right! The sea turtle eats the plastic bag because it looks like a jelly fi, er, sea jelly and the turtle gets the bag stuck in her belly and she starves to death, because she feels full and stops eating. She is full, but not full of food, she's full of indigestible **plastic!**

ALEX

Wow! Okay, I get it. I'll be recycling those plastic bags from now on.

GUIDE

Good for you!

BRENDAN

Wait a second. I have a better idea.

GUIDE and ALEX

You do?

BRENDAN

Yeah. Don't use them at all.

ALEX
(Sarcastically)

Great idea. I'll carry everything in my arms.

BRENDAN

No, miss **sarcasticalness**. Use a paper bag.

GUIDE

Or....

BRENDAN

A **cloth** bag!

GUIDE

Right! You can use them over and over. And they're really strong.

BRENDAN

And another thing. I'll bet people would use less plastic bags if they cost money.

GUIDE

Fewer.

BRENDAN

What?

Fewer plastic bags...

GUIDE

Same thing.

BRENDAN

Nuh-uh.

GUIDE

Is this another “grammar” thing?

BRENDAN

Yes.

GUIDE

You sure are a stickler.

BRENDAN

Call me old-fashioned...but

GUIDE

You’re old-fashion...

BRENDAN

I was kidding. But I **am** a stickler.

GUIDE

BRENDAN

I read somewhere that last year in Ireland people were charged 15¢ per bag and it worked. Not only were less bags used...

GUIDE

Ahem!

BRENDAN

(With a “look” at the Guide)

Not only were **fewer** bags used, so **fewer** bags got into the environment, but the Irish government made over one million dollars!

GUIDE

Where did you say you learned that?

BRENDAN

I read it somewhere, I think.

GUIDE

Good for you.

ALEX

Okay. You've convinced me. Now I just have to convince my parents to get a couple of cloth bags.

GUIDE

You go, girl! By the way, do you know what they make plastic bags out of?

ALEX

Plastic?

GUIDE

Well, yes, wise guy. But where does the plastic come from?

BRENDAN

Plastic trees?

GUIDE

Ohhh. And you were doing so well. No, not plastic trees.

BRENDAN

Rubber trees?

GUIDE

Noooo.

ALEX

The ocean?

GUIDE

Nope. *(To the audience. which remains invisible to Brendan and Alex)* Anyone out there know where plastic comes from?

ALEX

Who's he talking to?

BRENDAN

(Mocking the Guide)

You mean, "To whom is he talking?"

ALEX

Whatever.

BRENDAN

I really don't know. He's a little wacky sometimes.

(The audience may be suggesting answers, etc. Play with them...Ad Lib...)

GUIDE

(After some interplay with the audience)

We get plastic from oil.

BRENDAN

No way! Really?

GUIDE

Plastic bags are made from petroleum-based materials...petrochemicals. And they will remain in the environment as a bag for ten to twenty years.

ALEX

What happens then?

BRENDAN

Well, they never really leave the environment. They keep breaking down into smaller and smaller pieces and those pieces are easily absorbed by animals; especially animals that live in the ocean. The bags disappear but the plastic lasts forever.

GUIDE

(Astounded by Brendan's knowledge)

Where did you learn that?

BRENDAN

(Astounded by his own knowledge)

I...I don't know. It just came out of my mouth.

GUIDE

(Arte Johnson-ish?)

Verrrrry interesting. *(To Alex)* Do you think all that plastic makes the sea creatures happy?

ALEX

No.

GUIDE

It makes them sick.

ALEX

Time to get some cloth bags!

BRENDAN

Yeah. And if you get one with **Spiderman** on it, maybe your brother will help out more often.

ALEX

Now there's a thought. So what should I do with these bags?

GUIDE and BRENDAN

(Together)

You can reuse some of them and...

GUIDE, BRENDAN and ALEX

Recycle the rest!

BRENDAN

(Whispers into the Guide's ear)

GUIDE

Well, I guess so. *(To Alex)* Want to come with us?

ALEX

(Shrugs...indicating "Why, what for?")

GUIDE

We're going to go scare Cari.

ALEX

Are you kidding? I'd love to.

GUIDE

Go ask your Mom.

ALEX

(Yells to off stage)

Mom?

OFF-STAGE VOICE

Go ahead. It's okay.

ALEX

That was weird.

END OF SCENE

SCENE III

The Guide, Alex and Brendan come near the place where Cari is obviously “up to something.”

GUIDE

(To Alex and Brendan)

Well, looky here.

ALEX

What’s Cari doing?

BRENDAN

I don’t know. It looks like she’s pouring something down that storm drain.

GUIDE

Wait here, you two. *(Invisible to Cari now he walks toward her and knocks off her hat.)*

CARI

Hey! What the heck?

(The Guide tries but he’s not quite as menacing as before and his attempt at scaring her falls a little short.)

GUIDE

Just what do you think you are doing, Miss?

CARI

(Not afraid)

Did you knock off my hat?

GUIDE

(Becoming a little more menacing)

I asked you a question. What do you think you are doing?

CARI

(A little concerned now)

Just throwing this old paint away.

ALEX and BRENDAN

(To themselves)

She doesn’t know...There **is** no away!

GUIDE

(With mock anger)

By pouring it into the storm drain? Are you out of your mind?

What else can I do with it? CARI

Well, you can't throw it away. GUIDE

Why not? CARI

ALEX, BRENDAN and the GUIDE
(Together)
Because there **is** no **away!** *(Cari hears the other two, but doesn't see them. She's a little confused)*

You need to dispose of it properly. GUIDE

I thought I **was** disposing of it properly. CARI

Really? Well just where do you think all this paint goes after you pour it down the storm drain? GUIDE

I don't know. I never thought about it. CARI

Exactly! *(Gentler but still a bit threateningly)* You never thought about it. Out of sight...out of mind, eh? GUIDE
(Loudly)

You're kinda scaring me. CARI

Sorry. It's a hard habit to break. *(Turning to Alex and Brendan)* Okay, you two, you can come out now. GUIDE

Hi, Cari. ALEX

Hey, Dude. CARI

BRENDAN

How ya doin'?

CARI

I'm a little scared. Who is this guy? Do you know him?

ALEX

Yeah. We know him. And I get the feeling you're going to know him, too.

GUIDE

You're right. Hello, Cari. Let me ask you once again, where does this paint go after you pour it down the storm drain? Does it just disappear? Does someone come and clean it up? Where...does...it...go?

CARI

Ummm.

GUIDE

As Judge Judy would say, "Ummm is not an answer." *(Starts to daydream about Judge Judy)* Boy if Judge Judy were ten years younger...*(Snaps out of it)* *(Addressing the audience)* Anybody out there know? *(Alex, Brendan and Cari do not see or hear the audience)*

CARI

Who's he talking to? And who is Judge Judy?

BRENDAN and ALEX

I don't know. He's a little goofy sometimes.

GUIDE

Well? *(He fields a few answers from the audience; turns to Alex, Brendan and Cari)* I'll tell you where it goes. It goes directly into the environment. **Nobody** cleans it up. It finds its way into a stream or river or lake and it could eventually reach the ocean. It gets into your groundwater, too.

ALEX

Groundwater?

GUIDE

Yes.

ALEX

Is that an oxymoron?

GUIDE

Which?

“Groundwater.”

ALEX

Yeah. I suppose it is.

GUIDE
(Musing)

What’s an oxymoron?

BRENDAN

Butthead.

GUIDE

Don’t get personal.

BRENDAN

No. “Butthead” is an oxymoron.

GUIDE

So is “head butt.”

ALEX

Brendan’s just a regular moron.

CARI

Take that back!

BRENDAN

I’m just kidding. Lighten up, dude.

CARI

Yeah, well.

BRENDAN

GUIDE

I think we’ve gotten off the point. You’ll just have to look it up in the dictionary. Now where was I? Oh, yeah. *(Looking at Alex)* Groundwater. Groundwater is water that lies beneath the ground and we dig wells to pump it out. We use it as drinking water. *(Looking at Cari and trying to be menacing)* Do you think that you would like **paint** in your drinking water? Huh? Answer me! Do you? Well, do you?

CARI

You’re not scaring me anymore.

GUIDE

(Embarrassed that he's losing his scariness)

I...I wasn't **trying** to scare you. Just answer the question.

CARI

No. I would not like to have paint in my drinking water. *(Pause)* What do I do with it, then?

BRENDAN

You need to take it to the hazardous waste disposal site here in *(Insert local town or city)*. They will make sure that it doesn't get into the streams or lakes *(Pause.) (To himself)*
How do I know that?

CARI

What would happen if it **did** get into the lake?

GUIDE

Well, it could kill the fish. And then the animals that eat the fish would get sick from the paint that's in the fish.

ALEX

What animals?

BRENDAN

Bears, eagles, otter, mink, snakes.

EVERYONE

(Together)

Milk shakes?

BRENDAN

(Exasperated)

Mink...snakes.

EVERYONE

(Together)

Ohhhhhhh.

ALEX

Wait a minute...Snakes don't eat fish.

GUIDE

Some do. I once saw a garter snake lurk by the edge of a pond, and when the time was right, he plunged his head into the water and came out with a little mosquito fish in his mouth. That fish was three times the size of the snake's head, but he managed to swallow him anyway. It was amazing.

CARI

What about deer? Would they disappear, too?

ALEX

Well, I'm sure that deer don't eat fish.

BRENDAN

Why not?

ALEX

Because they're herbivores.

BRENDAN

What's an herbivore?

ALEX

An animal that just eats plants.

CARI

Oh...they're vegetarians.

ALEX

Yeah...I guess you could say that.

CARI

Cool. My cousin says he won't eat anything unless it had parents or a face.

CARI

Eeeeyeewww.

ALEX

Oh, he's a carnivore.

BRENDAN

Oh, I know what that is. Your cousin is a meat-eater!

CARI

Well, I eat everything. What am I?

ALEX

That's easy...you're a pig. (*Quickly*) Just kidding. You are an omnivore!

GUIDE

You are straying....

BRENDAN

Well, we learned from the best.

GUIDE

Back to the topic, please.

BRENDAN

In the long run, a deer could be affected by the paint.

GUIDE

That's a good point, Brendan. Everything in the universe is connected, you know. I'll show you. But I need some volunteers.

BRENDAN

Well, here we are.

GUIDE

I need more than you three.

ALEX

Where will you get them?

GUIDE

You'll see. Be patient. (*Cari, Brendan and Alex freeze and do not participate in getting the volunteers until later.*) (*To audience*) I need a volunteer. (*Most kids will raise their hands.*) (*One fun way to get volunteers is this: While the kids' hands are raised say*) I need a volunteer who is a boy. (*The girls put their hands down and the boys' hands remain raised*) I need a volunteer who is a boy and in Kindergarten. (*You can call on a real kindergartener at this time or embarrass one of the inevitable wise-guy sixth graders who still has his hand up yelling, "I'm in kindergarten." And call him up to be the first volunteer. This volunteer will be The Sun. Then*) I need a volunteer who is a girl in the first grade wearing something red. (*This volunteer will be a Honey Bee. Repeat this procedure with various requirements for each of the following: a Flower, a Fish, a Bear, Groundwater and, of course, a Deer. Cari will be the Paint. Alex, Brendan and Cari don't see the entire audience, just the volunteers as they appear on stage. They begin to Ad Lib*) "**Hey, where did they come from?**" "**Who's he?**" "**Here's another one**" "**This is crazy!**" (*Etc., etc.*)

GUIDE

(*Arranges the volunteers*)

(*Pointing to the Kindergartener*) Here is the **Sun**...shining on everything and providing the earth with **Energy**. (*Pointing to the First Grader*) Here is a **Flower**. (**S**)**He** gets energy from the **Sun** and provides **Food** for...(*Pointing to the Second Grader*) the **Bee**, and us and other animals, too, and, of course, the **Deer**. (*Continuing in this manner*) The **Bee** makes food for (*Pointing to the Third Grader*) insects, which provide food for the **Fish**. The **Fish** provides for (*Pointing to the Fourth Grader*) the **Bear**. The **Bear** and

People need (*Pointing to the Fifth Grader*) **Groundwater** to drink and grow things and to stay healthy. Then along comes (*Pointing to Cari*) **Paint! Paint** is poured down the storm drain and gets into rivers and lakes and **groundwater**. (*Groundwater turns its back to the audience and sits; no longer a part of the “environment.”*) The **Groundwater** is poisoned. The **Flower** can't use it to make food. (*The Flower turns its back and sits, too*) The **Bee** has nothing to eat. (*The Bee turns and sits*) The **Fish** has nothing to eat. (*The Fish turns and sits*) The **Bear** has nothing to eat. (*The Bear turns and sits*) That leaves **Mr(s). Deer**. (*The Deer looks around the stage for food, fish, etc. and finding none, turns and sits*) That leaves us with the **Sun**. And when the **Sun** sets...(*Sun slowly turns and sits leaving only Paint standing and reigning over all*)

(*Turning to Cari*)

So, what are you going to do with that **paint**, now?

CARI

That's easy! I'm going to pour it down the drain.

GUIDE, ALEX and BRENDAN

(*Together*)

What!!!!????

CARI

Chill. I'm just kidding. You convinced me. I'll get my Mom and Dad to take all this paint and other stuff to that hazardous waste disposal place you talked about.

GUIDE

I thank you, and the Fish thanks you. (*He gets the Fish to stand and return to his/her seat*)

BRENDAN

And the bears and eagles and otters and (*Very clearly*) the **mink** and **snakes**, thank you, too. (*The volunteers all return to their seats, except the Deer*)

CARI

And the Deer?

GUIDE

Oh, Let us not forget the Deer. (*The Deer returns to its seat*)

END OF SCENE

SCENE IV

Alex, Brendan and Cari continue running all over the auditorium Ad Libbing, "I'm a deer!" "I'm a bee!" "I'm a bear!" "I'm the sun!" "You're a baboon!" Etc.

GUIDE

Guys! Guys! Will you give me a hand with this fertilizer?

BRENDAN

What are you going to do with it?

GUIDE

(Nonchalantly)

Pour it down the drain.

ALEX, BRENDAN and CARI

(Incredulous)

What?????!!

ALEX

With all due respect...Are you nuts?

GUIDE

What do you mean?

BRENDAN

You can't pour fertilizer down the drain.

GUIDE

Why not?

CARI

You said we're not supposed to put anything down the drain; even if it's usually a good thing...like fertilizer.

BRENDAN and ALEX

Yeah...You said...

GUIDE

(Changing demeanor)

I am so proud of you guys. You've got it! You've learned a very important lesson. This was a test and you passed with flying colors.

BRENDAN

What does that mean, anyway?

GUIDE

What does what mean?

BRENDAN

“You passed with flying colors.”

GUIDE

It means you performed perfectly.

BRENDAN

Where does it come from?

GUIDE

(Thinking about it)

I don't know. It's just a figure of speech. I guess you'll have to look it up.

BRENDAN

Okay. *(He pulls a little book from his pocket.)* Here it is! “A victorious navy fleet sailing into harbor with the ships' flags still flying at their mastheads.”

GUIDE

That's interesting. I didn't know that. (Pause) Anyway... where was I? You got me off the subject again.

CARI

Fertilizer...

GUIDE

Oh, yeah. Fertilizer...It's a good thing...usually. It does make things grow better, and that is good. But it's possible for it to make the wrong things grow better.

ALEX

What do you mean?

GUIDE

Well, let's say that the fertilizer makes it into that stream over there; because someone dumped it down the drain. It will make the algae in that stream grow better.

ALEX

Algae?

BRENDAN

Little plants.

GUIDE

Well they're not plants really. They are **like** plants, but they're not **really** plants. They're...well...they're algae. You can look it up on the internet. Algae.

A...L...G...A...E.

ALEX

He's off on another tangent.

BRENDAN

I know.

CARI

I'm beginning to like this guy, though.

ALEX

Yeah, he's okay, I guess.

GUIDE

Now where were we? Oh, yeah. These little plant...er, algae, grow so fast when they get a hold of some fertilizer that they take over the stream...using up all the oxygen in the water and the other plants and fish suffer. By the way, how do animals that live in the water get oxygen? They need it to live, just as we do. We landlubbers use our lungs. What do fish use?

CARI

Their gulls.

GUIDE

Ooooooh. You are so close. They use their gills.

CARI

That's what I meant.

BRENDAN

Yeah. Right.

ALEX

I'll bet.

CARI

I did!

GUIDE

Okay. Okay. Where was I?

BRENDAN

Fish need oxygen to live.

GUIDE

Right. And the algae use it all up and the fish die.

BRENDAN

And the bears and eagles and otters and mink and snakes die, too. Huh?

GUIDE

And maybe even the...

ALEX, BRENDAN and CARI
(Together)

Deer!

GUIDE

Now you're getting it.

CARI

Well, how can we keep fertilizer out of the water?

BRENDAN

Don't use so much of it. Don't put too much water on your lawn and garden; the excess water goes down the storm drain bringing the fertilizer with it. (*Amazed at his newly acquired knowledge*) Here I go again!

CARI

Okay then. I won't put **anything** down the drain, even the so-called good stuff. I promise.

ALEX

Me neither!

GUIDE

Well, all I have to say is, "Yay!"

END OF SCENE

SCENE V

Alex, Brendan and Cari again start running all over the auditorium Ad Libbing, “I’m a deer!” “I’m an otter!” “I’m a snake!” “You’re still a baboon!”

GUIDE

Hey kids! Hey. Calm down you guys. I need some help.

ALEX

We’d be glad to help.

BRENDAN

What do you want us to do?

GUIDE

Well since you all seem to be into play-acting and role-playing, I want you to actually become actors and act out a little scene I’ve written.

CARI

Cool.

ALEX

Yeah. That’s tight!

BRENDAN

What do we have to do?

GUIDE

Well, it’s actually pretty easy. As you know by now, I can pretty much make things happen when I want tem to.

CARI

Yeah. *(To herself)* A little creepy.

GUIDE

(Taking out three scripts)

Here’s the scene I want you to learn.

ALEX

I’m not too good at memorizing things.

BRENDAN

No kidding. *To Guide*) Watch this. *(To Alex)* What’s your phone number?

ALEX

Er...I, uh...

GUIDE

You really must memorize your phone number and address (*To audience*) That goes for you, too. (*To Alex*) Don't worry, I will enable you to learn your lines in ten seconds.

BRENDAN

That's impossible.

GUIDE

You don't believe me? Watch this. (*He makes the audience visible to the actors onstage. The actors are flabbergasted, amazed, incredulous and a little scared again.*)

(*Alex, Brendan and Cari Ad Lib some more: "Who are these people?" "You really can do magical stuff!"*)

GUIDE

They've been here all along. (*To audience*) Say, "Hi," everyone.

(*AUDIENCE responds.*)

GUIDE

I just didn't want you to see them. They've been here with you (*Looks at Brendan*)

BRENDAN

When I had that little scene with the cigarettes?

GUIDE

Yup. And with you (*Looks at Alex*)

ALEX

When I was throwing those plastic bags..."away?"

GUIDE

Yup. And...

CARI

When all of us were learning about paint and fertilizer?

ALEX, BRENDAN and CARI *Ad Lib*

Unbelievable. No way! He's fooling around. It is kind of creepy!

GUIDE

Now I need your help to show them the problems we have with motor oil. (*He hands the scripts to Alex, Brendan and Cari*) Please take ten seconds to skim through these six pages. (*The Guide counts to ten.*) Time's up. We are now ready to start the play. (*Alex, Brendan and Cari take their positions*) Curtain up! Let's begin!

ALEX

Hurry up. Someone might see us.

CARI

So?

ALEX

So? What we're doing is against the law.

BRENDAN

Really?

ALEX

Yes. Really. Pouring oil down the drain is against the law.

BRENDAN

Then why are we doing it?

ALEX

I don't have time to recycle it. What am I supposed to do? Keep it in buckets in my garage? And besides it costs money to recycle oil. That's why I change it myself.

GUIDE

(His old, scary self)

Hey guys!

ALEX

(Lets out a little scream)

Who are you?

CARI

Where did you come from?

GUIDE

Well, let's just say I'm an observer. An interested observer. What are **you** doing here?

ALEX

Getting rid of this old oil.

GUIDE

How much have you got there?

ALEX

Oh, I don't know. Not much. About five quarts, I guess.

GUIDE

Hmmm. Not much, eh? Well, I'll tell you this: That much oil could contaminate more than a million gallons of water.

BRENDAN

No way!

GUIDE

I'm afraid so. It spreads very quickly over a very large area.

BRENDAN

How much **is** a million gallons?

GUIDE

If we had a bowl big enough to hold a million gallons of water, that would be enough water for a whale to swim in. That's how much a million gallons is.

ALEX

What kind of whale?

GUIDE

What? What kind of whal... Well, I don't know. What difference does it make?

ALEX

Well I know a little bit about whales. I read a book...

GUIDE

Good for you! I can't tell you how important reading is. I read a book about Monarch butterflies recently and...

ALEX

As I was saying... I read a book about whales and...

GUIDE

Did your book tell you that the killer whale isn't a whale at all? It's a dolphin. A very big dolphin. Seven thousand pounds of dolphin to be exact.

ALEX

Yeah. I think it did mention that. Now what was I talking about. You've got **me** going off on tangents now.

GUIDE

How am I supposed to know? You're the one who started talking about reading a book.

ALEX

Oh, yeah, now I remember. You said, “A million gallons of water would be enough to hold a whale.” And I asked, “What kind of whale?” And you said, “What difference does it make?” and I said, “I read a book...”

GUIDE

Good for you! I can’t tell you how important...

ALEX

Stop it! You’re driving me crazy! This stuff wasn’t in the script you gave us to learn. Stick to your lines, okay?

GUIDE

I do get a little muddled sometimes.

ALEX

(To HERSELF)

Sometimes? (to the Guide) **A...n...y...w...w...a...y.** There’s a big difference between a gray whale and a blue whale.

BRENDAN

The color for instance.

ALEX

Be quiet. That’s not in the script.

BRENDAN

Sorry.

GUIDE

Okay. Let’s suppose we’re talking about the smaller whale...the gray whale, right?

ALEX

Yes, the gray whale is smaller than the blue whale.

BRENDAN

And it’s a different color.

ALEX

Brendan!

BRENDAN

Sorry.

GUIDE

The adult gray whale is about 45 feet long and weighs about 45 tons. That is still a lot of whale, is it not? It's bigger than a school bus.

ALEX

Wow, that is big.

GUIDE

So a million gallons of water is a lot of water. Agreed?

ALEX

Agreed.

GUIDE

Here's a little experiment I want you to try.

ALEX

Now?

GUIDE

Sure. Why not?

ALEX

Okay.

GUIDE

Fill your bathtub with water. *(She does so)* Now, add two drops of this olive oil to the water. *(She does so)* Now, taste the water. *(To Brendan and Cari)* You, too.

BRENDAN and CARI

Do we have to?

GUIDE

Well, it's in the script so I wish you would. *(All three of the kids taste the water)*

(Alex, Brendan and Cari spit out the water making "Icky, yucky" noises as they do so)

GUIDE

Surprised? You can taste even that little bit of olive oil placed in a whole bathtub full of water. Motor oil acts the same way and motor oil is poisonous to animals and us.

CARI

That's unbelievable.

GUIDE

If you poured just a cup of motor oil on a lake...

ALEX

Yeah?

BRENDAN

It would cover an area the size of a football field.

CARI

Get out of town!

GUIDE

No, he's right...again. There's something else, too.

ALEX

What?

GUIDE

Some oil is heavier than water.

CARI

So?

GUIDE

So...it sinks to the bottom.

ALEX

Well, that's good.

BRENDAN

Not really. You see, when it sinks it covers the mud or sand on the bottom and the animals that live in the mud or sand...

ALEX

Get sick?

BRENDAN

Worse. They suffocate and die. *(Pause)* Guys, I'm scaring myself. I didn't know how much stuff I didn't know I know.

ALL

(Together)

Huh?

BRENDAN

Nothing.

ALEX

Well, who cares if a few worms and snails die?

GUIDE

Who cares? Who cares? Well, SpongeBob UnderPants for one.

ALEX (*Laughing*)

He said, “Underpants.”

BRENDAN

That’s SpongeBob **SquarePants**, not **underpants**.

GUIDE

(*A little embarrassed*)

Okay, okay...I made a teeny, tiny, little mistake.

ALEX

You are forgiven. Who else should care about worms and snails?

GUIDE

(*To all*)

Well, **you** should. That’s for sure.

CARI

We should care about a little worm? Why?

GUIDE

Okay. You asked for it. Here goes: (*Singing to the tune of **Dem Bones***)

*The worm is connected to the teeny fish;
The teeny fish is connected to the small fish;
The small fish is connected to the bigger fish
Now hear the word of food webs.*

*The bigger fish is connected to the fisherman;
The fisherman’s connected to the fish market;
The fish market’s connected to you-oo
And your dinner table, too!*

ALEX

Oh, wow! Worms?...Me?...the dinner table?

CARI

That’s kind of gross.

GUIDE

That's the way of the world, my friends. No worms...no you; just because you were too lazy or too cheap to recycle your old motor oil. So what should the next step be?

ALEX

I'm going to recycle this oil.

GUIDE

Great idea! *(To the audience)* Let's have a big hand for our splendid actors. Take a bow, my friends. Take a bow.

ALEX

Thank you. Thank you very much. *(Alex keeps bowing and thanking the audience even after they've stopped applauding – assuming they were applauding – finally...)*

GUIDE

Okay. That's enough; you big ham. Speaking of ham...Do you like sushi?

ALEX

What's ham got to do with sushi?

GUIDE

Nothing. I was just curious.

ALEX

You mean raw fish and seaweed and stuff?

GUIDE

Yeah.

ALEX

No way! I don't like fish anyway, whether it's cooked or not. **And** I would **never** put seaweed in my mouth. That's just gross!

BRENDAN

Well, I'd be willing to try it, I guess.

CARI

Not me! I wouldn't be caught dead eating seaweed.

GUIDE

Did you brush your teeth today?

CARI

Of course. **And** I flossed for thirty seconds.

GUIDE

Well, there's a good chance that the toothpaste you used had something in it that would surprise you.

CARI

Like what?

GUIDE

Like...

CARI

Wait! Don't tell me! Let me guess...It had (*Laughing at the absurdity of what she is going to say*) seaweed in it. Ha Ha Ha.

GUIDE

Right-a-roonie!

CARI

Eeeeeeeew! I was kidding!

GUIDE

Lots of toothpaste has seaweed in it.

ALEX

Ick!

GUIDE

Don't worry. You're not going to find big chunks of seaweed in your toothpaste or on your toothbrush. Let me explain. They take just a little seaweed, grind it up, dry it out and extract an ingredient called carrageenan from it. (*Note: Carrageenan is pronounced with a hard "G".*)

ALEX

Really?

BRENDAN

He wouldn't lie to you.

GUIDE

You see the ingredient they get from the seaweed can turn a liquid into a gel. It makes stuff thick. If it weren't in the toothpaste, you couldn't call it tooth**paste**.

BRENDAN

You'd have to call it tooth-waterystuffthatsquirtsallovertheplacewhenyoutakeoffthecap.

CARI

I'm never going to brush my teeth again.

GUIDE

Oh, don't say that. If you stopped using all the things that have a little seaweed in them you probably wouldn't enjoy yourself too much.

ALEX

Why?

GUIDE

Well...Do you like chocolate milk?

CARI

I love it!

BRENDAN

Me, too!

GUIDE

It's got seaweed in it.

BRENDAN

I **knew** that!

GUIDE

Yup. The next time you have chocolate milk at school, look at the ingredients label and try to find the word "carrageenan." They put just a little bit of carrageenan in the chocolate milk so that the chocolate doesn't all settle to the bottom. It keeps the chocolate suspended in the milk.

ALEX

Can you see this carrageenan?

GUIDE

No. Just like the toothpaste, you are not going to find big pieces of seaweed floating in your chocolate milk. You can't smell it either. Does anyone here like whipped cream?

ALL TOGETHER

I do!

GUIDE

(To the audience)

Who likes whipped cream out there?

(Audience responds)

GUIDE

Well, it's got seaweed in it.

CARI

Whipped cream?

GUIDE

Have you ever had home-made whipped cream?

BRENDAN

Yes.

GUIDE

It stays nice and thick...for about thirty seconds.

BRENDAN

Then it gets all goopy and runny and the cherry falls off, right?

GUIDE

Right.

BRENDAN

Don't tell me, the whipped cream has seaweed in it.

GUIDE

You got it. The manufacturers of the store-bought whipped cream put a little bit of carrageenan...Where does the carrageenan come from?

BRENDAN

Seaweed.

GUIDE

Right. The manufacturers of the store-bought whipped cream put a little bit of carrageenan in it so it stays nice and thick and the cherry stays on top, where it belongs.

ALEX

What else has seaweed in it?

GUIDE

Oh, there's lots of stuff. Post-It Notes, for example.

CARI

What are Post-It Notes?

BRENDAN

You know. Those little pieces of paper that have a sticky back so you can put them on the refrigerator. *(As he says this, the Guide starts putting Post-It Notes on everyone – their nose, their forehead, their arms, etc.)*

CARI

Oh, yeah.

BRENDAN

They've got seaweed in them. If they didn't they'd all stick together. They wouldn't peel apart so easily. It's interesting because Post-It Notes has seaweed so they won't stick and Band-Aids has seaweed so they **will** stick.

CARI

Unbelievable.

BRENDAN

This is fun.

ALEX

What else?

BRENDAN

Cup O' Noodles – seaweed makes the noodles soft and the soup thick.

ALEX

(To Brendan)

How do you know all this stuff?

BRENDAN

I don't know...I really don't know.

CARI

What else?

GUIDE

Dog food.

ALEX

Yuck!

GUIDE

(To Alex)

You eat a lot of dog food, do you?

ALEX

Nooooo.

BRENDAN

(Very confident now in his new found knowledge)

Seaweed keeps the dog food from getting too soggy.

CARI

Fido will freak out.

GUIDE

Who's Fido?

CARI

My dog.

GUIDE

You have a dog named Fido? No kidding? I always wanted a dog named Fido. I thought it would be really funny to name a dog Fido or Rover...

CARI

What else has seaweed in it?

GUIDE

Oh, I'm sorry. I got carried away again, huh? Are you ready?

CARI

Yeah.

GUIDE

Are you sure?

ALEX

Yes. *(Pleading now)* Tell us!

GUIDE

Ice...

BRENDAN

(Very sure of himself)

...cream. **Ice cream** has seaweed in it.

GUIDE

How did you guess?

BRENDAN

I didn't guess. I...I...**knew** it!

ALEX

Well if you know everything...Why is there seaweed in ice cream?

BRENDAN

It makes ice cream creamy. Toothpaste – pasty; Ice cream – creamy. Homemade ice cream can be a little gritty. Store bought ice cream feels smooth in your mouth because they put carrageenan from seaweed in it.

ALEX

This is almost too much information. Are we almost done?

GUIDE

Not by a long shot. I'm thinking of something red.

ALEX

A tomato!

GUIDE

I'm pretty sure there are no tomatoes in the ocean.

CARI

We need more clues.

GUIDE

It comes in a tube.

CARI

Another clue please.

GUIDE

Women use it to make themselves kissable.

ALEX, BRENDAN and CARI

Eeeeeeyeeew!

ALEX

Is it...lipstick?

GUIDE

Right you are! The seaweed helps it hold its shape. And there's more...the shiny lipstick, the lip gloss...

CARI

What about it?

BRENDAN

It's shiny because it's got **fish scales in it!**

CARI

That's **gross!**

ALEX (Laughing)

I'm going to tell my Mom!

BRENDAN

All the things we've been talking about have an ocean connection. And there are many more.

CARI

Like?

GUIDE

Peanut butter, antacids...

BRENDAN

Paint, fertilizer...

ALEX

(Starting to realize that she knows stuff, too)

Bread, pancake syrup, Girl Scout cookies – **Samoas** – my favorite!

GUIDE

Other things have an ocean connection too. And I'm not talking about seaweed.

CARI

What **are** you talking about, then?

GUIDE

Aluminum cans.

CARI

What?

ALEX

Manufacturers of aluminum cans add magnesium to the aluminum - say that three times fast – to make them stronger. The magnesium comes from seawater. *(To herself)* I didn't know I knew that.

BRENDAN

It must be catching.

ALEX

What must be catching?

BRENDAN

Knowledge.

ALEX

Hmmmm.

GUIDE

What else?

ALEX

Chemicals for film developing, flame retardants, explosives, and, of course, our drinking water.

CARI

Drinking water! The ocean's salty. We can't drink that.

ALEX

Right. But remember the water cycle? The water **evaporates** from the ocean and forms clouds. The water in the clouds **condenses** to form rain.

GUIDE

Good old **precipitation**.

BRENDAN

Then it **percolates** through the ground and...

ALEX

....**accumulates** in underground pools called **aquifers** and we pump out this (*Emphasizing the word*) **g.r.o.u.n.d.w.a.t.e.r** and drink it. (*Amazed at herself*) Well, I'm just a walking encyclopedia!

CARI

So, I guess it's pretty important to make sure the ocean stays clean, huh?

GUIDE

And not just for the plants and animals that live there, but as you can see it's important for us, too.

CARI

But what can we do to keep the ocean clean? We don't even live near it.

GUIDE

Well, it's a lot closer than you think. Did you know that you can drive from Lynchburg to the Chesapeake Bay in a little over four hours. It's only about 240 miles. That's really not very far.

BRENDAN

Trash and toxins get into Blackwater Creek and other streams and creeks that empty into the James River here in Lynchburg and pollute the environment all along the way until they empty into the Chesapeake Bay. No matter where you live, you live in a watershed and you have an impact on the waters of this planet, including the ocean.

ALEX

Remember this...you don't have to go the ocean to make it filthy and you don't have to go there to clean it up.

CARI

How can that be?

ALEX

If you pick up trash here in Lynchburg and throw it in the trash can and make sure the lid is on tight, it won't be able to "escape" into the streams and rivers.

BRENDAN

So it can't be carried to the river and the ocean.

GUIDE

Right. And if you **recycle** things that can be recycled, **those things** won't get into the environment either.

BRENDAN

Reduce, reuse, recycle...and **remember** to do it.

CARI

I will. But I didn't know that that would keep the ocean clean.

GUIDE

Well, now you do.

CARI

Wow! We **can** make a difference.

GUIDE

Oh, you **do** make a difference. **Everyone** makes a difference.

CARI

What about people who pour motor oil down the storm drain? Or the ones who throw paint into the gutter or trash into the street?

GUIDE

Well, think about it. Do they make a difference?

ALEX and BRENDAN

Oh, boy, do they!

GUIDE

What kind of difference do they make, Cari?

CARI

A **bad** difference!

GUIDE

Right. If we're not careful we'll lose the things we love the most. Before you know it they'll be **going**...going...gone. But it's not too late...yet. *(He makes himself disappear)*

BRENDAN

Hey! Where did he go?

ALEX

This has been really weird.

CARI

But it's been a lot of fun. And I learned a lot! I'm going to miss him, though.

ALEX

You got that right.

BRENDAN

Well, guys, let's get busy...We have a planet to save!

ALEX, BRENDAN and CARI

(To the audience)

Remember, **Everyone** makes a difference...Make **Yours** a positive one!

The Guide appears in the background walks down stage and smiles at the audience. Then he turns slowly upstage and skips away.

CURTAIN