

[SPEECHES FOLLOWING THE RAP OF THE GAVEL ARE SPOKEN BY CITIZENS IN A TOWN MEETING AND SHOULD BE DELIVERED WITH ANIMATION].

(READER 1 RAPS A GAVEL ON MUSIC STAND SEVERAL TIMES).

**READER 1:** "What are we going to do about Jack Wiley?"

**READER 2:** "Yeah! Something must be done!"

**READER 4:** "I agree!"

**READER 3:** "We all agree!"

**READER 5:** The raised voices came from a town meeting in the village of Overton.

**READER 6:** The problem was Jack Wiley. Everyone was sick and tired of him.

(ALL READERS NOD THEIR HEADS).

**READER 7:** It wasn't because Jack wasn't a likeable fellow. He was. And it wasn't because the people of Overton didn't want to have a good time. They liked fun as much as anybody.

**READER 2:** It was because Jack was a practical joker of the very worst kind, the kind that never quits.

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**READER 4:** So while Jack was away visiting his sister, the rest of the people in town had gathered to talk about him.

(READER 1 RAPS GAVEL AGAIN).

**READER 1:** "Last week Jack returned some books he had borrowed. The next day I tried to open one of them and found all the pages had been glued together!"

**READER 2:** "He short-sheeted my bed!"

**READER 5:** "He put shaving cream in my toothpaste tube!"

**READER 7:** "He put salt in my sugar bowl!"

**READER 4:** "He called the phone company, had my number changed, and then wouldn't tell me what the new number was!"

**READER 3:** "HE DYED MY DOG GREEN!"

(ALL READERS NOD).

**READER 6:** Everyone in the room had been tricked by Jack over and over. The more they told him to lay off the jokes, the worse he got.

(READER 1 RAPS GAVEL ON MUSIC STAND).

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**READER 1:** "It's gotten so bad that I am forever waiting for something to happen. If I reach to open a door, I half-expect the knob to come off in my hand. I feel like I'm walking on eggs."

**READER 4:** "That's right. We are always waiting for the other shoe to drop."

**READER 6:** All agreed. Jack had to be cured of his never ending practical jokes.

**READER 3:** "We could carry him out in the country and make him walk home. That would give him something to think about."

**READER 7:** "I doubt it."

**READER 5:** "Look, we've got to do something! Let's all put on our thinking caps."

**READER 2:** The room was quiet for a minute. Then Sara said she had an idea, and everyone crowded in to listen.

(ALL READERS LEAN SLIGHTLY TOWARD READER 7 FOR A MOMENT, THEN STRAIGHTEN UP. READER 6 BOWS HIS HEAD. READER 1 CONTINUES).

**READER 1:** Early the next morning the best hunters of the village walked into the woods. When they came out at noon the next day, they went straight to Sara's house.

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**READER 7:** "Did you get them?"

**READER 3:** "Well, we had to do a powerful lot of trapping before we found four exactly alike, but I think we did it."

**READER 4:** One of the hunters opened a large sack, and out hopped four rabbits. If you had been there, you might have thought you were dreaming.

**READER 1:** The four female rabbits were identical in size and coloring; each a perfect copy of the others, right down to a slightly bent right ear.

(READER 7 OPENS EYES IN WIDE SURPRISE).

**READER 7:** "Wonderful! They are exactly what we need. Now remember, everyone, mum is the word."

**READER 2:** Sara took one rabbit and shut it in the shed behind the house.

**READER 3:** She let one hop freely around the kitchen.

**READER 1:** And she handed the remaining two rabbits to her husband, Darnell, who then set off for the Lion's Inn.

**READER 2:** Anyone who happened to be in town at 4:00 would usually drop by the Lion's Inn for tea and talk. It was a longstanding custom. And on this day, because of Sara's plan, the inn was crowded way ahead of time.

**READER 4:** One person to arrive early was Darnell. He carried the two rabbits Sara had given him. He put one rabbit in his coat pocket and gave the other one to Leo, the owner of the inn.

**READER 7:** Then Darnell sat down and started talking with friends.

(READER 6 LIFTS HIS HEAD).

When Jack Wiley came in, fresh from the visit to his sister's, it looked like any other afternoon at the Lion's Inn. Darnell welcomed him back.

**5/DARNELL:** "Jack! How was your trip? Sit down, and let me buy you a cool drink."

**READER 3:** Jack sat and began telling everyone about his trip. He loved being the center of attention and did not think it strange the Lion's Inn was so crowded that day.

**READER 2:** Darnell let him talk for five minutes before interrupting.

**5/DARNELL:** "Excuse me, Jack. It just occurred to me that you're probably tired from your trip. How would you like to come home with me for dinner?"

**6/JACK:** "I'd like it very much. Thanks for the offer."

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**READER 4:** He continued the account of his travels. Two minutes later, Darnell interrupted again.

**5/DARNELL:** "Pardon me, Jack, but wouldn't it be nice if we all went to my house for dinner. We could make a party of it. How about it, everybody?"

(READERS 1, 2, 3, AND 4 AD LIB ASSENT).

**READER 3:** Everyone agreed.

**READER 1:** Why wouldn't they? It was part of the plan.

**6/JACK:** "Great! There's nothing I like better than a party."

**READER 2:** Once again Jack went back to the story of his trip.

**READER 4:** A minute later Darnell stopped him a third time.

**5/DARNELL:** "Sorry to interrupt you again, Jack, but I'd better let Sara know I'm bringing so many people home. If I don't, we might have to split two chops between the lot of us."

**READER 7:** Darnell reached into his coat and pulled out the rabbit. He spoke directly to it.

(READER 7 BOWS HER HEAD. READER 5 PRETENDS TO BE HOLDING RABBIT AND TALKING TO IT).