The Woodland Creatures are Having a Party
By Jessica Huang

CHARACTERS
Raccoon
Badger
Fox
Moose

If you have any fur in your closet get it out. Put it on.
If you have a festive hat, dust it off.
Put out a few bowls of nuts and pretzels.
Pour a drink that fizzes.
The woodland creatures are having a party.

Raccoon
welcome!
oh welcome
thank you for coming
Fox! it's just wonderful to see you.
Badger - babe. You look sleek as ever.
make yourself at home!
tonight’s celebration is all thanks to the trashcan on 170th and Audubon
you know the one
burnt rice galore
pizza crust
some old root vegetables
and decomposing lettuce
yum
I also got some chicken bones and fish heads
if you're already on 170th you might as well, right?
Oh and there should be some fruit around here somewhere
and maybe a couple of french fries?
I don't know
I literally don't know
something just comes over me when I'm throwing a party
I can't stop myself
Seriously you should see me
whenever I'm at the trashcan my eyes go black and I lose track of time
and before I know it I've got more than I can carry
and still I just keep piling it on
it's a compulsion
I feel responsible
I want to make sure we have enough
I want you all to have a good time
The idea of running out of food gives me a stomachache
it gives me gas
it makes me puke
so what are you waiting for?
dig in dig in dig in

BADGER

I brought some
uh
grubs
from my tunnel

RACCOON

Oh Badger!
Oh you shouldn't have!
just look at this
just look at this, Fox
ey they smell immaculate
ey they look delectable
my mouth is watering
literally watering
Shall we put them here next to the bruised papaya?

FOX

Well I'm an idiot!

RACCOON

what's the matter?

FOX

I didn't think to bring anything.
I should have known!

RACCOON

you brought yourself
that's all we care about

FOX

And with a whole duck in my burrow-

RACCOON
don't be silly!
you need that duck
and we have more than enough
we have plenty
You got that duck for Vixen and you two should enjoy it
How is Vixen?

FOX

she's fine, she's stellar.
home with the kits tonight, sad she couldn't make it.
she said to say hello
Raccoon

Well you give her a hello right back from me okay?
and set a few of those radishes aside for her

Fox

Where's the animal of the hour?

Raccoon

Headed this way
I think
I hope
I got an RSVP
but you know Moose
these days Moose goes to bed at twilight

Badger

Moose will show

Fox

Moose never misses one of your soirees

Raccoon

I hope so
I surely do hope so
yes, I really
truly
hope so
but please! what are you waiting for?
eat!

Badger and fox assess the spread.
They each find something delicious
Raccoon knows what each of them likes best and got it just for them

Badger

so
how's it looking
up in your neck of the woods?

Fox

It's quiet

Badger

yeah
not so many of those
death machines
rolling around
kinda eerie innit?
I mean I'm not complaining
but doesn't it kinda feel like low pressure before a storm?

yeah

where are the guns?
what happened to the motor boats?

air smells cleaner

but why?

I have noticed
an increase of the bipedal ones
crunching around
and also more frequent appearances
of the domesticated wolves

Yeah
I've noticed it too
less cars
more dogs

god I hate those drooling yapping things

what do you think it means?

What's this what's this what's this?
we're having a party!
please be civilized!
don't kill the mood!
don't kill the fun!

Sorry
FOX

yeah! sorry.
Party foul.
Don't be mad, Raccoon

RACCOON

sorry
oh shoot
sorry I don't know
sorry I didn't mean to snap like that
sorry
sorry
I just
I wish
If only Moose were here
Moose would have something to say
something of importance
about the circumstances
but me, I don't know
I don't like it
the streets are empty
the streets are quiet
the streets are clean
and yet the trashcan is full
and I'm not one to say no to a full trashcan
but it is
unnerving
I am unnerved
what does it mean?
when will it end?
what will happen to us?
what will happen to me?
are we safe?
will we survive?
how? what will it take?
I don't mean to be overbearing
I just like to be prepared that's all

FOX

I have an idea

RACCOON

if the world is ending I'd like to be prepared.

FOX

what if we play a little game?
a little party game - what do you say?
just to lighten the mood?
terrible idea Fox

I suppose
I suppose I’d be up for it
as long as it’s civilized
this is a party after all
what shall we play?

Badger? Any ideas?

uh
how about
Never Have I Ever?

Classic!
though I was thinking something more like spin the bottle

Fox!

What? Vixen doesn't mind.

Hot potato?

Duck duck goose?

Seven minutes in heaven

you sure
have a one track mind

fox grins, shrugs

what about Chase?

The animals consider this
for a long moment
and here I thought you wanted to be civilized

I haven't played Chase
in a long
long time

I just thought
with things being the way they are
for now at least
under these circumstances
today
Chase might feel
kinda nice

I'll admit
the idea
does thrill me a bit

I doubt Moose would like it

Moose isn't here yet
and it's already past dusk
and I think we could all use a diversion

Chase
certainly is amusing

a good way to let off some steam

So?

Well you know me
I'm always game

Alright then
we'll play Chase

A shift
the animals transform
it's subtle
but unmistakable
they become unsheathed
fanged
sharp
ferocious
wild

FOX

On your mark

BADGER

get set

RACCOON

...
...
...
go

they fan out
they crouch
they scan the forest floor
they salivate

BADGER

(nearly a whisper-)
lizard

the other animals' heads snap
and train on the spot where BADGER is staring
as one they leap
and then
they run
at first chasing the lizard
then chasing whatever their chasing has stirred up
and eventually chasing each other-
RACCOON chased by BADGER
BADGER chased by FOX
BADGER closes in on RACCOON
bites

RACCOON

ow
ow!
that's my loin
my tender loin!

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BADGER

sorry
it's Chase

FOX takes that moment to pounce
gets BADGER by the throat

FOX

Chase it is-

but before FOX can do any damage
a shadow looms large

MOOSE

what is all this?

The animals shake it all off

BADGER

uh

FOX

oh

RACCOON

oh

oh

the animals slowly return to their civilized state

RACCOON

uh
hello Moose
welcome
please uh
make yourself comfortable

BADGER

can I take your
uh
anything?

MOOSE

I am quite comfortable

FOX

We were just amusing ourselves while we were waiting for you
MOOSE

so I see.
I was told this party would be civilized
In fact I received a guarantee

RACCOON

and it is
I solemnly swear
very civilized
uh
indeed

MOOSE

I should hope so
this is past my bedtime

BADGER

we know
we know that
Moose

RACCOON

Please -
help yourself to the vegetation
I picked it out just for you
please come this way
and try a bite
you'll see
it is civilized
it is dignified
you'll see

RACCOON shows MOOSE the spread
MOOSE is very dignified, very civilized
MOOSE eats the vegetation right there off the log or woodland table
(actor playing MOOSE - no using your hands!)

MOOSE

Mmm.
This is quite suitable.
Quite.

RACCOON

Oh wonderful!
Oh spectacular!
I hope you don't think-
what you walked in on
it was just a game
that's all
a little game
to blow off steam

BADGER
we uh
needed
to shake it all loose
you know

MOOSE
it has been stressful
of late

RACCOON
Hasn't it?
I have been going out of my mind!
the streets are empty
Empty, Moose.
I've never seen anything like it

BADGER
the death machines aren't rolling like they used to

FOX
the air is cleaner
the water too

MOOSE
I've noticed.

RACCOON
Please.
What is happening?
What is it all about?
And why
when it seems like we should be celebrating
does it feel instead a lot like
like
dread

BADGER

MOOSE
My friends
I do not know what is happening
I do not know why the human population has gone quiet
and fled inside
I do not know if it is a good thing or a bad thing for us just yet
but I do know one thing
I know why you feel such dread.
I was here for many winters before you
And I suspect
given my considerable lifespan
I will be here for many winters after you
With my great height I can see further than you can possibly imagine
With my strong legs I can travel great distances
and knowledge comes from such scope
true insight
and so I will share what I've learned:
change
is inevitable
change
is natural
change is life
and life is change.
It is also natural to fear change
as you do
as so many of us do
but change you must
and change we must
otherwise we will be left behind
On the other hoof
once you allow change
in all its many glorious forms and facets
you will be at peace

*The animals contemplate MOOSE's wisdom for a long moment.*
Truthfully, nobody wants to look dumb
but what the heck is MOOSE talking about?
Finally RACCOON gathers courage-

**RACCOON**

Moose
thank you for giving us the benefit of your wisdom
it was very
uh
wise
and
wizened.
But I mean can I be honest with you for a second?
Can I tell you the truth?
all the wisdom in the world doesn't do much to soothe my rising panic
it's just that
fine fine FINE
we can move with change
Sure no problem
we're woodland animals after all
it's all seasons and weather
and mosquitos
and Chase and be Chased
but if you really want us to be at peace then you gotta tell me
what do I do about
all this stupid, scary, hairy, beware-y
pent up
unspent
ENERGY?

MOOSE

A very good question
little Raccoon
To deal with pent up energy
I suggest we play a game
a little party game.
I call it Gallop and Shout.
Shall I teach you?

A blackout.
During which some things change
If there is no blackout to be had, go ahead and hide
quick
and then count to 10
When the lights rise you know what to do
MOOSE has laid it all out-
The lights rise
(or out you leap)
and the animals Gallop!
and Shout!

end of play