

WATERSHIP DOWN

A 4-Hour Dramatic Mini-Series

Based on the Novel by Richard Adams

Outline by Malcolm MacRury

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WATERSHIP DOWN

PART ONE: ACT ONE

FADE IN:

1. AN UNKNOWN POV stares out from a BURROW HOLE. A man's TASSLED GOLF SHOES stand close to this hidden, furtive Watcher. His unseen eyes look up -- way up -- as if taking in a giant or an ogre. High above him, A LAND DEVELOPER talks on a CELL PHONE, but his VOICE is unintelligible. The cell phone WHINES and the businessman casually drops a CIGARETTE to the meadow floor. We HEAR SNIFFING as the Watcher stares out at the discarded butt's THIN SMOKE. But the smoke quickly turns to a SWIRLING MIST that engulfs him! HUMAN HANDS thrust through the thick fog at CAMERA! –
2. WE REVEAL – The Watcher is a small, frightened rabbit named FIVER. He runs down the BURROW away from the grasping HANDS. But they transform into eerie BLACK SHADOWS pursuing the rabbit deep along the tunnel walls –
3. DISSOLVE TO: A BAND OF RABBITS, crowded on a RAFT, flee in terror down a dark RIVER. The hand shadows still dog them, now in the form of elongated, finger-like BRANCHES AND VINES. Fiver stares at the raft and sees it's made of BONES and BARBED WIRE. The rabbits panic at the sight! "They're bones!" HAZEL, Fiver's brother, commands them to swim! They flee the macabre raft. But the dogpaddling Fiver spies Hazel disappearing into a BLACK TUNNEL all alone. "Hazel!" he cries, his head barely above water –
4. CUT TO: A burrow underground. Fiver is KICKING OUT at his brother Hazel in his NIGHTMARE. Hazel wakes him, annoyed at being disturbed. But Fiver is a Seer, a rabbit blessed and cursed by visions. He tells Hazel that something awful is coming to the warren. He doesn't know what, but he recounts the end of the dream where his elder brother disappears into the dark tunnel, saying: "The Chief Rabbit must go alone." "Chief Rabbit? Me? What rubbish," replies Hazel. He leads his jittery sibling up to feed in order to calm him down –
5. Their WARREN is situated in forest and sloping farmland near the Northumberland Hills – north of Lake Ontario; east of the ever-growing Megacity. Rabbits dot the meadow, eating grass or passing hraka. But Hazel and Fiver are driven away from a prized treat by bully-boys of the OWSLA – the warren's muscle. They drift to a more isolated corner of the field. There, Fiver sniffs at a "man-thing" -- A POST AND SIGN. He spies a crushed CIGARETTE and all his fears return. He sees the fields turning BLOOD RED! Hazel tries to calm him – "It's only the evening light." But Fiver insists they have to warn the Chief Rabbit. Other rabbits – the clever BLACKBERRY and the story-teller

DANDELION are upset by Fiver's feverish prophecies. But still others mock him as a runt, a "fiver" who jumps in fear of everything. Fiver and Hazel exit –

CLOSE ON: We see the "man-thing" SIGN is an APPLICATION TO RE-ZONE FARMLAND –

6. The entrance to the Chief Rabbit's warren is guarded by a huge, Sergeant-Major of a rabbit named THLAYLI, nicknamed "Bigwig" for the curious TUFT OF FUR on his head. He reluctantly agrees to give them an audience with the Chief Rabbit, although he predicts there'll be hell to pay for it –
7. They are brought in by Bigwig to the imposing CHIEF RABBIT, who is enjoying a meal of stolen LETTUCE. Hazel explains that his brother often has feelings of danger before ill-fortune happens. The Chief is politely unimpressed. Fiver goes into a trance trying to warn him that a wire is set around all their necks! They're dismissed. And as expected, Bigwig has his head chewed off by the Chieftain --
8. That Night. Fiver and Hazel talk with Dandelion and Blackberry about his fears of the man-thing sign. They agree to flee the warren – partly out of respect for Fiver's warning and partly because of ill-prospects in their crowded home. But Bigwig appears and announces that's he's left the Owsla in a row. He grills Fiver on his vision and satisfied with the answer determines that he'll leave with them. Hazel is not-entirely pleased to have this imposing traveling companion. Bigwig commands them to meet back here at "fu-Inle." with as many souls as they can gather. He'll canvas one or two fellows in the Owsla. Hazel warns him that the Chief Rabbit won't look kindly on losing his Owsla Guards. But the big rabbit scoffs at the danger. Hazel stares after worriedly as Bigwig boldly bounds away –
9. "Fu-Inle". The FULL MOON is high in the sky. Fiver is strangely calm now that they are fleeing. The others hiding in the DITCH are agitated. They number six –Fiver, Hazel, Dandelion, Blackberry and two unpromising recruits, the pipsqueak PIPKIN and the dullard HAWKBIT. They are joined by Bigwig and another Owsla guard, SILVER. They look the unpromising company over. "Is this it? Is it worth going?" But the decision is made for them by the appearance of CAPTAIN HOLLY, Head of the Owsla, and TWO GUARDS. They move to arrest Bigwig and Silver. Bigwig immediately tackles Holly, scratching and kicking! The guards are scattered. "Go or we'll kill you," Hazel tells Holly calmly. "I am Captain of Owsla!" "Go or you will be killed," Hazel repeats. Holly bounds out of the ditch. Hazel leads his motley band away from the only home they have ever known, following a BROOK as it flows towards a DISTANT WOODLOT –

ANGLE ON: As they run we see a BILLBOARD in a farmer's field. It bears the image of a HAPPY GOLFER and it boasts – "Highland Rose Estates. Golf Club Townhouses from \$199,000. Executive Homes from \$349,000. Coming Soon!" –

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

10. The exhausted band has covered half-a-mile. But now they must push through a dense WOODLOT to keep following the brook. Hazel summons up his courage and leads the way. He dashes from cover-to-cover in the eerie forest, stamping his foot to bring up his followers. “Well done,” whispers Dandelion. “Running our risks for us are you – like El-ahrairah?” But Bigwig comes to command – “We’ve got to stop here. Fiver and the other half-pint you’ve brought are done in.” Hazel gathers them under the poor shelter available. He shrewdly asks Dandelion for a story to cheer up the woeful-looking rabbits. Dandelion chokes back his own fears of the owl sounds and the smell of predators to tell “The Story of the Blessing of El-ahrairah” –
11. DISSOLVE TO: A DIFFERENT STYLE OF ANIMATION as Dandelion tells the rabbit myth of creation and fall – how Lord Frith (The Sun) gave each animal a gift and set them as enemies to El-ahrairah and his people. But how Frith also blessed the trickster rabbit’s bottom, making him faster than any creature in the world. “El-ahrairah your people cannot rule the world, for I will not have it so. All the world will be your enemy, Prince with a Thousand Enemies, and whenever they catch you they will kill you. But first they must catch you – digger, listener, runner, prince with the swift warning. Be cunning and full of tricks and your people shall never be destroyed.” –
12. The rabbits seem calmer as Dandelion finishes the familiar tale. But Hawkbit starts. They all tense, smelling danger. Across the path a bush rustles and parts revealing a BADGER. Its predator eyes stare at them. Its jaws open revealing sharp teeth stained with blood. The rabbits are motionless staring back. Until Bigwig moves to his fellows and mutters – “A lendri. It may be dangerous and it may not, but I’m not taking any chances.” He and Hazel lead the way. The small band bolts along another path, with tiny Pipkin limping at the rear –
13. But the wood lot comes to an end. The way forward is blocked by a twelve-foot wide STREAM. The agitated Bigwig criticizes Hazel for leading them into the forest. But the emerging leader shrewdly responds with compliments to Bigwig on his handling of the badger. “He’s one of the Thousand alright. A digger more than a runner. But it was lucky he had just fed,” replies an appeased Thlayli. Fiver tells Hazel that they have to cross the river, though he fears he and Pipkin are too exhausted. He’s certain of the place they must search for -- a high, lonely hill where rabbits can smell and hear and men hardly ever come. The other rabbits balk at swimming. They want to follow the brook. But Blackberry asks Bigwig if he wouldn’t mind swimming across and seeing what’s what? Without hesitation, Bigwig plunges in and swims to the far shore. Hazel whispers to Blackberry – “He’s a handful Bigwig is. But I don’t know where we would be without him. He’s fearless.” Not quite fearless. Soon after Bigwig reappears on the opposite bank running full-out. He dives into the water, swims across and reports – “We

have to cross the water now! There's a dog loose in the forest. He must have caught the smell of the lendri. And who do you think he'll smell next?!" The rabbits hear the YELPING of a DOG! Growing nearer. In a panic they want to swim to safety now! But Hazel won't leave Pipkin and Fiver behind. Bigwig calls him a fool. They're on the point of fighting when Blackberry finds the solution. There's a "man-thing", a BOARD, floating at the shore. If Pipkin and Fiver climb on top it they can be pushed across. The other rabbits have no clue what the clever Blackberry is proposing. But Fiver gamely steps onto the tipsy Board. Pipkin is nudged to follow. And through trial-and-error the good ship is pushed to the far bank safely. Fiver thanks Blackberry – "You saved Pipkin and me. He's got no idea what just happened, but I have." "It's a good trick I admit," Blackberry replies. "Let's try and remember it" –

14. The rabbits sleep under the green canopy of BEAN PLANTS in a farmer's field. Hazel digs a NASTY THORN out of wee Pip's foot. "Lick it and it'll soon be better." "They won't leave me behind will they?" asks Pipkin. "No one's going to leave anyone behind. But don't pick up any more thorns. We may have to go a long way." The weary Hazel moves away to keep watch –
15. The band approaches a TWO-LANE ROAD in the evening light. They cower as a CAR whizzes by at a speed far faster than any rabbit. They sniff and paw at the unfamiliar TAR of the road. Only Bigwig is familiar with it. He says it is harmless unless they try to cross it at night. At night the lights of the passing hrududil (cars) can bewitch them. He demonstrates how safe it is by standing at the side of the road as a PICKUP TRUCK speeds by. They scurry across the black river of tar, taking in the roadkill-remains of a FOX --
16. NIGHT brings hard going for the band. They head uphill through rough, barren ground that's a DUMP for "man-thing" refuse – abandoned WASHING MACHINES, TIRES, BAGS OF GARBAGE. They are exposed and near panic as they spy OWLS and RATS. Hawkbit startles a SNAKE and screams. The rabbits rebel. They don't think Hazel has a clue where he's going! They want to go back to their safe warren! Bigwig falls back on Owsla intimidation to drive them on; while Hazel tries to calm them and encourage their hard going –

He and Fiver reach a rise. They spy the MOON over the distant HILLS OF NORTHUMBERLAND. "Look!" says Fiver, "That's the place for us Hazel. That's where we have to get!" Hazel says it's too far, too dangerous. But Fiver starts to shiver and prophesize – "There's a mist between us and the hills. Like being deceived and losing our way. We're heading into mysterious danger!" But in the crisis of leadership, Hazel ignores the warning. He turns to encourage the fearful stragglers on – all doubtful that this night of terror will ever end --

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

17. But dawn brings them into a beautiful meadow and forest, as good as the home they fled. The refugees come together to praise Hazel. “Oh Hazel I thought you were making this place up. I should’ve known better,” exclaims Blackberry. “Well done Hazel-rah! You’re what I call a real Chief Rabbit!” But Bigwig interrupts – “Hazel-rah? Chief Rabbit? The day I call you Chief Rabbit, Hazel, that’ll be the day, that will! I’ll stop fighting that day!” And yet it is Hazel, not Bigwig, who sets the rabbits to scout out the safety of their new home – ignoring the troubled Fiver’s pleas to go on to the high, lonely ground --
18. A light RAIN falls. Rabbits dig in the banks of a BROOK making shallow holes for protection. Bigwig and Silver return from scouting. “What’s this?” asks Bigwig. “There’s no need to do any serious digging is there? That sort of thing’s alright for does, but not for us.” “A few scrapes for the rain,” replies Hazel. “What did you find?” Bigwig and Silver praise the new home – no predators, only a farm and the smell of man in the forest. “Why does the man come I wonder?” says the wary Fiver. “Who knows why men do anything?” replies Bigwig. “What does it matter? I’d rather dodge a man than a weasel or a fox.” But Dandelion STOMPS a warning. He is staring at a STRANGE RABBIT watching them in full-view across the meadow. It boldly approaches the band without fear. His name is COWSLIP – a big, healthy aristocrat of a rabbit. Bigwig talks tough – they can fight and they mean to live here! But the stranger is welcoming – “Why shouldn’t you? Plenty of grass for all of us. Although it’s not so easy to fight the weather. You’re welcome to join us in our warren if the rain keeps up.” He lopes back towards the woods. The motley band of wild rabbits debate accepting the stranger’s invitation. They decide to trust him and set off for the promised shelter. But Fiver sulks at the rear. And Hazel mutters a prayer as they go – “O El-ahrairah. These are rabbits that you know as well as you know us. Let it be the right thing that I’m doing.” –
19. To their surprise the strange warren seems to have no need for Owsla Guards. They are freely ushered in and welcomed by the laconic Cowslip. The GREAT BURROW is a revelation to the newcomers – held up by roots of trees and large enough to accommodate the entire warren. The bucks and does within are just as impressive – all are as strong and healthy as Cowslip. They feed on delicacies of lettuce and vegetables. It looks like paradise to the bedraggled refugees. Hosts and guests settle in with one another, sniffing and rubbing noses. Hazel breaks off with a buck named STRAWBERRY and his beautiful doe, NILDRO-HAIN to tour the huge complex. They are friendly but oddly evasive of his questions, especially any beginning with “where”. They show him a “shape” – a representation of El-ahrairah made by pushing STONES into the wall. It is all too confusing and sophisticated for the wild, country rabbit --

He confesses as much to Pipkin that night as they settle in for sleep. The little rabbit is delighted with the new home and especially with the plentiful does, but

he too has noticed how their hosts shy away from answering “where”. They seem sad to him and despite their size he doesn’t think they are fighters, not like Bigwig or Silver in any case. “Speaking of where?” says Hazel. “Where’s Fiver?” --

20. The anxious Fiver spends a sleepless night above ground in the rain. He sniffs at ominous CLAW MARKS on the ground and stares down with dread at the nearby FARMHOUSE lying below the warren – “Frith help us,” whispers the Seer –

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

21. Morning. Hazel sleeps huddled with Pipkin. But he’s woken by a dangerous smell. “Man,” he tells Pipkin. They creep up a tunnel towards the daylight. But Strawberry approaches stamping and singing, “Flayrah! Flayrah!”. He is waking the burrow to go gather the flayrah before the rats and birds take it. He and other rabbits bound outside without caution. The newcomers follow them to a COMPOST HEAP. They taste carrots for the very first time. Cowslip explains that a man throws it out and they take it into the burrow. He is just as evasive with Hazel as ever. But the other newcomers are delighted with their good fortune, praising Hazel for bringing them to this haven. They learn the ropes of carrying food down into the burrow like dogs. Fiver watches from a distance. Hazel goes to him and is shocked to find him wet and shivering from a night out in the cold. The little rabbit is caustic – “Dogs – you’re like dogs carrying sticks!” He wants nothing to do with the new warren. “Its roof is made of bones!” Hazel tries to appease him to no avail. “You’re to blame,” says Fiver. “They all think I’m mad but you know I’m not and still you won’t listen and go.” Frustrated, Hazel must recruit Bigwig to bully Fiver into re-entering the Great Burrow –
22. They feed on the man’s delicacies down in the Great Burrow. Cowslip calls for stories to pass the time. Dandelion readily agrees and tries to impress their hosts with a stirring rendition of “El-ahrairah and the King’s Lettuce.” But as he describes the adventures of the mythical trickster his new listeners turn away or look down. He stops in confusion. Cowslip thanks him but explains that while these old tales have a certain charm they don’t recite them very much here. Bigwig bristles. “El-ahrairah is a trickster and rabbits will always need tricks.” “No,” answers a pale, young rabbit. “Rabbits need dignity and above all the will to accept their fate.” He’s SILVERWEED, an ascetic poet beloved by the sophisticated warren. He starts to recite a poem about death and resignation. Fiver, terrified by the sight and sound of him, bolts from the huge burrow –
23. Fiver runs in abject terror from the warren. He has a FLASH OF BIGWIG carrying RED BERRIES in his mouth, grinning – “Look, I can do it! Ask me where I’m running! Ask me where!” Hazel and Bigwig run the frightened Fiver down. He tells them that he’s going on alone. Going to the hills if he can get there. “Not a chance, you’ll die by ni-Frith,” says Bigwig. “No. You are closer to death

than I,” replies Fiver quietly. Bigwig explodes at him, calling him a moaner, an attention-seeker who’s trying to ruin the good home they’ve found! He turns away in disgust and bounds back through bushes towards the warren. But the bushes EXPLODE in a commotion of violent, silent struggle! –

The frightened Hazel and Fiver creep forward to find Bigwig caught in the deadly SNARE of a SHINING WIRE. He’s bleeding, vomiting and grasping for breath as his back legs scratch the ground uselessly. The drops of blood at his mouth look like the red berries he was carrying in Fiver’s vision. “Thlayli,” says Hazel. “You’re in a trap. What do we do? What do they say in the Owsla? Think!” Bigwig gasps – “The Peg -- Dig.” Fiver runs for the warren to summon help –

24. Fiver hurries into the Great Burrow and sounds the alarm. His band of brothers speeds to help. But Cowslip tells him to stop talking. “I said hhe’s caught in the wire!” insists Fiver. Cowslip CUFFS him and turns away. The other rabbits follow his example, turning their backs. Only Strawberry stares at Fiver in shame. His does whispers for him to look away. Fiver bolts from the cursed rabbits –

25. They dig desperately to free Bigwig from the strangling wire. His back legs have gone still. Little Pipkin goes in to try and snap the wooden peg. Fiver reappears. “Where’s Cowslip?!” asks Hazel. “Maybe he knows what to do!” “He wouldn’t come. He told me to stop talking about it,” answers Fiver. “What?!” Pipkin reemerges from the hole with a nose filled with his BLOOD. Fiver goes in and bites the peg free. They gently push Bigwig. “Bigwig? The peg’s out.” No response. No breathing. “My heart has joined the Thousand,” sighs Hazel. “For my friend stopped running today.” “The Black Rabbit’s taken him to Inle. If only it weren’t Bigwig,” moans Blackberry. “What will we do without him? How will we live?” Hazel looks to Fiver. “We’ll live. We’ll go to the high hills. Like Fiver wanted us too. Like he saw.” But other rabbits are all for fighting Cowslip and taking the warren from the coward. “I’ll kill him,” sounds a fearful VOICE –

They turn to see that Bigwig is alive! He struggles up with the wire still around his neck. Looking like a demon ! “I’ll kill him. The coward!” But he collapses and the rabbits work to get the wire off his neck. And Fiver ends all talk of storming the warren. “It’s a death hole! An elil’s larder!” He tells them that the whole forest is snared with traps. Man brings food and takes away a few rabbits at a time. No one dares ask “where?” They would’ve been next, strangers who could readily be sacrificed to preserve the unnatural life of this unholy warren. “So where do we go?” asks the frightened Pipkin. “To the hills,” answers Hazel. “Now!” They hurry to leave. But Hazel and Silver stop as they see Strawberry approaching. He looks miserable and trembling. “Take me with you,” he pleads. Silver wants no part of a deceiving rabbit. “The wires,” moans Strawberry. “You can come with us,” answers Hazel kindly. “Don’t say anymore, poor fellow” –

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

26. A MONTAGE OF TRAVELLING – always with the beckoning HILLS drawing nearer –

- They run along a ditch, while a TRACTOR harvests corn in the field --
- They sleep in a CAR JUNK YARD until driven out by attacking RATS – Bigwig kills one, but Strawberry is bitten in the leg –
- Hazel licks the newcomer’s wound, while Fiver stares up in awe at the IRON TREE and HYDRO LINE that HUMS as they pass underneath --

27. At last they reach the foot of the GREAT HILL. It is evening and the exhausted rabbits find what shelter they can. Hazel sits up on his haunches trying to take in as much of the incline as his small height allows. “You really mean for us to climb this Fiver?” he asks. The worn-out Seer nods. “Well, it’s not the oddest thing you’ve asked” –

He gathers up Silver and Hawkbit and starts the ascent on a scouting mission. Their climb is seen from a RABBIT’S POV – all grass and small ups-and-downs – until the land finally levels off. Hazel has lost his climbing partners. But he spies Silver sitting on his haunches atop an ANTHILL. Staring off. “What are you doing Silver?” he asks with a trace of annoyance. “I’ve never seen the whole world before Hazel,” Silver answers simply. Hazel turns to look –

WE REVEAL – The great vista from the 300-foot high hill. It looks awesome in the evening light. Stars emerging. The Great Lake to the south. But also the lights of man – including the heavy, snaking TRAFFIC of the 401 HIGHWAY in the distance. “What is it Hazel? It looks like a great snake of light. Is it a man-snake?” “Don’t look at it,” answers Hazel. “Don’t let it bewitch you” –

They turn away to find the Hawkbit. “It’s just like him to wander off,” complains Hazel. But the slow-witted Hawkbit has found an ABANDONED WARREN beneath A LONE TREE near the crest. Hazel is pleased that even a rank-and-filer like Hawkbit can contribute. He tells Silver to go bring the others up. “By Frith they’ll sleep underground tonight!” –

28. Dawn at the Top of the World. The excited adventurers feed and race about exploring their new home. It’s as good as Hazel-rah promised and as Fiver foresaw. The old warren they fled is forgotten. Blackberry has found an ideal spot among BEECH TREES to dig their new home. But can bucks do serious digging? “Why not?” says the clever rabbit. They’ve done all types of unnatural things in traveling here. Why not dig like does? Hazel agrees. The bucks will set to work in shifts. He wants Strawberry to oversee it, to figure out how to make a Great Burrow like the one in Cowslip’s warren --

29. Bucks dig deep inside the earth. The new Great Burrow is under construction. Strawberry explains to Hazel that it will be as big as Cowslip's but with more root pillars, more like a honeycomb. It'll be warmer in the winter that way and it will allow them to hear danger up above. Hazel nods but looks pensive. Hawbit, digging, says he for one is looking forward to some winter rest. But Hazel tells him that their work here on the hill has only begun. "What do you mean, Hazel-rah?" asks the dullard. "The answer lies between your dirty claws, buck." Huh? "Does," explains Hazel. "Without does we have no warren. None that will live" –
30. "Does," remarks Bigwig, "Easier to dream than to conjure." "Least in a world that's strange to us," agrees Hazel. They rest at a BURROW ENTRANCE beneath a TREE. Bigwig spies a HAWK circling in the sky over the nearby clearing. "Should I stomp the alarm?" he asks Hazel. "No," grins Hazel. "Hawkbit is safe below." But they spy a field MOUSE frozen in terror in the exposed grassland. "Any moment now," observes Bigwig, callously. But Hazel impulsively moves out to save the mouse! It hesitates and then dashes towards him! They race into the shelter of the run just as the Hawk POUNCES! It stares down the burrow with terrible predator eyes before flying off. When it is safe the mouse makes off, thanking Hazel in hedgerow lingua franca (sub-titled). Hazel explains that he didn't really know what he was doing when he saved the mouse. But now he does. They're in an alien land. They have far too many enemies. Any chance they can make allies they should. They might come in useful. "Mice? Useful? We'll be overrun." "Well, a bird then," Hazel concedes. "A bird would be useful. It might find us a warren full of does from the air." "A bird like that one!?" remarks the exasperated Bigwig of the hawk --
31. At evenfall, Bigwig and Dandelion graze on the choice grass at the bottom of the hill. But Hazel stands a distance apart, staring at the nearby FARM. His comrades join him. "I thought you wanted to come down and silfay on the long grass?" asks Dandelion. But Hazel replies – "What do you smell at the man-place?" "Cats," answers Bigwig. "A stinking dog and...?" "Rabbits?" "Yes. But faint. Odd-like." "Worth investigating another time," says Hazel. "Owls be out soon. Let's go back up." But they HEAR a STOMP and catch a glimpse of a RUNNING ANIMAL. They go to ground in a ditch. The animal or animals draw near making woeful, unnatural CRIES! The three rabbits tremble. And then they hear Bigwig's name being called out in a wavering, wail – "Thlayli! O Thlayli". Bigwig is convinced it's the Black Rabbit of Inle come to claim him! He has no choice but to go when his name is called! Dandelion whimpers. But Hazel forces Bigwig back and bravely goes forward alone. "Who's there?" he whispers. The abject cry comes again and Hazel moves forward to a bush to find – Captain Holly of their old warren's Owsla! He's wide-eyed and helpless. In the last stages of exhaustion –
- Bigwig and Dandelion come to stare down at him in shock. Holly's lone traveling companion, BLUEBELL, a kind of court jester, appears and explains what a bad

way they are in. Come so far. Seen so much horror. But with Bluebell's bad jests to cheer him on they rouse the stricken Captain and start up the hill –

32. As they climb the hill with the exhausted Holly, Bigwig confides to Hazel – “You got yourself out of that ditch down there instead of me. I won't forget that Hazel-rah.” It's the first time the big warrior has acknowledged him as Chief Rabbit. It won't be the last –

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

33. Next day, Hazel enters the burrow where Holly is resting. He looks much recovered. He tells Hazel that he has nothing to worry about from him. He can see the young rabbit has been accepted as Chief Rabbit. The Holly that tried to arrest him was another rabbit, from another time and world. Hazel asks if he is strong enough to tell the others how he came to find them? Holly nods. “But it will turn their ears to frost when they hear it.” Hazel leads him up and then down into the Great Honeycomb. Holly is amazed that bucks have dug a chamber big enough for the whole warren to gather in –
34. Holly eyes Fiver as he gets set to begin his tale. “You're the rabbit that saw it all coming, didn't you? You talked to the Chieftain.” “He talked to me,” replies Fiver. “Would that he had listened,” reflects Holly –
35. DISSOLVE TO: Holly's tale of destruction is seen as he recounts the horror their old warren endured: MEN and their MACHINES arrive -- they stop up the rabbits' holes – GAS is pumped in to poison them down below or drive them out – dying rabbits tear at one another to escape the jammed burrows – their dead bodies are skewered onto a pole – BULLDOZERS and CHAINSAWS set to work destroying the earth and trees –
36. The band of rabbits spared from the holocaust sit in silent shock. All of the old world they knew is gone. The upset Fiver slips away outside --
37. He sits on the crest looking down on the wide world, including the ribbon of light that is the GREAT HIGHWAY. He's joined by Pipkin and Hazel. “I knew the men hated us for raiding their crops and gardens. But so much?” asks wee Pipkin. “That wasn't why they destroyed the warren,” answers Hazel. “It was just because we were in their way. They killed us to suit themselves. “They'll never rest till they've destroyed the earth,” adds Fiver the Prophet, in a whisper –
38. Day. The Mouse that Hazel saved approaches him in an agitated state. “You help me I help you. You want bird? You come. He sick.” Hazel calls Bigwig and the mouse leads them into the forest to the hiding place of a wounded gull named, KEHAAR. The great brute of a bird is still full of piss-and-vinegar despite its

- wound. It threatens them with death and destruction! It swears it can still fight them plenty good! And looking at its great sharp beak, Bigwig has no doubt. “What do you expect us to do with this monster, Hazel?” “Feed it. Make it a friend.” “Feed it what?” Hazel pushes BARK filled with BUGS at the gull. He jumps away as the famished bird stabs it! “There’s more if you’ll come with us,” he tells the gull. But the bird shrieks, “I fight you! I fight plenty good!” –
39. The rabbits look on in awe and terror as Hazel and Bigwig lead the proud gull to their warren. Kehaar SHRIEKS at Pipkin and Hawkbit, sending them running! He settles down in the entranceway to one of their burrows and announces – “Eat! Now eat plenty!” Bigwig, with his Sergeant Major voice, directs the stunned rabbits to gather all manner of slugs and insects for their guest’s feeding –
40. The rabbits gather at night in their Honeycomb Chamber. Dandelion stares up the run at Kehaar, asleep in the mouth of the burrow. “He stinks!” the rabbit complains, “He sits in his hraka! Why can’t he pass it in the woods like a decent rabbit?!” “He’s our guest,” Hazel replies calmly. But the warren is agitated and confused by the bird’s presence. Though not Bigwig. He admires the great smelly gull. He’s a fighter. He fought a barnyard cat that took him unawares and the cat still came off the worst. And the stories he tells! Imagine flying? Imagine seeing this “Big Water” where his kin have gone? “Have you asked him about helping us?” says Hazel. “Not yet.” The Gull shrieks down – “Mister Bigwig! Me eat!” Bigwig exits to obey. Rabbits call for a story from Dandelion – “El-ahrairah and the Wolf!” “No. ‘Crossing the River on a Pike!’” --
41. Bigwig brings Hazel to a much-recovered Kehaar. Indeed, the gull is eating a FISH that he has flown off to catch. “What on earth is that?” “Fish. You like? Plenty good.” Hazel shakes his head. “Did you catch it in the Big Water?” the excited Bigwig asks. “Lake!” spits Kehaar. “No Big Water! I no mate with little lake shithawks! I go Big Water find my Mudder – but first I go find plenty Mudders for rabbits.” Hazel and Bigwig beam with excitement –
42. The Great Gull takes off in flight, buzzing the heads of the watching rabbits. All are excited that Kehaar may actually succeed in finding them a warren with does to spare. Pipkin compliments Hazel – “If this trick of yours works it’s one worthy of El-ahrairah himself, Hazel-rah!” Hazel is puffed up by the praise. He confides to Pipkin that there’s another little trick he’s been considering. How would he fancy a trip down to tour the man-place? “There’s cats there?” replies the fearful Pip. “Cats aren’t dangerous,” Hazel reassures Pipkin as he leads him off –
- ANGLE ON: But a worried Fiver watches his brother and Pipkin as they descend the hill towards the old Ontario Redbrick FARMHOUSE --

END OF ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

43. The Farmacyard. A huge BLACK DOG sleeps in its doghouse, tied to a rope. Hazel leads the fearful Pipkin across the yard and into the BARN. No cats in sight. He sets him as watchman at the door and explores the darkened barn. He finds a CAGE filled with FOUR DOMESTICATED RABBITS. Two are does. He tells them about the life of free rabbits on the hill. If he was to come back some day and open this cage, would they like to come with him? They look confused and frightened by the prospect. But CLOVER, a doe with spirit, tells him that she'd come for one. Pipkin stomps. A cat is coming across the yard to the barn! Hazel tells Clover he'll come to get them some other day. He joins Pipkin at the door. A black-and-white TABBY is crossing towards them. Hazel boldly steps out of the barn, ordering Pipkin to join him. Cat and prey stare at one another. "Don't move till he does. Then run with me and don't stop running." The cat lunges! The rabbits bolt past him! He gives chase, waking the dog who BARKS and strains at his rope! The cat breaks off his hopeless pursuit, pretending he was never really interested. Hazel laughs as they run – "They don't like to look silly!" --
44. Hazel compliments Pipkin on his bravery as they near the warren. The little rabbit beams and says he would go anywhere for Hazel-rah. Even to Inle itself! But the waiting Fiver is not so impressed. "We've found some does," Hazel tells him. "Hutch does. Useless," replies Fiver. "What are you playing at Hazel? Leave it to the bird," he reprimands. But the now-cocky Chief Rabbit only grins --
45. Kehaar flies into their midst with great tidings! There's a huge warren no more than a day-or-so hard travel away. A warren so big it is overflowing with plenty, plenty Mudders! As Bigwig and others feed the bird, Hazel schemes. A delegation will be sent, guided by Kehaar, to negotiate the coming of the does. No right-minded, over-crowded warren would refuse the offer. Holly, Strawberry and Silver are given the honor of representing them all –
46. Kehaar stares down from the sky. Below, he sees Holly, Silver and Strawberry making first contact with a group of RABBITS from the huge warren he found. Mission accomplished, he flies back towards home --
47. But the perspective of those on the ground is very different. Holly's delegation is surrounded by CAPTAIN CAMPION and his SOLDIERS. With brisk orders and military efficiency they are marched off towards the great warren of Efracfa and a fate they dare not imagine –
48. Bigwig pretends to be a cat. He is teaching his mates how to fight with a feline. "What's this?" asks Fiver. Bigwig tells him that Hazel is planning a raid on the man-place to free the hutch does. The upset Seer moves away to confront his

brother. But Kehaar returns. He brings news to Hazel that Holly has reached the big warren. They should be back with plenty Mudders in two days. “Mister Bigwig! Me eat!” the gull orders. Bigwig and the others break off their training to go feed their demanding guest –

Fiver takes Hazel on about the farm raid. There’s no need to put himself and the others in danger. Holly will bring all the does they require. “The truth is you’re just trying to be clever.” “Shouldn’t a Chief Rabbit be clever? Rabbits will always need tricks. The point is to surprise Holly with two does when he gets back,” protests Hazel. Fiver is disappointed in his brother. Hazel asks if he has had a vision about the raid? A bad feeling? “Not about the raid,” Fiver replies. “But about you. I see you going on alone.” Hazel, still reluctant to abandon his plan, proposes a compromise to mollify Fiver. He won’t go into the farmyard. He’ll stay safe in the lane. But Fiver looks anything but mollified –

49. Underground in the EFRAFA WARREN – Holly, Strawberry and Silver wait nervously for their audience with the imposing warren’s COUNCIL. They are guarded by Campion and his soldiers. “It won’t be long now,” Campion tells them. “The Council’s just dealing with some internal business.” But they HEAR THE HORRIFIC SQUEALS of a rabbit issue from the Council’s burrow! Holly and the others tremble as they hear what sounds like murder! A buck named BLACKAVAR emerges under guard. His ears are BLOODY and MUTILATED. The delegation from Hazel’s warren are shown into the Council –
50. The Council Burrow is long and dark. It’s lined with grim-looking ELDERS who eye the strangers silently as they creep forward. “Strangers apprehended!” sounds a SOLDIER. A VOICE, a voice of doom, issues from the far end of the chamber – “Come forward.” They enter the presence of the biggest rabbit they have ever seen – the cold, commanding GENERAL WOUNDWORT. He begins to lay out the rules and obligations of being members of the Efrafa Warren. Holly tries to correct him. They haven’t come to join Efrafa. They are a delegation from another warren seeking does. But Woundwort ignores him. The strangers are assigned to the Right Flank Mark under Captain Bugloss. “The what?” By answer, SOLDIERS come forward and hold Holly down. One BITES him deep on the right flank, marking him forever as a member of Efrafa –
51. Holly, Silver and Strawberry huddle apart in a burrow filled with OTHER RABBITS of the Right Flank Mark. They lick their wounds, for all three are now marked as Efrafa’s. Strawberry shivers with fear. “What are we going to do Holly?” Holly has no answer for him. A doe named HYZENTHLAY approaches the new conscripts. She asks them about a buck called Blackaver who was taken to the Council for punishment. Holly tells her they saw a rabbit whose ears had been nearly torn off. “But he’s alive?” she asks. He nods. “What was his crime poor fellow? What did he do?” “He tried to escape,” she replies bitterly. “No one escapes from The General.” The three prisoners share a fearful look --

52. Hazel leads Bigwig, Dandelion, Bluebell and Blackberry to raid the farm at night. As promised to Fiver, he waits in the LANE and sends his troops on. Bigwig is itching for a fight with a cat – “I feel a really dangerous animal,” he growls. He leaps into action at the first opportunity. All four rabbits charge the Tabby in the yard! Scratching, snarling and cuffing it into flight! They creep into the barn, careful not to disturb the sleeping dog –
53. While Bluebell and Dandelion keep watch at the door, Bigwig and Blackberry move to free the hutch rabbits. Bigwig tells the fearful creatures that Hazel is waiting for them in the lane. The clever Blackberry soon sorts out the cage, tearing away the leather strap that holds the door. But the adventure is too much for the domesticated rabbits. Nearly paralyzed with fear, they have to be prodded out the barn door –
54. The cat is circling in the yard. THREE hutch rabbits freeze in terror, unable to go further. Dandelion and Bluebell go on into the lane with Clover. They tell Hazel that the others won’t move! Hazel enters the yard to try and coax the second DOE onward. But suddenly they are blinded by the HEADLIGHTS of a returning PICKUP TRUCK. The rabbits are frozen, bewitched, by the awesome light. Truck DOORS open and loud, unintelligible VOICES CRY OUT. Hazel and the others spring to action, leading the frightened doe down the lane! They hide in a ditch. But VOICES and FLASHLIGHTS follow. Searching for them. The way forward is blocked. Hazel commands his rabbits to bolt to safety when he distracts the men! Before they can argue, their Chief Rabbit dashes in front of the men! Their FLASHLIGHTS follow him as he bolts into a field. A SHOTGUN FIRES! Hazel is hit and falls to a ditch! -- He stops running –

ANGLE ON: His comrades and the hutch does look on in dread as the MEN approach the ditch where Hazel fell. The men kneel by it with their LIGHTS. A long beat. Then they stand and head back towards the Farmhouse –

Bigwig and Blackberry creep forward in darkness towards the fateful ditch. Hazel is gone. All that remains is a SMEAR OF BLOOD –

END OF ACT SEVEN

ACT EIGHT

55. The woeful raiding party returns up the hill with two frightened does. But without their Hazel-rah –

ANGLE ON: Fiver watches them climb. The little rabbit, blessed and cursed with second sight, sees the BLACK SHAPE of an unknown rabbit limping along beside the others. But the ghost rabbit DISSOLVES in the darkness --

The raiding party and hutch rabbits reach him. “Fiver,” says the grim-faced Bigwig, “there’s bad news -- “I know,” interrupts the seer. “I saw him.” The little rabbit turns away to grieve in private. The anxious Clover approaches Bigwig. “What should we do?” Bigwig tells Dandelion to show them into the warren to sleep. As they are led away, Blackberry observes – “They’re so frightened. Will they even live?” “We’re all Lord Frith’s,” replies the sad-hearted Bigwig. “Poor old Holly too. He’s seen so much loss. And now this for a home-coming” --

56. But Holly is far from home. He and the others are ordered up out of the burrow by CAPTAIN BUGLOSS to silfay above ground. It’s the night shift of the Right Flank Mark in this regimented, fascist warren. Bugloss moves away to rouse other bucks and does. But as they climb towards STARLIGHT, Holly has an inspiration. “You remember El-ahrairah in the King’s Palace? How he bluffed his way in to steal the cabbages?” His confused friends nod. “Stay close and run when I do!” Above ground, Holly strides boldly to the OFFICER on duty, pretending to be an Efracan superior. He orders him to report to the Council immediately. The officer is wary of the unknown stranger, but Holly blusters his way through. “Run!” says Holly when the duty officer disappears below ground --

They bolt through the night across unfamiliar ground! But the Efracan Oswla quickly responds. STOMP ALARMS are sounded! GUARDS appear out of hiding from all quarters, tearing after the fugitives! “They’re too fast!” yells the terrified Strawberry. “Run!” insists Holly. As the Oswla converges on them they dash up the steep incline of a RAILWAY EMBANKMENT. Stumble over the HUMMING RAILS! And tumble head-over-heels down the other side –

They look up and back at their deliverer! A CN FREIGHT TRAIN whizzes by in a blur of light and thundering sound! The lead OWSLA OFFICER is hit! Holly and the others stare at the passing freight train in awe-filled terror. “Lord Frith!” sounds Holly, shaking in fear at the Creator’s grave handiwork --

57. Fiver also shivers and shakes. He’s alone in his burrow, in the grip of another vision --
58. DISSOLVE TO: BURROW HOLE POV: As in the opening nightmare, Fiver stares up-and-up at the Land Developer GIANT. But now the man holds the rezoning application SIGN. The bodies of dead rabbits are skewered on it. He spies the watching rabbit and grins. He speaks to Fiver in Lapine (sub-titled) – “I’m putting up this sign for that Hazel. But I can’t find him down the bloody hole.” He points with the sign towards a SMALL DARK TUNNEL. “Do you know what this sign says?” asks the grinning giant. “How can a sign speak?” answers Fiver. “That’s where we know what you don’t. That’s why we kill you when we have a mind to,” says the man. “It says, ‘In memory of Hazel-rah! In memory of Hazel-rah!! Ha! Ha! Ha!’” His awful laughter chills the small rabbit. He creeps out of the burrow towards the dark tunnel – “Hazel? Hazel?!” But the man swings the sign down on his head –

59. QUICK CUT TO: Fiver wakes from his new nightmare. He heads outside –
60. Dawn is just rising. He stares down once again from the Top of the World. And warily asks once more, “Hazel?” --
61. THE CAMERA TRACKS towards a DARK TUNNEL, a drainpipe at the end of a farm ditch. We enter. A BODY can be glimpsed in the blackness. A body that is still and covered with blood. Hazel’s. Dead or still running we cannot tell, as we hear the giant man’s mocking laughter sound once more – “In Memory of Hazel-rah! In Memory of Hazel-rah! Ha! Ha! Ha!” --

FADE OUT:

END OF PART ONE

WATERSHIP DOWN

PART TWO: ACT ONE

FADE IN:

1. Hazel lies deathly still in a surreally BARREN LANDSCAPE. Ominous CLOUDS whip by at tremendous speed. But there is no sound of wind. No sound at all. The weary rabbit lifts his head as MACABRE FIGURES flit by him – beyond his sight but not beyond his tortured imagination. “Do you know where you are, rabbit?” SOUNDS an unseen presence. “Inle,” replies the weakened Hazel. The chilling figure of THE BLACK RABBIT OF INLE appears before him, moving more like a SHADOW than a corporeal being. “Then you know who I am, rabbit. And why I have come” –
2. CUT TO: The anxious Fiver hurries down the hill with a reluctant Blackberry. “His body’s not there, Fiver,” complains Blackberry. “I told you the man took it.” “For Frith’s sake hurry!” replies Fiver. “He’s alive I tell you! I saw him!” The unbelieving Blackberry shows the Seer the way to his brother’s place of death --
3. BACK TO INLE – “I am not your enemy, rabbit,” the Black Rabbit tells Hazel as he draws near. “Nor my friend,” Hazel answers. “No. Your fate, rabbit. The fate of all who must one day stop running.” The shadowy figure begins to nuzzle the helpless rabbit, cloaking him in absolute DARKNESS –
4. CUT TO: Fiver and Blackberry enter the DITCH where Hazel was shot. Fiver sniffs and heads for the SMALL DRAIN TUNNEL. “The bloody hole!” The bloody hole!” he whispers. He crawls in and butts up against the nearly lifeless body of his brother. “What do you see Fiver?” asks Blackberry. Fiver pops out. “Hazel’s in that hole,” he tells him. “Alive?!” asks the shocked Blackberry. “He’s between the worlds,” answers Fiver. “The one we see and the one we can’t.” He goes back in the hole to nudge Hazel and draw him back to the living – “Hazel? Hazel it’s me. Fiver” –
5. Up on the hilltop, Holly and his two bedraggled companions return from the horror that is Efrafa. Strawberry is bleeding from a wound. Bigwig and others rush to them. “By Frith what happened?!” “You can’t imagine it unless you’ve been there,” sighs the defeated Holly. “The warren did this to you?” asks a shocked Dandelion. “Efrafa they call it,” answers Holly. “But it’s not a warren of rabbits -- or none I’ve ever seen. It’s a warren of elil or of man.” But then Holly spies the two HUTCH DOES watching them. “Who are these?” he asks. “Hazel led us on a raid of the man-place down below,” answers Bigwig flatly. Holly brightens. “Then we’re not without hope. Hazel’s succeeded where I failed!” “Holly,” says Bigwig gently. “Hazel’s stopped running.” Holly’s face falls as his hope withers –

6. But down below them, Hazel revives from death at Fiver's insistence. He opens his weary eyes to him, eyes that have seen Inle. Blackberry is sent back to tell the others. The two brothers lie facing one another in the narrow tunnel. "I heard you calling me Fiver," Hazel whispers. "But I almost didn't heed you. It was so much easier to remain on the far side of all the suffering." "You've been to another place, another country." says Fiver. "We go there when we sleep; at other times too; and when we die. Some rabbits will tell you its all easy there. But that only shows they don't know it. It's a wild place, isn't it? And where are we really – there or here?" "I know I'm alive. I know my body's here and that's good enough for me," says Hazel quietly. "And I know that if you ever give me future warning, Fiver, it'll be no hard task getting me to accept it" –
7. Blackberry runs up the hill with the news that Hazel is alive! He enjoys the effect it has on the startled rabbits. And he especially enjoys tantalizing them with the revelation that it was Fiver who found him – "Found him in a dream!" Some are disbelieving. Bluebell in particular. He insists that Kehaar must've spotted Hazel from the air and come to tell Fiver. But Kehaar, poking at worms in the ground, cryptically replies -- "Mr. Fiver, he travel much further than me." Bigwig and Holly hurry off to go down to Hazel --
8. Hazel has been coaxed out of the drain hole by Fiver. The little brother is licking his sibling's bloody LEG WOUND as Bigwig and Holly run up. He tells them that Hazel is weak from loss of blood but that the bone is unbroken. "Best news I've ever had!" exclaims Holly. Their weakened Chieftain asks Holly about his mission – "Does our warren have life?" "Only what you brought us Hazel-rah," Holly sadly replies. He tells them about the unnatural world of Efrafa: We see FLASHES of GENERAL WOUNDWORT; the torture of BLACKAVAR; regimented eating; HYZENTHLAY and other DOES huddled unhappily underground – as he explains that Efrafa is based on security above all else. "It's so secure, so 'safe' it's become a prison to them within it," concludes Holly. Bigwig is appalled by the place. "How ever did you escape?" he asks. "As a doe named Hyzenthlai told me, the system is breaking down despite all the rules and guards. It's too over-crowded, too many souls to control. We bluffed our way out pretending to be officers. The guard we tricked was too fearful of not obeying commands to contradict me. But even so we would've been killed. The Efrafa Owsla is no joke. They were right on us until..." "Until what?" asks Fiver. "Until Lord Frith sent his messenger to save us," answers Holly. They stare at him agog. FLASH TO: Holly stares up in terror as THE TRAIN thunders by saving them from the Owsla. "You may think it's a wonderful thing to be saved by Lord Frith in his power," concludes Holly. "But I tell you it was far more frightening than being chased by their Owsla" –

Kehaar lands in their midst to see the resurrected Hazel. "You get black stones out?" "The what?" "Always with guns come black stones. You take out you get plenty well, Mr. Hazel." The bird pecks at Hazel's wound and spits out TWO SHOTGUN PELLETS. Hazel is weakened. He has to rest. "Tell them all I'll

come up the hill tomorrow.” They argue with him that he can’t stay another night near the man-place. But Fiver calmly tells them it will be alright. He’ll stay with Hazel. He sees no danger. And after what he has seen – who are they to argue? –

9. The Next Day. Hazel limps up the hill with Fiver. The whole warren comes to greet him. Some wrestle with him playfully. But as he tells Fiver in an aside – “It’s a welcome but it’s also a test. They don’t even know it. But it’s our nature to see if I can still lead.” He moves to talk to Clover and Holly. She tells him that it’s hard for the hutch rabbits to adjust. There’s so much to learn. They like the freedom but they’re terrified by it at the same time. “You’ll get the hang of our ways soon enough,” encourages Holly. But Hazel isn’t so sure they will –

He goes to have a private word with Blackberry as he grazes. He asks him if he’s heard Holly’s account of Efrafa? Blackberry has and it chilled him to the bone. “We still need does if we’re to live,” says Hazel. “Don’t tell the others, but I’ve decided we have to go back to Efrafa.” “But Hazel?” replies the shocked rabbit, “You heard Holly yourself? That’s impossible.” “I admit it will take a trick worthy of El-ahrairah himself,” replies Hazel. “The trick must do three things – get us safely into Efrafa; get the does safely away; and most importantly, make us all vanish forever from their watching eyes.” “As I said,” answers Blackberry, “Impossible.” But Hazel grins. “And you’re just the rabbit to come up with it.” He leaves the shocked rabbit to ponder the impossible trick –

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

10. Hazel calls a meeting of the warren down in the Honeycomb Burrow. He lays out their situation. Despite the two hutch does they are no better off than before. The does may not take to the free life. They may not be able to have litters. But even if they do – “two does with eleven bucks means we’ll be scratching our eyes out before winter is past.” If they mean to live here, if they mean to make this a real warren after all their hard travel and work – they need to find does. “Where?” asks Hawkbit. “The bird only found the one warren in all his flying?” “From Efrafa,” replies Hazel, calmly. “We have to go back and steal them.” The rabbits are shocked. Holly takes him on – “Perhaps I didn’t explain the situation properly to you Hazel. These rabbits and their General are like elil.” But Hazel tells them that Blackberry has come up with a plan as good as El-ahrairah. He keeps the details of the trick from them in case any should be captured on the journey. But he shrewdly tantalizes them with the news that Kehaar is part of the plan; the huge bird has agreed to fight for them. The revelation has the desired effect. But the timid Pipkin asks – “Will we have to go into Efrafa?” Hazel shakes his head. He continues his appeal by assuring them that Fiver has promised to warn them off if he foresees danger. And finally, he throws down a sly challenge to their rabbithood – “Some of us are going no matter what. But no one needs to go who doesn’t feel up to the challenge. And of course, those who have already been to

Efrafa must stay here.” But as he expected, the proud Silver volunteers. “If the trick’s as good as you say, I’d give anything to see the look on that Woundwort’s face when we pull it off!” His spirit animates the others. Almost all volunteer at once. Clamoring to go –

11. The RAIDING PARTY of rabbits is at the edge of forest. Kehaar descends on them from the sky. “Rabbits go now! Get Mudders! Quick! Kehaar want go Big Water! Get his Mudder!” He flies up again. Hazel says they’ll have to travel quickly. The bird won’t stay with them long. He takes his leave from Holly and Clover. The original band of eight rabbits sets off again, now augmented by the jester Bluebell. Holly and Clover watch them go. “Will they be back?” she asks, warily. “Frith willing,” Holly replies doubtfully. Clover starts to shiver. It’s still difficult for her to stay exposed above ground for long. Holly turns and leads her back towards the warren –

12. MONTAGE OF TRAVELLING –

- The brave band of adventurers run Indian-style along a ditch, with Dandelion as lookout, staring at BLACK AND WHITE CATTLE grazing in the field –
- They sneak across a SMALL GRAVEL ROAD, while in the b.g. a DUMP TRUCK and its ROAD CREW work to fill the POT HOLES --
- They sleep rough in a thicket, with Pipkin on guard duty. But the only noise he hears is Hazel WHISPERING with a shaken-looking Bigwig. He hears Bigwig plead – “I can’t Hazel. Don’t ask me.” But Hazel continues to whisper his unknown plan into Bigwig’s ear –

13. The next day. The band nears a long, thin WOODLOT. But Bigwig lags behind the rest, looking anxious and downcast. His uncharacteristic mood causes unease and gossip. But Hazel harshly silences the talkers. “Bigwig has his role to play and we have ours. Stop your idle chatter!” But staring back at poor Bigwig, the rabbits can’t help but worry what that role is? –

14. They gather undercover at the EDGE OF THE WOODLOT to rest. The grim-looking Bigwig is the last to settle down. His fearful mood threatens to unnerve them all. So once again, Hazel calls on Dandelion to cheer their spirits with a story. Happy tales of tricks and adventures are proposed. But Bigwig insists on hearing the ominous tale of “El-ahrairah and the Black Rabbit of Inle.” It suits his mood and he will brook no opposition. Dandelion reluctantly begins the tale. It is a desperate story of sacrifice. King Darzin and his army of beasts lay siege to the rabbits’ warren. They starve El-ahrairah’s people. Slaughtering all who try to escape from the guarded holes. El-ahrairah can see no hope but to travel to Inle and offer his own life to the Black Rabbit in exchange for the warren’s. The story is too intense for the frightened Pipkin. Fiver leads him off into the woods --

15. DISSOLVE TO: A DIFFERENT STYLE OF ANIMATION as Dandelion describes El-ahrairah's travels through the barren landscape of Inle, where he enters the Black Rabbit's CAVE. The shadowy Black Rabbit rejects El-ahrairah's offer of his own life. His time to stop running has not yet come. But he proposes a wager for something he does covet – El-ahrairah's SHINING EARS. But no one, not even the great trickster, can best the Black Rabbit. Wager lost, the Black Rabbit's DARK WRAITHS set on El-ahrairah and TEAR his shining ears away! We hear Fiver call out frantically – “Hazel!” --
16. QUICK CUT TO: Fiver and Pipkin rush back into the thicket to warn the others! A FOX is coming through the forest! Hazel tries to keep his band calm and together, preparing to run as one. But Bigwig is too agitated to sit still. He sacrifices himself, darting right towards the Fox in order to draw it off! --
17. WE TRACK Bigwig as he races through the trees with the Fox at his heels! He dashes through a BUSH and barrels right through a WIDE PATROL of EFRAFA OWSLA. “Stand to!” commands their CAPTAIN. But the Fox is on them in a flash, tearing at the Captain's throat and scattering the others! --
18. Hazel and his band huddle in the thicket. Ready to run. They HEAR the Owsla Captain's horrific SQUEAL OF DEATH. “He's got Bigwig!” screams Pipkin. But their champion reappears on the tear. “Run!” commands Bigwig. They bolt away through the forest and into the far meadow –
19. As they run through the meadow, Hazel limping from his gunshot wound, comes alongside Bigwig to reprimand. There was no need to distract the fox! They could've got away without having Bigwig endanger himself. But Bigwig says he's so wound up he had to act! He's not sure he can do what Hazel has asked. He's not sure he can go into Efrafa alone! But Hazel admonishes him. There's no one else for it – “You're the only one they'd accept. All our hopes depend on you.” Bigwig nods glumly. “What was the animal the fox killed?” asks his Chieftain. “I barreled into a party of rabbits. Big fellows,” explains Bigwig. “They must be from Efrafa,” says Hazel. “You've saved us after all, Thlayli. Hurry! We have to get beyond their patrols before we're found again!” They head off to encourage the others to speed! –

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

20. At evening, they cross over the ELEVATED RAIL LINE. Silver tells them that this is where Lord Frith sent his messenger to save him. Fiver sniffs at the rails and observes that it's a “man-thing”. “Man-thing or not, it was the hand of Frith,” replies the pious Silver, still in awe of his deliverance –

21. The SUN IS SETTING as they reach the banks of a broad and fast-flowing RIVER. It's set in the midst of a CONSERVATION AREA with wet and exposed PARKLAND. Kehaar lands and shrieks at them – “Not here! Other side! You want them rabbits catch you?!” “We can't swim this!” answers Hazel. “Not swim! Bridge!” cries the Gull. But this is beyond their comprehension. “Rabbits not know bridge?!” shrieks Kehaar. “Stupid rabbits! Come!” He flies off towards a SMALL CAR BRIDGE as the stupid rabbits follow –
22. They nervously cross the BRIDGE and hurry to shelter in the DRY WOODS on the far side of the river. Safe from Efrafa's patrols for the night. The fearful and exhausted rabbits settle down to sleep. Bluebell makes a joke about Efrafa to cheer them up. But Bigwig, nerves on edge, tells him to shut up about it! Hazel limps over to Blackberry. “Leg hurts?” “It's fine,” lies Hazel, anxious not to draw attention to it. “Poor Bigwig's in a bad way,” observes Blackberry. Hazel nods. “It may be too much we're asking of him,” replies Hazel. But Blackberry wonders if Hazel is asking too much of all of them? They still haven't got a clue how to solve the third and most important part of the trick – how to vanish with the does and never be found again. The grim-faced leader knows it. “But we have to,” he replies, “Holly is right. The Efrafa Owsla is no joke. It was just sheer luck we weren't found by their patrol today.” He looks off across the river towards the boundaries of the fearful warren –
23. CUT TO: AN OFFICER reports to General Woundwort and the COUNCIL. He tells them that his patrol was on the scent of a large group of strange rabbits when a fox was set on them by a cunning runner. Their Captain was killed instantaneously. “Why didn't you apprehend this rabbit?” asks Woundwort coldly. “There was a fox, sir,” replies the nervous officer. But Woundwort expels the officer from the Owsla and the stricken soul is escorted from the burrow. CAPTAIN VERVAIN, Woundwort's weasly second-in-command, gently tries to intercede. Can they afford to lose another officer? What with the death of Captain Charlock on the iron road? Now Captain Mallow? As well as Captain Bugloss's unfortunate... But Woundwort cuts him off with a look. “Without discipline there's only anarchy. It's a small price to pay for the peace and security we enjoy. Double the wide patrols for the night. These homeless rabbits are a menace. They attract elil and man.” “Of course you're right sir,” toadies Vervain, moving to obey –
24. Dawn. Kehaar lands and rouses the slumbering rabbits to action! “What wait for?!” he shrieks. “Go get Mudders lazy rabbits! I want Big Water! My Mudder!” Hazel calls to Bigwig, Blackberry and Fiver and leads them downstream to a SMALL PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE. “To Efrafa,” he says, as he limps ahead, drawing them across the bridge on a scouting mission –
25. The four brothers-in-arms stare out from the RIVERBANK REEDS at the RAILWAY EMBANKMENT ARCHWAY in the distance. It's the gateway to Efrafa. But there's nothing but PARKLAND between the river and the arch. No

cover whatsoever. “It’s hopeless Hazel,” says Blackberry. “Even if Bigwig could get the does safely through that tunnel with the bird’s help, we’d be blocked by the river or cut down at the bridges.” It looks grim indeed. But Kehaar lands on a SMALL ROWBOAT tied up at the riverbank and shrieks – “What wait for?! Go!” “Bloody impatient bird,” mutters Hazel –

But Fiver stares at the gull floating on the boat and has an inspiration. “Blackberry? Do you remember the man-thing that I floated across the stream on?” “Not now,” hisses Bigwig. But Blackberry has the same thought as Fiver – “By Frith I do!” They hurry to Kehaar and the rowboat. The mystified Hazel and Bigwig follow. “Kehaar! What is that thing?!” the excited Blackberry asks. “Boat!” replies the Gull. “Rabbits not even know boat?!” “If we chewed this rope would the boat thing float away down the river?” asks Fiver. Kehaar spits in contempt. “Rabbits know anything?!” “That’s a ‘yes!’” exclaims the excited Blackberry. He explains the trick to Hazel and Bigwig. If Bigwig and Kehaar can get the does to the boat thing, they can float downriver and vanish forever with that damn Woundwort none the wiser! All are thrilled by the plan – all save Bigwig, who sees that the time has now come for him to do his part. “Tell Kehaar when you want us to be waiting here,” says Hazel. “And may Frith go with you.” Bigwig nods. They rub noses and he starts to depart. But Kehaar calls out from the rowboat – “Mister Bigwig! You call me! I come fight plenty good!” --

CLOSE ON: Bucked up a bit by Kehaar’s pledge, Bigwig starts to run towards the Railway Arch. Entering Efrafa all alone –

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

26. The Right Flank Mark is above ground in Efrafa for their morning silfay. Hyzenthlai and other discontented DOES huddle together talking. But they go silent as the ominous figure of General Woundwort appears. He stares at them coolly, chilling their blood. Then moves away to address CAPTAIN CHERVIL, successor to the disgraced Captain Bugloss. He asks how the does transferred to his Mark are getting on? Any more grumbling? “None that I’ve heard, General sir.” “See that you do hear, Captain. We can ill afford to expel another Captain of the Right Flank Mark.” “Of course, sir.” They are interrupted by Captain Champion running up with news. A wild rabbit has been apprehended “What of it?” replies Woundwort. “We’ll deal with him tomorrow.” “As you wish sir,” says Champion. “But he says he’s traveled a long distance to join Efrafa.” “Wants to join Efrafa?” asks Woundwort, puzzled. “That’s what he says, sir. And to my mind he looks a distinctly useful rabbit.” “Useful how?” says The General. “Well, to put it frankly sir,” replies Champion. “He’s almost as big as you, sir.” Woundwort has to see this. They head off together to meet this useful rabbit –

27. Bigwig stands surrounded by GUARDS. He stares at Woundwort levelly as the giant General comes to inspect him. “Who are you?” growls Woundwort. “My name is Thlayli.” “Thlayli, sir,” insists Campion. But Bigwig remains silent. “What are you doing in Efrafa?” asks Woundwort. “I’ve come a long way to join your warren.” “Why?” “My own home was destroyed by man. I’ve heard that can’t happen here.” Woundwort sizes him up. “What can you do?” “I can run and fight and spoil a story telling it,” Bigwig coolly replies. “I’ve been an officer in an Owsla.” “Fight can you? Could you fight him?” says the General, pointing at Campion. “If you wish,” says Bigwig, swiftly swatting the officer to the ground! “Stop it you fool!” commands Woundwort. He sizes up the big warrior once again. “Well, I suppose you better come along and see the Council. See what they say about you,” says Woundwort. “As you wish,” replies Bigwig. “Though I expect they’ll say exactly what you tell them to – sir.” Woundwort almost allows himself a grin as he leads Bigwig away. “You see a lot, Thlayli,” says he –
28. Bigwig stands before the Efrafa Council. Woundwort addresses him – “You come to us from a warren that man destroyed, Thlayli. I know such things. When I was a mere kitten my Father was killed by a farmer’s shotgun. My Mother, weakened by the same shot, was taken by a weasel as I watched. But I lived. And I swore that I would build a warren that elijah dreaded.. And where no man could find us. You’ve come to such a place. A warren that knows no fear. If we welcome you into the officers of Efrafa you must swear by Frith to obey our laws and honor the commands of this Council. Do you, rabbit?” “I do,” lies Bigwig. “Where should we place him?” Woundwort asks Vervain. But Bigwig shrewdly pipes up – “I favor the right flank if that’s any consideration? An old wound from a cat on my left.” And so Vervain BITES the new officer on the right, assigning him to the same Right Mark that Holly was part of –
29. Evening Meal Time. Captain Chervil shows the new recruit the ropes of patrolling the Right Flank Mark. They have one-hour above ground for feeding in the morning and one-hour in the evening. Sentries are posted in the woods to warn of incursions and to prevent escape. “Do many try to escape?” asks Bigwig. “A few malcontents. He’s one,” replies Chervil, pointing at Blackavar. The rabbit who had his ears mutilated looks near death. He stands between TWO GUARDS as a warning to all of what disobedience brings. Chervil is sure he will be killed soon, after all the Marks have had a good long look at him. Bigwig spies the discontented DOES talking in a huddle. “What about does?” he asks. “What privileges does an officer have?” “You can have any doe in the Mark you want. But it must be within the Mark. Keep a sharp eye on those ones. Cozy up to them if you like. The General’s concerned about their loyalty.” Bigwig readily obeys. He bounds over to the clutch of does, all of whom go silent before him. “Is one of you called Hyzenthlay?” he asks. A doe nods warily. “I’m Thlayli. Come to my burrow tonight after feeding.” She bitterly nods agreement. But as Bigwig heads away, a young doe named NELTHILTA jokes loudly – “Is it a rabbit or a rooster wants to mate with you?” Some laugh. Bigwig reddens at the jest about his odd

tuft of head fur. But as he lopes off, he looks up and sees Kehaar flying above him -- a friend who is watching all --

30. Bigwig's brethren are still camped on the far side of the river. Kehaar lands and reports that Mister Bigwig is with them damn rabbits. "They bite him good! There!" He nods with his beak towards the markings on Silver's right flank. "The Right Flank Mark," says Silver to Hazel. "The same as I was" --
31. Alone, Bigwig waits nervously in his burrow. Hyzenthlay unhappily enters the officer's quarters. But he quickly reassures her that she has not been summoned to mate. He confides that he has come from the same warren as Holly and the others who escaped from Efrafa. They've come to bring does away. Will she come? Can she bring others? "How?" asks the wary doe. He assures her that the plan is good. A great bird will fight for them and they'll all disappear from sight through a trick of which even Woundwort hasn't dreamed! "A bird," she replies trance-like. "I dreamt of a bird and of a rabbit riding in a hrududu. No it can't be..." But he tells her to trust her visions. There's one in his own warren also blessed with second sight. She fights back her fears and agrees to come. Many more will follow her lead when the trick is sprung. But she will only confide in her friend Vilthuri in advance. For there are no secrets in this warren. And many spies. "One more thing," Bigwig tells her. "We're bringing that poor buck Blackavar out of Efrafa with us. I won't leave him here to die" --

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

32. Morning mealtime for the Right Flank Mark. Bigwig stares up at Kehaar circling in the sky. But he sees the guards taking poor Blackavar off to pass hraka and seizes the opportunity. He blusters past the sentries and pretends to pass hruaka as he WHISPERS to the mutilated rebel -- "I am an enemy of Efrafa. Be ready to escape at evening silfay." But Blackavar is so weak, Bigwig isn't sure he even hears. He exits the latrine and sees that Kehaar has landed in the field. But as he starts towards him, a VOICE OF DOOM SOUNDS -- "Thlayli!" Bigwig turns to see Woundwort staring at him coldly. He approaches. He's told that a guard in the Wide Patrol has identified him as the rabbit who set a fox on them. "I ran for my life from a fox, if that's what you mean?" bluffs Bigwig. "I had no idea those rabbits were from Efrafa." "Why didn't you mention it?" asks the suspicious General. "I didn't think it was important -- sir." Woundwort stares at him searchingly. But he's distracted by the CALLS of Kehaar, feeding in the Efrafa field. "Damn that intruding bird," spits Woundwort. "Shall I drive him off for you?" asks Bigwig, eager to get away from the General's questions. "You're not afraid of his beak?" replies Woundwort. By answer, Bigwig dashes towards Kehaar. When he is near to him he WHISPERS -- "Tonight! It must be tonight at evening silfay! Now fly!" The gull takes off as if frightened by Bigwig. The watching General Woundwort withdraws --

- Captain Chervil sounds the end of mealtime. The Right Flank Mark head back to the burrows. But at the entranceway, Nelthilta, the young doe who mocked Bigwig as a rooster, provokes the Mark Captain – “We won’t forever be at your beck and call!” “What’s that supposed to mean?” asks Chervil, sharply. “Just a little something a birdie told me,” laughs the doe. Chervil looks at her searchingly. And Bigwig locks eyes with Hyzenthlay – what by Frith has she done!? –
33. Evening -- STORM CLOUDS approach. THUNDER SOUNDS. Hazel leads his band across the river on the pedestrian bridge and takes up position by the rowboat. Kehaar lands. They eye the Railway Arch leading to Efrafa. Hazel starts to GNAW at the ROPE holding the vessel to shore. But Blackberry stops him. Plenty of time. It will be “ni-Frith” when Bigwig brings the does –
34. But inside Efrafa, Hyzenthlay enters Bigwig’s burrow in a panic! The young doe, Nelthilta, has been arrested! She’s being taken to the Council right now! She’ll tell everything! She overheard Hyzenthlay talking to her friend Vilthuril! “What do we do Thlayli?! We’re lost!” Bigwig is near panic himself. A lone conspirator in this wretched warren. But Captain Chervil intrudes. He tells Bigwig that an arrest has been made. The warren is to be shut down for the night. No evening silfay. “Inform the sentries,” he orders. Chervil exits to the Council and Bigwig seizes his chance. He tells Hyzenthlay to gather all the does she can! Bring them above ground and ready to run! He’ll tell the guards they are having an early mealtime due to the storm. And then he asks – “Where’s Blackavar’s cell? I said I won’t leave him” --
35. The Efrafa Council watches as Vervain CUFFS the doe Nelthilta. But the impatient Woundwort stops him – “She can’t talk if you keep cuffing her, you fool.” Vervain stops the torture. The young doe sobs – “Hyzenthlay said – oh! oh! – she said a big bird would attack the Owsla and we would run away in the confusion!” “A bird?” interrupts The General. “You must be lying!” “No sir!” she pants. “The new officer told her the bird would fight!” “What new officer?” he spits. “Thlayli, sir,” she confesses. Woundwort’s face screws up in hatred. “I’ll blind him myself!” he exclaims, leading his SOLDIERS from the burrow –
36. Heavy RAIN is falling as Blackavar’s TWO GUARDS and Bigwig lead him up to silfay. Prisoner and deliverer lock eyes. At the entranceway, Bigwig swiftly attacks the lead guard! He’s bitten on the shoulder but slashes the Efrafa rabbit’s stomach, crippling him! The other guard flees down the burrow. “Run!” Bigwig commands Blackavar. They gather up the waiting does – TEN of them! – and bolt through the storm towards the distant Railway Arch –

But the Efrafa Owsla is as quick as ever. STOMP ALARMS are sounded throughout the warren. Champion and THREE WIDE PATROL are the first to set off in chase. But they are followed soon after by the dreaded General Woundwort himself and his COUNCIL SOLDIERS --

37. Bigwig, Blackavar and the outlaw does reach the Railway Arch. LIGHTENING FLASHES! THUNDER SOUNDS! The does huddle out of the storm under the Archway. Bigwig goes forward but can see no sign of either Kehaar or Hazel. His heart sinks. But he orders the does to keep moving! “But where is the bird?!” one cries. Where indeed? “Keep moving!” cries Bigwig. “It’s not far now!” They exit the Archway, hurrying to him. But the swift-running Champion and his patrol are on them almost at once! “Give it up Thlayli! You haven’t a chance!” “Leave us!” replies Bigwig. “I don’t want to hurt you!” But a fearful doe cries – “The General! The General!” And sure enough, Woundwort is running under the Archway, looking like a demon out of hell in his hatred! Blackavar tells Bigwig – “Never mind, sir. You did your best. We may even kill one or two before it’s finished.” Bigwig rubs noses with his new comrade-in-arms. “I’ll fight too,” says the defiant Hyzenthlay. “I won’t go back!” –

Woundwort runs right up to Bigwig, spewing venom – “You dirty little traitor! I’ll kill you myself!” “I’d like to see you try you crack-brained slave driver!” replies Bigwig. “You’re not fit to be called a rabbit! May Frith blast you and your foul Owsla!” –

LIGHTENING CRACKS! Kehaar descends with it! “Yark! Yark! Yark!” He attacks the General as the great rabbit cowers to protect his head! The Owsla scatters in terror! “What wait for?!” cries Kehaar, flying up again. “Go!” Bigwig, Blackavar and the does race for the river, as the Gull fights a rear-guard action – “Yack! Yack! Yack!” But now that he is no longer taken unawares, the terrible Woundwort stands on his haunches, slicing out at the gull with his claws! –

Bigwig and his party meet up with Silver and Dandelion as they near the river. “Get the does to the man-thing!” he cries. But Kehaar flies low with a warning – “That damn rabbit! He try fight me! They come! They come by ditch!” Bigwig sees that Woundwort has rallied his troops and is running parallel to them towards the river. “Hurry!” he tells his own rabbits. But as he runs, he mutters, staring at the ominous General – “Frith help us! He’s not a rabbit at all!” –

The does reach the rowboat. But some are afraid and confused by it. “Come on!” says Hazel at the rope. “It’s perfectly safe!” But Woundwort appears out of the reeds. He CUFFS a doe with a vicious blow! She stumbles onto the boat. The others follow in panic! But Bigwig is still ashore. He faces Woundwort and all his gathering Owsla alone. The General sneers at him – “I trusted you Thlayli. You can trust me now. I’ll tear you to pieces the whole lot of you. There’s nowhere left to run.” Bigwig spies Dandelion hiding in the rushes, nearly surrounded by Owsla, but so far undetected. “Vervain! Champion!” commands Woundwort. “When I give the word we’ll go straight into them! As for that bird, it’s not dangerous!” But Bigwig seizes the moment – “There it is!!” he cries. The Owsla cringe in fear of the unseen bird. And in that brief moment, Dandelion and Bigwig

leap aboard the rowboat! Hazel drops the rope from his mouth and the current catches the vessel, taking it swiftly away! –

Their last sight of Efrafa is the furious, disbelieving face of General Woundwort! “He looks like that hawk who lost the mouse,” says Hazel to Bigwig. “If I’d known what he was like I never could’ve gone into Efrafa,” Bigwig replies. “Not for a thousand does.” “Ten will do,” says Hazel brightly. “And you’ve done it” –

ANGLE UP TO: The rowboat filled with 20 RABBITS spins round-and-round as it floats on the broad river. Floating away from Efrafa –

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

38. Dawn the next day. The storm has passed and the sky is clear. The Rowboat rests against ANOTHER BRIDGE, far downstream from Efrafa. The rabbits sleep huddled under the bridge or in cover. But Hazel sees Hyzenthlay nudging at a PRONE DOE by the river. He goes to her and sees that the female rabbit slashed by Woundwort has died in the night. “Is it worth it?” Hyzenthlay asks. “The life of this warren you’re taking us too?” “It’s a chance to start anew,” he answers her. “But is it worth it? That’s for you and your sisters to say. It’ll be whatever you make of it.” She stares at him bemused. He doesn’t seem like a Chief Rabbit to her. “You’ve only known the one,” he jokes –

Kehaar lands to say farewell. Hazel, Bigwig and Fiver go to him. He’s off to the Big Water to find his own Mudder. Hazel thanks him for all. The Gull promises to come again in the Spring. “See plenty little Bigwigs!” As he flies away to find his own home, Blackavar comes to report. He’s already been out scouting. “There’s a man out, no doubt searching for the boat thing. We should move, sir,” Hazel nods. But adds that they’ll want to give Efrafa a very wide berth as they travel. “I assumed as much, sir,” says Blackavar. “I’ve already scouted the way, sir. Shall I rouse the does, sir?” Hazel nods, impressed. Blackavar exits to work. “And here I thought I was rescuing a broken soul,” comments Bigwig. “I’d say he’s a distinctly useful rabbit. If only he’d drop that Efrafan ‘sir this sir that’ nonsense.” “Give him time,” grins Hazel, “A few days with our lot and he’ll be as lazy as the rest” –

39. HIGH SHOT – At evening, Groups of Rabbits are scattered all over a SLOPING PASTURE. They make their way upwards to FOREST, with GRAZING SHEEP set in their midst –

CLOSE ON: Hazel encourages the tired does that are with him. “It’s not far now. Only a little way’s longer.” Dandelion cries out – “It’s Holly!” Hazel looks up to see Holly racing down from the forest! They all run forward to greet him. “Great Frith you’ve done it!” exults Holly. “How many has El-ahrairah brought!” “Nine

sisters for the warren,” says Hazel proudly. “Nine!?” Holly starts to greet each of the new does – “How do you do?” “How do you do?” “How do you do?” – till Bigwig cuts him off. “For Frith’s sake Holly. Wait till we get to the warren till you start courting!” “How is the warren?” asks the Chief Rabbit. “How’s Clover?” There is great news there as well. The hutch doe is expecting the warren’s first litter! Bigwig cuffs Holly good-naturedly. For he’s in no doubt who the Father is! In high spirits they all set off up the slope -- leading the newcomers to what no one doubts will be a fine long rabbit’s life –

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: But on a **RIDGE** overlooking the pasture, **FOUR STRANGE RABBITS** stare at the happy band from cover –

Captain Champion turns and leads his Wide Patrol back towards Efrafa. The news he brings will cheer the heart of the brooding, vengeful Woundwort --

40. **FADE TO:** Two weeks pass at the Top of the World. Happy weeks, as the freed does enter fully into the life of the warren. Lord Frith **SHINES DOWN** in the height of the summer heat. Efrafa is forgotten. Hazel rests contentedly with Bigwig and Blackavar in the **SHADE** of the Beech Trees. “Twelve bucks and eleven does makes for a happy enough warren, I suppose,” offers Bigwig. “Of course I say to those who will insist on bickering – they can always go join Efrafa!” Hazel smiles. “It seems like a dream that we were ever really there,” he muses. “Not a dream, a story, sir,” adds Blackavar. “I heard Hyzenthlay telling it to the hutch does. It was as good as one of El-ahrairah’s.” “She can tell it to Clover’s kittens soon enough. They were born in the night. Our warren’s first litter.” “Here’s your old friend,” says Bigwig, motioning to the **MOUSE** Hazel once saved. They pass chit-chat about the weather in hedgerow lingua franca. But the mouse says something odd about rabbits starting a new warren on the morning-side of the meadow. Bigwig thinks the mouse is talking rubbish. But their Chief Rabbit is curious. He asks Blackavar to take Holly and check it out. “Yes sir,” replies the former soldier of Efrafa. “By Frith,” complains Bigwig, “When’s he going to cut that out?” He continues to relax as Holly and Blackavar slip away –
41. They lope through the forest – no need to rush. But when they stare out at the upland meadow they spy a blood-chilling sight – Woundwort and **TWENTY FIVE SOLDIERS** rest below after a long march! “Stand to!” cries a voice. But they bolt in terror from Champion and his patrol before they can be apprehended –
42. Hazel and the relaxed Bigwig stare at Blackavar and Holly as they come racing back. “There’s something wrong,” says the Chieftain. “Hmm?” replies Bigwig. Holly runs up and **STOMPS THE ALARM!** Does and bucks run for the burrows to get underground. “Efrafa’s come with an army!” Holly tells Hazel. “Come to destroy us! We have to get everyone underground! Stop up the holes!” But Blackavar says they should flee. The General’s troops know how to storm a warren! And there’s still time to get as many away as they can! Hazel looks about

- him. “Anyone who wants to go can go. I won’t. We made this warren ourselves and Frith only knows what we’ve been through on account of it. I’m not running anywhere. It’s my home.” He orders his bucks to fill in all the burrow holes save Kehaar’s run. They set to work with a will. But Hazel stares off at the forest and the upland meadow beyond. He decides he must go to the dreaded General and plead for peace. He tells Bigwig that he is Chief Rabbit till he returns. “But Hazel?” says Bigwig. “Woundwort’s out there?!” Hazel nods. Well he knows it.. As he limps through the forest, he mutters – “The Chief Rabbit must go alone” –
43. Champion reports to Woundwort. He apologizes for letting Blackavar and the other rabbit get away. They’ve lost the element of surprise. “It’s of no matter,” replies The General. “We’ll go up and see if they’ve fled in fear. If they have we’ll run them down.” They head to the woods to see the outlaw warren he means to kill --
44. But as they lope through the forest, they encounter a strange rabbit sitting on the path. He’s unremarkable looking. Indeed, he walks with a limp as he comes forward to the awesome General. “Thlayli send you to beg?” says Woundwort with contempt. “I’m a friend of Thlayli,” replies Hazel. “And not to beg but to talk terms.” But Woundwort’s terms are that all the does along with the traitors Blackavar and Thlayli must be handed over to him. Hazel replies that rabbits have enough enemies. They ought not to make more among themselves. He proposes that the two warrens co-operate – establishing a new colony between them. “You’re in no position to bargain,” replies The General. “Take back my terms to your Chief Rabbit, Thlayli. Tell him if the does aren’t waiting outside his warren with him and Blackavar, I’ll tear the throat out of every buck in the place.” Hazel starts to reply that he is Chief Rabbit – “I am the warren’s...” But Woundwort has already turned away to go marshal his troops. Ignoring the lame rank-and-filer –
45. CUT TO: It’s a desperate scene down in the Honeycomb Warren, as the rabbits LISTEN to the invaders’ approach. They can hear them digging, trying to open up a blocked run. The Does huddle with Clover and her NEW-BORN KITTENS. Hazel shouts up at his warriors in KEHAAR’S RUN to get ready! But Fiver goes into a feverish trance on the floor, shaking and emitting AN EERIE ANIMAL GROWL! “Stop it Fiver!” commands Hazel. “You’re scaring the does!” But the Seer is beyond his hearing, lost in a new vision –
- ANGLE ON: GROUNDEL, an Efracan soldier, breaks through Kehaar’s run. But he hears the awful SOUND OF FIVER’S GROWLING. Nevertheless, he presses on in the narrow tunnel – till attacked on both flanks by Silver and Blackavar! Bitten and mauled, he retreats --
46. Bleeding, he emerges from Kehaar’s run and goes to Woundwort to report. “The runs are defended, sir! And I heard some sort of animal down below! Maybe the bird?!” Other warriors look at him in fear. Woundwort cuts off his talk – “We’re here to dig and to fight! Not to listen! There is no bird! Get back to your post!” Groundsel dashes back to the woods. “The runs look a hard bargain,” says

Campion. Woundwort nods. “We’ll dig straight down and come in on top of them,” replies his General. The bucks are set to work, tunneling straight down to the Honeycomb Burrow –

47. Down below, Hazel can hear the diggers right above his head. “They’re coming straight down!” he tells Holly and Bigwig. “Get everyone back into the rear burrows and barricade them with dirt!” His lieutenants move to obey, ordering all paws back! Hazel goes to the shivering, trance-like Fiver. “Fiver! We have to retreat!” There’s no response but strange GROWLING. He lays his paw on his brother to wake him. But on contact, he’s seized by a SUDDEN FLASH –

THE CAMERA TRACKS SWIFTLY through a Woodlot at Dawn. Like it was an animal hunting. It nears a group of eight frightened rabbits, who are huddled by a STREAM after fleeing their doomed warren. We hear Bigwig exclaim – “There’s a dog loose in the forest!” Just as he did so many days before. But now the CAMERA breaks into their midst like a hungry predator! –

RESUME – Hazel looks shaken by his vision. He steps away staring at Fiver. A beat. And then he calls out – “Dandelion! Blackberry! Come with me! El-ahrairah has told me how to save us!” Together they bound up Kehaar’s run –

48. Captain Champion reports to Woundwort. “Three rabbits were seen running from the woods. Should I pursue them, sir?” Woundwort shakes his huge head. “Three less to fight. Keep them digging.” Champion goes forward to spur the tunneling rabbits on --
49. Hazel, Dandelion and Blackberry speed down the great hill! “You know what you have to do?!” he asks Blackberry. The frightened rabbit nods. “Stay here!” They leave Blackberry at his post in the field and race on to the farm –
50. At the farm, Hazel positions the swift Dandelion in the LANEWAY. He leaves him and goes on alone. Entering the farmyard, he silently creeps up on the plywood DOGHOUSE. Thank Frith, the huge BLACK DOG is asleep within. He leaps up onto a bail of HAY and then onto the roof of the canine’s home itself. As quietly as he can, he begins to GNAW at the ROPE binding the dog. But he stops in fear as the DOG turns over in uneasy slumber. Dreaming of – rabbits? –

END OF ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

51. THE DEEP HOLE down to the warren is almost finished. Only a thin layer of dirt separates the warring armies. Woundwort leads the attack himself. Plunging down into the hole – followed by Vervain, Groundsel and Chevril --

52. Woundwort lands inside the great warren and immediately puts his back against a wall. Expecting attack. He stares out warily at the huge Honeycomb Burrow that's strangely empty. Vervain follows him in – but SCREAMS as he lands. “What is it?!” hisses The General. “I landed on a dead rabbit,” replies the embarrassed Vervain. They inspect the prone figure of Fiver, no signs of life. Groundsel and Chevril enter. “Never mind the little rat! Find them!” commands Woundwort. They inspect the burrow. Sniffing at the walls and runs. Groundsel notices the FRESH DIRT piled up at one part of the wall. “They’re cowering behind there,” spits Woundwort. “Dig!” –
53. The entire warren is huddled behind the SOFT EARTH WALL. The does are frightened. Even Clover’s new-born KITTENS sense danger and tremble.. At the wall, Bigwig can hear the SOUND OF DIGGING. The grim-faced warrior tells Holly and Blackavar to make as much noise as possible. “Make sure the General comes through right here!” While in the b.g., Bluebell tells the story of “El-ahrairah and the Wolf”, trying to calm the does and bucks in their terror –
54. CUT TO: Hazel has almost gnawed the rope free. But he looks up at the watching Dandelion and sees that the Tabby CAT is stalking him close. He instinctively THUMPS the top of the doghouse in alarm! Dandelion JUMPS from the cat just in time! But the awakened dog barrels out of his hutch in pursuit of the rabbit! The doghouse is ROCKED and Hazel falls off to the ground! He lands hard with a CRY! Re-injuring his bad leg! In a flash the cat is on him! Pinning him helplessly to the dirt and sinking his sharp claws into his neck! He HISSES in feline (sub-titled) -- “Can you run? I think not” –
55. CUT TO: The huge dog is at Dandelion’s heels as he leads him on a chase! They dart in-and-out of bushes! The dog almost has him, when Blackberry appears to distract the smelly elil and lead him on towards The Hill –
56. Hazel lies helpless in the cat’s claws. The Tabby sinks his fangs into the rabbit’s fur. But the HAND OF GOD, or that’s what it seems to Hazel, BATS the hissing cat away! A YOUNG GIRL GIANT picks up the injured rabbit. She utters soft COOING WORDS, unintelligible to the rabbit, as she carries him to the BARN. She places him inside the CAGE with the TWO HUTCH BUCKS who remain her pets. It is a fate worse than death! --
57. CUT TO: The does and bucks watch with dread as a HOLE is punctured in their defensive wall. A beat. And then the terrifying figure of Woundwort starts to crawl through the gap into their midst. He has them! But Bigwig suddenly RISES UP out of his hiding place beneath the dirt! He sinks his teeth into the joint of the unsuspecting General’s front leg! Ahh!!! They snarl and battle desperately as the warren looks on! Woundwort claws and bites the back of Thlayli ferociously! Ripping his ear! But Bigwig rears up swiftly and SLASHES his grim foe across the NOSE – once! twice! Nostrils BLEEDING, Woundwort BULLS FORWARD with his great weight! Pushing the warren’s champion back! Bigwig’s back legs

strain against the bullying mass! It looks hopeless, until the General breaks off his attack unable to breathe. He retreats a step and tries to clear his bloody nostrils. Both utterly exhausted, the two warriors stare at one another in close quarters. “Give it up,” pants Woundwort, trying to seduce his opponent. “You’re too good to be killed like this. I can send one fresh fighter after another into the run. Come back to Efrafa. I’ll give you command of any Mark you choose. I give you my word.” “Silfay hraka, u embleer rah,” replies Bigwig tightly with a low, gasping voice. “My Chief Rabbit has told me to defend this run and until he says otherwise I will stay here.” “Your Chief...?” utters Woundwort, despite himself. For the first time since he was a kitten, the tyrant knows fear. His Chief Rabbit?! A rabbit even bigger than Thlayli?! He withdraws from the bloody but unbowed Bigwig –

58. The three soldiers in the Honeycomb Burrow are shocked by the General’s appearance – exhausted, bleeding at the nose, limping at the leg, eyelid torn, scarred and defeated. But still he blusters – “Get the diggers down! We’ll tear down the wall and go at him from all sides!” Woundwort yells. Chevril goes up the run to obey – or is it to escape? Woundwort orders Vervain to have a go at Thlayli himself. The coward is shocked. He makes a great show of having grit in his eyes. The angry and impatient General storms – “Confound it! Where are those diggers?!” But Groundsel calls out in shock – “Sir! The dead rabbit’s alive!” They all stare at little Fiver, as he stares back at them from his haunches. “Well kill him! You can at least handle that can’t you Vervain?!” he taunts. “Groundsel! Come with me!” The General and Groundsel exit to go get the tardy diggers –

Fiver looks calmly at Vervain as the killer crosses towards him. A long beat passes as they stare at one another. At last the little rabbit speaks – “I am sorry for you with all my heart.” “Sorry? You sorry?” asks the surprised Owsla Captain. “For your death,” replies the heartfelt Fiver. A beat. And then Vervain flees the warren in fear! –

59. CUT TO: Dandelion and Blackberry lead the big dog on up the hill –

60. The bloodied Woundwort staggers up out of the run. He stumbles sideways from his damaged leg. His warriors look on in shock and fear. “Where are the diggers!” he yells. “Why aren’t they down below!” A YOUNG WARRIOR sobs – “Oh sir, they say there’s a great Chief Rabbit bigger than a hare! And an animal or a bird!” “Shut up!” commands Woundwort. “Follow me! Come on!” But some of his soldiers start to slink away. “Where do you think you’re going!” he yells at Chevril. The terrified officer bolts! A STOMP ALARM SOUNDS as Campion runs through their midst! “Run! Run for your lives!” All of Efrafa breaks in terror as the Great Dog bounds into their midst! He seizes Vervain by the throat and shakes him lifeless! All panic, save the terrible, half-crazed General – “Come back you fools!” he snarls. “Dogs aren’t dangerous! Come back and fight!” –

The dog drops Vervain and turns on Woundwort. He recoils for a second at the sight of the bristling and snarling rabbit. And then they leap at one another in joint attack! – The General’s last --

END OF ACT SEVEN

ACT EIGHT

61. HIGH SHOT – A FARMER’S PICKUP TRUCK ascends the Great Hill on a GRAVEL ROAD. It stops as A BLACK DOG comes down the slope towards them. It limps from a nasty wound. Must’ve fought a badger? Or something almost as big. A MAN climbs out and inspects the injured dog. He leads it to the truck and puts it in the back cab. It begins to BARK! The man silences it as he starts up the hill again. But still the dog GROWLS at an unwelcome presence –

WE REVEAL – Hazel, now in a BIRDCAGE, rides in the front seat. A YOUNG GIRL’S HAND rests protectively on the top of his prison. For as the doe, Hyzenthlay foresaw – a wild rabbit is riding in a hrudidu, coming home in a car! –

62. The truck stops at the crest. The YOUNG GIRL climbs out with her imprisoned rabbit and carries it a few yards away. She looks morose at the prospect of losing her pet. But she has her orders to follow. She bends down and LEANS IN to give the wild rabbit a parting KISS at the bars. Hazel retreats in fear from the GIANT’S FACE! –

She OPENS THE CAGE and steps back. Hazel cautiously climbs out. He stares up – way up – at the YOUNG GIRL. Is this one of Fiver’s dreams? he wonders. The girl lifts her hand in farewell. A beat. Then Hazel bolts to freedom! Running across the crest of the hill as fast as his wounds allow! Running home! –

63. His home is saved! His rabbits inspect the DEAD BODIES of Vervain and others. Though there is yet no sign of The General’s. They rejoice when their Chief Rabbit comes running into their midst! “You did it Hazel-rah! They’re gone!” “Fiver did it,” Hazel replies. “Where is he?” Dandelion points to where Fiver sits alone. Hazel bounds to him. “I saw what you wanted me to Fiver,” Hazel tells him. “I saw the dog running loose in the forest.” Fiver nods but seems lost in himself. “It costs me when I travel to that other country Hazel. More than I can tell. It is wild,” he whispers. “You don’t need to go again,” reassures his brother. “We all go there brother,” says Hazel. “Not yet. Not now. Not while Frith smiles,” he smiles. And Fiver answers it. They rub noses as Blackberry calls out – “Hazel! Bigwig’s calling for you!” He leaves to go see his warrior –

64. Bigwig still lies where he fought. He’s scarred and bleeding. Hyzenthlay gently licks his wounds. Hazel creeps in nose-to-nose with the warren’s stalwart defender. “They’ve all run away Bigwig. You beat him.” “I thought he’d killed me,” replies Bigwig weakly. “No more fighting for me. I’m finished that way.”

“Come up and silfay with me Thlayli. Frith is shining.” But Bigwig can’t. He SNIFFS. “What’s that smell on you?” “Man,” answers Hazel, grinning. “I came home to you in a hrududu!” Bigwig’s eyes brighten at the joke. “With a white stick in your mouth I suppose?” he smiles. But Hyzenthlay exclaims – “He did! He did come home in a hrududu! It’s what I saw in Efrafa. I told you.” Hazel stares at her. “You’re like Fiver. You see the other country, don’t you?” She nods, as filled with awe at it as his own dear brother --

65. DISSOLVE TO: A beautiful AUTUMN DAY at the Top of the World in a warren that knows no fear – or only the normal fears of rabbits. YOUNG KITTENS train with the scarred but recovered Bigwig, as he teaches them how to fight a cat. Fiver and Vithuril play with their KITTENS. While the Chief Rabbit and Blackavar watch all with Blackberry. They hear Clover reprimand one of her YOUNG – Stop that! Or The General will get you!” They smile at the old wives tale. But Blackavar offers – “He’s still alive you know? We could never find his body.” Blackavar believes The General’s gone off to found a new warren. A warren full of elil “He’s welcome to it! ‘That damn rabbit!’” replies Blackberry, imitating Kehaar. “What does it matter,” muses Hazel. “We’re alive.” “Yes, sir,” answers Blackavar, still not broken of Efrafa habits. They head off to silfay on the good grass at the bottom of the hill. But Hazel stops at the crest to enjoy the Fall Colors from the Great View, sending his friends on without him –

As he stares at the vista full of brilliant colors, his mind travels back to the beginning of their story. We HEAR -- “That’s the place for us Hazel. That’s where we have to get! A high, lonely hill where rabbits can smell and hear and men hardly ever come!” --

66. DISSOLVE TO: FALL gives way to SUMMER. A summer many years hence. A LONE RABBIT still sits at the crest, savoring the view. Though we note that the MEGACITY has grown closer with time. But not too close yet –

CLOSE ON: The lone rabbit at the hilltop is still Hazel, but now a Chief Rabbit bowed with age. He turns from his post and wearily makes his way home –

67. The entrance to the aged Chief Rabbit’s burrow is guarded by a YOUNG SENTRY. “No guests please,” Hazel tells him. “I’m a little tired.” “Yes sir. As you wish, sir.” “You’re Blackavar’s son, aren’t you?” asks the old rabbit with a twinkle. “Yes, sir.” “I knew your Father well. He was a fine rabbit.” “Thank you sir.” The Chieftain shuffles off alone into his burrow --
68. But as he rests, a guest does come to him. He opens his eyes and stares through the darkness at a YOUNG BUCK. “Do you want to talk to me?” asks the Chief Rabbit. “Yes, that’s what I’ve come for,” replies the VOICE IN THE DARKNESS. “You know me don’t you?” Hazel squints trying to recall the young rabbit’s name. But the buck creeps forward – revealing THE SHINING EARS of El-ahrairah! “Yes my Lord,” says Hazel in awe. “Yes, I know you.” “You’ve been

feeling tired,” says the Stranger. “I’ve come to ask whether you’d care to join my Owsla. We should be glad to have you. If you’re ready we’ll go along now.” The weary Hazel rises and follows the Stranger rabbit out –

69. They pass the Sentry, but he takes no notice of The Other. They head to the WOODS, where the rabbit with the faint, shining ears says – “You won’t be needing that.” Hazel turns back and sees that he has left his BODY behind, lying lifeless in the woods. He stares at it and then up at the distant warren, where his children’s children play. “And you needn’t worry about them,” says his Companion. “They’ll be all right.—and thousands like them. Come along!” –

Hazel turns from his lifeless body as a YOUNG BUCK in his prime. He follows after El-ahrairah. Running together through the forest, the meadow, the world if need be! Running to that far country now seen in its wildness –

And as they run WE HEAR – “All the world will be your enemy, Prince with a Thousand Enemies, and whenever they catch you they will kill you. But first they must catch you – digger, listener, runner, prince with the swift warning. Be cunning and full of tricks and your people shall never be destroyed” –

FADE OUT

THE END