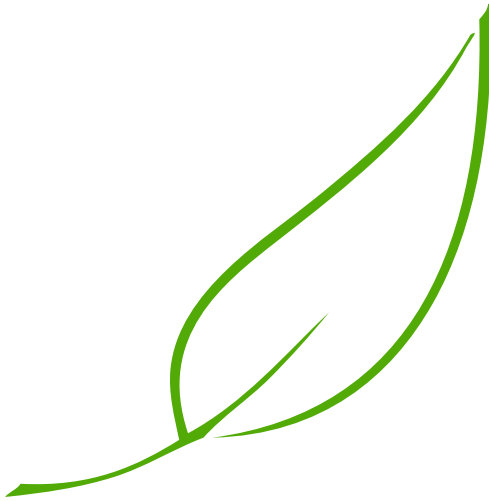


THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

Book by Gary Peterson

Songs by Larry Nestor



GREEN ROOM PRESS

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THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

A musical for children based upon the classic story by Margery Williams

Book by Gary Peterson

Songs by Larry Nestor

SYNOPSIS: Margery Williams' enduring story about love is brought to life in this musical, which spans one year in the nursery of a six year old boy. A much beloved, huggable stuffed animal learns what is needed for it to become real.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 female, 2 male, 6 either; gender flexible)

VELVETEEN RABBIT (f/m).....	(68 lines)
SKIN HORSE (f/m).....	(35 lines)
CLOCKWORK MOUSE (f/m).....	(18 lines)
NANA (f).....	(17 lines)
BOY (m)	(20 lines)
MOTHER (f).....	(9 lines)
FATHER (m)	(3 lines)
FIRST REAL RABBIT (f/m).....	(23 lines)
SECOND REAL RABBIT (f/m)	(20 lines)
DOCTOR (f/m).....	(7 lines)
FANTASY FAIRY (f)	(13 lines)

ALL LINE COUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE

DURATION: 60 minutes

SCENE: The entire play takes place in the Boy's nursery, during the 1910's.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

SONG: WHAT IS TRULY REAL?

SONG: SPRING

SONG: GIVE ME MY BUNNY!

SONG: FOOD

SONG: DON'T TRY TO FAKE US OUT

SONG: IN THE LAND OF MAKE-BELIEVE

SONG: I LOVE TO WIGGLE MY NOSE

SONG: WE'RE REALLY A TEAM

SONG: WHAT IS TRULY REAL (REPRISE)

SCENE 1*A Winter Morning in the Nursery*

AT RISE: *All is quiet in this corner of the Nursery. There seems to be a large pile of oversized stuffed animals, lying atop each other, over at the back wall. The stage is relatively sparse, but everything about it is oversized. There are, perhaps, large crayon drawings aligning the walls, the bottom and legs of a huge dressing-table, or the edge of a gigantic bed to denote the general scale of the play. A window is seen in the back wall, through which the changing seasons may be seen. Currently, it is Winter, not long after Christmas. Stage Left is the only entrance to the room, a tremendous door frame, through which, presently, THE CLOCKWORK MOUSE comes scampering.*

The actor playing the CLOCKWORK MOUSE is dressed in a grey leotard, with white gloves for paws and feet, and a huge wind-up key protruding from one side. He dashes across the stage in a straight-line fashion, crouching low to simulate "all fours". When he hits the opposing wall, he bounces off and runs straight-line into another wall, crossing and re-crossing the stage once or twice until he smashes into the pile of stuffed animals and they all tumble over.

CLOCKWORK MOUSE: *(During his dash.)* Rrrrrrrunnnnnnnnnnn!
Rrrrrrrunnnnnnnnn! *(He is not at all disturbed by hitting the wall or any other object.)* Rrrrrrrrrunnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn!!!

When he smashes into the pile of animals, they fall all over but he turns wrong-side-up, his legs and arms still "running" wildly against the thin air, still happily repeating "Rrrrrrrrrrrunnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn!" Then, his movements slow down until he stops all together with a pronounced jerk.

CLOCKWORK MOUSE: *(After a refreshing pause in the action, with tremendous relief.)* Oh, that was wonderful!

VELVETEEN RABBIT: *(Pause.)* Did you enjoy yourself, Mouse?

CLOCKWORK MOUSE: *(Drained.)* It was great! Great! You'll never know how great!

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I guess not. I don't have a wind-up key.

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- CLOCKWORK MOUSE:** That's where you really miss out, Rabbit.
When the Boy winds up my key, I come alive! I can run! Run!
- SKIN HORSE:** Is running so important?
- CLOCKWORK MOUSE:** Running is everything, Horse! Running is... is LIFE! Running is what makes me real.
- VELVETEEN RABBIT:** *(Suddenly very interested.)* You're REAL??
- CLOCKWORK MOUSE:** Of course!
- SKIN HORSE:** *(Shakes his mane disapprovingly.)* No, you're not real.
- CLOCKWORK MOUSE:** I am, too! I can Rrrrrunnnnn!
- SKIN HORSE:** Only when the Boy winds you up.
- CLOCKWORK MOUSE:** Yes, but he winds me up all the time. He likes to wind me up.
- SKIN HORSE:** He's not winding you now. He didn't even follow you into the nursery.
- CLOCKWORK MOUSE:** *(Trying to look.)* He must be just outside the door.
- SKIN HORSE:** None of us is REAL, Mouse, we're all stuffed with sawdust, and sewn together.
- CLOCKWORK MOUSE:** *(Defensively.)* Not me!! I feel it when the Boy winds me up. I feel it inside; my insides get all tight and excited. I can't wait till he lets me loose so that I can Rrrrrunnn! Then, how my insides buzz and whirl with real LIFE! Rrrrunnn! *(He strives, without success, to move his feet and hands.)* Run!
- SKIN HORSE:** But you can't do it by yourself, Mouse. Real things, real people and real animals, can run all by themselves without anybody winding them up or pulling their strings or changing their batteries. They go where they want to, when they want to.
- VELVETEEN RABBIT:** Wow!
- CLOCKWORK MOUSE:** A lot you know, Horse. You've never run in all your life.
- SKIN HORSE:** Sadly, you are right. I've never run, nor am I likely to on these stiff legs.
- VELVETEEN RABBIT:** My legs are sewn together. I guess I'll never run, either.
- CLOCKWORK MOUSE:** See? How can you say I'm not real when you haven't Rrrunnnnn? You don't know!

SKIN HORSE: Mouse, I've been here a long time. You and the Rabbit here are newcomers to the Nursery. Look at my hide, all worn and shabby from the ten thousand hugs I've gotten. The stuffing in my left ear is coming out through a tiny rip in the seam. I've seen toys far more wonderful than you come and go. There was a little chirping bird here last year in a silver cage, who could sing when the Boy wound her up. She would sing and sing, beautiful songs; but one day the Boy wound her too far, and she couldn't sing any more. His father tried to fix her, but she was... She was broken.

CLOCKWORK MOUSE: (*Scared.*) Broken!

SKIN HORSE: Yes. You know what they did to her? They threw her
—away—

CLOCKWORK MOUSE: No!

SKIN HORSE: Just because she couldn't sing any more.

CLOCKWORK MOUSE: They wouldn't... they wouldn't do that if she could run.

The Boy enters. He is played by a full-grown actor in oversized children's clothes. He is six years old.

BOY: (*With recognition.*) Horse!! (*He runs over to the SKIN HORSE and hugs him all over, kissing his shaggy head, and rubbing his worn hide. Then he sees the VELVETEEN RABBIT and goes to him.*) Oh, Rabbit! (*He straightens the VELVETEEN RABBIT.*) Now sit up straight and be good. Oh, you're so pretty, Rabbit! (*He hugs the VELVETEEN RABBIT.*) And what nice ears.

The BOY continues holding the VELVETEEN RABBIT, then stroking it, and is oblivious of their ensuing conversation.

SKIN HORSE: (*To VELVETEEN RABBIT.*) Rabbit, you're in luck.
The Boy cares for you.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I like him, too. I feel something when he hugs me. I can't explain it.

SKIN HORSE: That's it! That's what I was saying!

VELVETEEN RABBIT: What?

BOY: *(Suddenly, as his attention shifts to the CLOCKWORK MOUSE.)* There you are! I've been looking for you. *(He goes to the CLOCKWORK MOUSE and begins to wind him.)*

CLOCKWORK MOUSE: Oh, oh! I feel it coming! That sensation! I feel it! All my insides are charging up. I'm going to Rrrrrrunnnn again!!

SKIN HORSE: I hope he doesn't wind you up too much, Mouse.

CLOCKWORK MOUSE: What?! Do you think he might? Please, please, don't wind me too much... just enough. Just enough for me to—

BOY: *(Talking over him.)* Here you go, Mouse.

CLOCKWORK MOUSE: *(Suddenly off, in the direction of the doorway.)* Rrrrrrunnnnnnnnnn!

The BOY watches him, and then is off to follow him out the SL door. Once they are both gone.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: What is Real, Horse? Does it mean having things that buzz inside of you and a wind-up key?

SKIN HORSE: I tried to tell the Mouse; no. That's not it at all. Real isn't how you're made. It's a thing that happens to you. The Boy just likes the Mouse to play with. He doesn't really love it. When a human really truly loves you, then you become truly real.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Truly real?

MUSIC under. Musing.

Truly real. See, I felt something inside when the Boy hugged me. It's like I could almost hug him back. I can't explain it, but I know it didn't buzz.

SONG: WHAT IS TRULY REAL?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: *(Sings.)*

TELL ME, PRAY TELL ME

WHAT IS TRULY REAL?

IS IT SOMETHING YOU SEE?

IS IT SOMETHING YOU FEEL?

THERE'S A WARMTH DEEP INSIDE

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I CAN'T HIDE THE FACT I'M ALL AGLOW
 GOSH, IT MUST BE GENUINE
 FOR IT COULD MELT COLD WINTER'S SNOW.

SKIN HORSE:

REAL ISN'T HOW YOU LOOK
 OR HOW YOU ARE MADE
 WHEN A CHILD LOVES YOU A LONG TIME
 MAYBE THEN YOU'LL MAKE THE GRADE.
 SOMETIMES THE REAL WORLD CAN
 PLAY TRICKS ON YOUR EYES
 BUT IF YOUR HEART IS SENSITIVE
 NOT ARTIFICIAL OR UNWISE
 WHAT IS TRULY REAL CAN BE MORE
 THAN YOU REALIZE.

VELVETEEN RABBIT:

EV'RY TIME I'M HELD REAL CLOSE,
(Raises paw to chest.) I FEEL A LITTLE POUNDING START

SKIN HORSE: *(Scholarly.)*

THAT WOULD BE SOME EVIDENCE
 OF THE PRESENCE OF A HEART.

VELVETEEN RABBIT:

AND WHEN IT'S A VERY COLD NIGHT
 AND I'M BEING HELD REAL TIGHT
 I START TO FEEL A LITTLE WARM

SKIN HORSE:

A SLIGHT TEMP'RATURE
 BUT NO CAUSE FOR ALARM.

VELVETEEN RABBIT:

WILL I BE ABLE TO EAT A MEAL
 OF CARROTS AND CABBAGES?

SKIN HORSE nods slightly.

ARTICHOKES AND RADISHES?

SKIN HORSE nods significantly.

TENDER AND YUMMY
 TO FILL MY TUMMY?

SKIN HORSE:

YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE STUFFED!

VELVETEEN RABBIT:

I AM!

BOTH:

REAL ISN'T HOW YOU LOOK
OR HOW YOU ARE MADE
WHEN A CHILD LOVES YOU A LONG TIME

VELVETEEN RABBIT:

MAYBE THEN I'LL MAKE THE GRADE.

BOTH:

SOMETIMES THE REAL WORLD CAN
PLAY TRICKS ON YOUR EYES
BUT IF YOUR HEART IS SENSITIVE
NOT ARTIFICIAL OR UNWISE
WHAT IS TRULY REAL CAN BE MORE
THAN YOU REALIZE.

There is a momentary pause.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Oh, I wish I were truly real. I mean, I wish I could hug the Boy back. It's so nice to be hugged that it must be ever so wonderful to give them.

SKIN HORSE: Yes. The Mouse will never feel that. He is made of metal and nobody hugs metal, Rabbit.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Are you real, Horse?

SKIN HORSE: (*Whistfully.*) No, no I'm not. But I thought I could be once; I mean I felt it so strong... I know that if I'd been just a little better, I could be real.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Does it hurt to be real?

SKIN HORSE: Sometimes. But when you're Real, you don't mind being hurt.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Does it happen all at once, like the Mouse being wound up?

SKIN HORSE: No. It takes a long time. You don't turn real, you become real. That's why it doesn't often happen to toys that break easily or have sharp edges. By the time you are real, most of your hair has been loved off, you have patches and worn spots, and maybe even you're ripped and resewn. But that doesn't matter at all. Rabbit, once you become real, you can't ever be ugly, except to the ones who will never understand.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Then are you real forever?

SKIN HORSE: Not forever. But for a very long time. Remember, even real animals do not go on forever. But their lives are filled with wonder and joy every minute, and they are capable of giving and returning a lot of love.

There is a great noise offstage outside the main door. The shadow of NANA falls into the nursery from without. It is huge, denoting a person of normal size, but quite monstrous against the scale of the nursery.

NANA: *(Offstage, to BOY.)* Now child, be good; it's time for you to go to bed.

BOY: *(Offstage.)* But I don't wanna!

NANA: *(Offstage.)* Be a good boy, and do as I say... *(Coaxing.)* You can take one of your toys with you.

BOY: *(Offstage.)* Really?

NANA: *(Offstage.)* Yes, pick one and let's go to bed. Do you want your Mouse?

BOY: *(Offstage. Decidedly.)* No! *(He enters the nursery, looking at all his toys.)*

NANA: *(Offstage.)* Hurry up, child, it's getting late.

BOY: I will. *(He rubs the SKIN HORSE.)* Hello, Horsey. *(Then he sees the VELVETEEN RABBIT.)* Rabbit! I want the rabbit!

NANA: *(Offstage.)* Very well; bring it along.

BOY: Come on, Rabbit, it's past your bedtime. Let's go. *(He grabs the VELVETEEN RABBIT and drags it offstage.)*

Slow fade to blackout. In the darkness, the actors playing the VELVETEEN RABBIT and the SKIN HORSE reset themselves to a prominent place in the nursery. If possible, both stuffed animals should look slightly shabbier in this second scene. The picture outside the nursery window is changed to show that Spring has come. The lights come up again.

SCENE 2

A Spring morning in the nursery

VELVETEEN RABBIT: *(To the SKIN HORSE.)* Have you noticed how nice the days are becoming, Horse? It used to feel so cold over near that window, and now...

SKIN HORSE: Yes, that happens every year. You're very new, so you don't know, but every few weeks a season changes. It will get warmer and warmer *(With a sigh.)* But then it will get cold again.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I hope not too soon; I like the warmth.

SKIN HORSE: We have a good long time, Rabbit.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: What's it called?

SKIN HORSE: What, the season?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Yes, the season. This warming of the sun and greening of the world; what's it called?

SKIN HORSE: It's called Spring, Rabbit.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Spring! My what a nice name! I wish I could feel it up close. *(Sighs.)* Spring!

SONG: SPRING

SKIN HORSE:

SPRING, SPRING,
THE TASSEL-TIME OF SPRING!

VELVETEEN RABBIT:

SPRING, IT HAS A NICE RING.

SKIN HORSE:

WARMER DAYS,
SO MUCH LONGER AND SUNNIER,
WIDER SMILES
EVEN OLD JOKES SEEM FUNNIER
WHEELBARROW RIDES
SOME SLOW, SOME FAST!
A BASKETFUL OF GOODIES
FOR A PICNIC IN THE GRASS!

SKIN HORSE:

SPRING, SPRING
THE CHILDHOOD OF THE YEAR,

VELVETEEN RABBIT:

CAN'T WAIT TO SPRING INTO GEAR!

SKIN HORSE: (*Warning.*)

BUT YOU CAN'T STAY OUTSIDE TOO LONG,
'CAUSE THERE'S LOTS OF DEW ON THE GROUND;
IF YOU GO "ROUGHING"
YOU'LL GET SOAKED TO YOUR STUFFING
AND THE EARTH WILL RUB THE PINK FROM YOUR NOSE.

VELVETEEN RABBIT:

AND I DON'T HAVE A CHANGE OF CLOTHES.

SKIN HORSE:

SPRING, SPRING,
(*Agreeing.*) IT HAS A NICE RING.

VELVETEEN RABBIT:

LIKE A TELEPHONE ON A TABLE!

SKIN HORSE gives him a strange look.

BOTH:

SPRING, SPRING,
THE TASSEL-TIME OF SPRING!

VELVETEEN RABBIT:

MY COAT MAY END UP LOOKING LIKE SABLE!

SKIN HORSE:

HOW'S THAT GOOD BUDDY?

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VELVETEEN RABBIT:

VERY SIMPLE, IT'LL GET MUDDY!

They BOTH laugh.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Somehow it just warms my insides to feel that bright sunshine. I wish we really could go outside, to jump and play, but I suppose that's impossible.

SKIN HORSE: No, not impossible... The Boy sometimes takes his favorite toys out into the garden. If you're very lucky, you might be chosen.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I hope so.

SKIN HORSE: Real Horses and Real Rabbits play outside in the sun all the time.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: They do?

SKIN HORSE: Yes, I've seen them. Once I remember the Boy took me out and I watched a Real Horse graze. You cannot imagine how it is outside the window, Rabbit. Outside, there is no ceiling except patches of fluffy things called clouds, that fly terrifically high and can change their shape to be whatever they want.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Did you see Real Rabbits?

SKIN HORSE: Not personally, but I know they exist. In fact, there are said to be lots of Real Rabbits in the garden.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I hope to meet some one day.

SKIN HORSE: Oh?

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Yes. I imagine that they will be able to tell me the secrets I'll need if I become real myself.

SKIN HORSE: I see.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Horse, do you ever think I could become real? I want to with all my stuffing.

SKIN HORSE: Wanting to is not enough. Remember that Mouse that used to run around here before he got over-wound and they threw him away? He wanted to be real. He wanted to be real so bad that he fooled himself into believing he was real.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I don't understand.

SKIN HORSE: The Mouse thought that if he could convince everyone that he was real by making a big show of his gear-box insides and his ability to run—well, that alone would make him real. In the end, the only one he convinced was himself.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: So how do I become real, Horse?

SKIN HORSE: There is only one way, and it can be painful. You must love. You must give of yourself until your velveteen sides rip and your stuffing falls out. You must love forever and hope that you are loved in return. And if you are loved greatly enough then maybe, just maybe, you can become real.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: It sure doesn't sound easy.

SKIN HORSE: It's not. Take it from one who has tried and failed. Miracles do not come cheaply, Rabbit.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: That makes me want it all the more.

SKIN HORSE: Good. Then there's a chance for you.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: Why did you give up?

SKIN HORSE: I didn't. I'm still trying. But I'm old, and the Boy is careless about me. Look at my hide, here, so worn, so shabby. My seams are widening; such a disgrace. I tell you though, if you do make it, Rabbit, I shall not be a total failure, because you are my friend, and winning is always teamwork.

There are muffled voices outside the main door. The shadow of NANA falls largely into the center stage.

BOY: (*Offstage.*) —need my toys, Nana!

NANA: (*Offstage.*) Oh go ahead, then, Boy, pick one of your toys. Just one, mind! You're sure to get it full of mud outside anyway and it'll take forever to wash.

BOY: (*Offstage.*) Oh, thank you, thank you! (*He enters.*)

NANA: (*Offstage.*) Now do hurry!

BOY: (*Trying to decide which toy to take, he looks all around.*) I think I'll take...

NANA: (*Offstage.*) Come on, pick one!

BOY: (*Triumphantly.*) The Bunny!

NANA: (*Offstage.*) Oh, not the Rabbit! It will get all dirty outside in the grass. Why don't you take your model airplane? Or the Boat?

The BOY comes over to the VELVETEEN RABBIT and touches him.

BOY: I want my Bunny!

NANA: Take your riding car, why don't you?

SONG: GIVE ME MY BUNNY!

BOY: *(Singing.)*

OF ALL THE TOYS I'VE EVER KNOWN,
OF ANIMALS I'VE PETTED,
AND KITES I'VE FLOWN,
BUNNY, I WOULDN'T TRADE YOU
FOR ALL THE MONEY IN GREAT BRITAIN.
GUESS I'M SMITTEN WITH YOUR CHARMS
LOVE TO HOLD YOU IN MY ARMS.

IF I HAD TO CHOSE WHICH TOY WAS MY HONEY
I'D SAY, "GIVE ME MY BUNNY!
GIVE ME MY BUNNY!"
NANA SAYS YOUR HEART IS MADE OF SAWDUST
IT MAY BE RAW DUST
BUT IT'S WARMER THAN STARDUST
YOUR BOOT-BUTTON EYES MAY HAVE LOST THEIR POLISH
BUT TIME WILL NEVER EVER DEMOLISH
THEIR WISDOM AND BEAUTY
TO ME YOU'LL ALWAYS BE A CUTIE.

SO I'LL KEEP REPEATING LONG AFTER IT SOUNDS FUNNY
I'LL SAY, "GIVE ME MY BUNNY!
GIVE ME MY BUNNY!"
GIMME, GIMME, GIMME, GIMME, GIMME, GIMME!
GIVE ME MY BUNNY!!

NANA: *(Offstage.)* Oh, you don't want that old thing! It's such a silly toy to take outside!

BOY: *(Defensive.)* Don't call him a toy! I love my Bunny! My Bunny's REAL!

NANA: *(Offstage.)* Oh, very well, go and take it. But wipe it's face with your 'kerchief first; it's got some water about the eyes.

Fadeout.

SCENE 3*High Summer in the Nursery*

AT RISE: *Again, the picture outside the window is changed, this time to denote high summer. The window is opened a little to let in a warm breeze. VELVETEEN RABBIT is alone in the middle of the room, his velveteen fur in a most disreputable condition; the SKIN HORSE is gone.*

VELVETEEN RABBIT: I really miss that old Horse. He used to be such good company. He said himself he was getting old; but there he was one day with the stuffing all out of him, lying on the floor. The one they call Nana cleaned it up and took him away. First the Mouse and now him. I wish he were still here. He knew so much. He might even be able to tell me what the name of the new season is. *(Generally, to audience.)* Do you know? It's hot now, and the sun is very shiny. I'm glad that they leave the window open for the breeze. It's no fun wearing this velveteen coat all the time! Oh, the Boy calls for me almost every day now. During the springtime, we used to go outside and he would sit me up in the green grass, which is only proper for the Real Rabbit I have become. Oh, yes, I'm a Real Rabbit, now, the little boy said so. Anyway, I would sit there in the green grass and think about hopping and running about. Now this surprises me, because I always believed that Real Rabbits not only thought about running and playing, but actually did it, without anybody pushing them or holding them up. No matter, the Boy said I was real; therefore I must be real. And there's been another surprise: Lately he hasn't been taking me outside at all. You would think we would go outside a lot in this warm weather and play while it was pleasant. But we don't. When he calls for me, which is nearly every day, Nana picks me up and takes me to his room and puts me close to him in his little bed and he hugs me and we go to sleep. It feels wonderful to be so close to him, but why do you suppose he stays in bed all day and won't go out into the sunshine? Real people do mysterious things, I guess. That is the joy of being real. To be able to do things on your own. To rely on your friends for comfort and warmth, to give your respect and love to them freely, but to choose

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to do these things from your own heart and mind. That is what separates those toys from us real animals; a toy Rabbit must stay and be told what to do, but a Real Rabbit chooses to stay even though he could run away anytime. Free choice. That's what I have. Free choice. I am so happy to be Real.

The window is pushed a little more open, and the two REAL RABBITS scamper in, first one, looking to see if the coast is clear, then the other.

FIRST REAL RABBIT: C'mon; it's safe! There are no humans here.

SECOND REAL RABBIT: You sure? They're pretty tricky.

FIRST REAL RABBIT: I'm sure. Look, nothing here but these toys.

SECOND REAL RABBIT: (*Sniffing one.*) They seem safe. Any food?

FIRST REAL RABBIT: Haven't seen any yet. There's always nibbles of some kind in these Man-homes.

SONG: FOOD

FIRST REAL RABBIT:

Food!

SECOND REAL RABBIT:

Food!

FIRST REAL RABBIT:

F-O-O-D!

SECOND REAL RABBIT:

F-O-O-D!

FIRST REAL RABBIT:

F-O-O-D!

SECOND REAL RABBIT:

F-O-O-D!

BOTH:

Food!



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