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Dramatic Publishing

A Lonely Boy's Guide to Survival (and Werewolves)



Comedy by Ernie Nolan

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A Lonely Boy's Guide to Survival (and Werewolves)

Comedy. By Ernie Nolan. *Cast: 3m., 1w. with doubling. May be expanded to 4m., 2w., plus extras.* It's 1954, and even though he has just become a Badger Scout, young Skipper McCready's life is a big mess. His grumpy next-door neighbor is upset with him all the time; his friend Sally Ann is obsessed with being a girl detective; and his best friend, Lucky, a dog, has gone missing. To top it all off, his mother wants him to befriend the new weird kid in Rolling Meadows, Jonathan Van, a bookish boy with outlandish tales of his monster-hunting father. With his scout survival guide in hand, Skipper sets off with his friends to solve the mystery of Lucky's disappearance. Is it really possible there's a werewolf loose, or are Jonathan's monster-filled tales too incredible to believe? Exploring the topics of friendship, self-reliance, loss and grief, Skipper begins to wonder if the answers to life's uncertainties may be found in his Badger Scout survival guide or if anything—or anyone—is truly what they seem. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Code: LK7.*

*Cover: La Jolla Playhouse, La Jolla, Calif., featuring Ian Littleworth and Jason Frank.
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Comedy by
ERNIE NOLAN



Dramatic Publishing Company

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ERNIE NOLAN

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(A LONELY BOY'S GUIDE TO SURVIVAL (AND WEREWOLVES))

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“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

To Steve, Michael, Shirley, Kim Peter and Deirdre
who made me feel anything but lonely on this adventure.

A Lonely Boy's Guide to Survival (and Werewolves) was presented as a rehearsed reading in May 2012, at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, as part of New Visions/New Voices. The premier production was commissioned by La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego in February 2013 and directed by Michael J. Bobbitt.

Cast

Vivian/Sally Ann/Krampus/Werewolf Olivia Espinosa
Skipper Jason Frank
Jonathan Ian Littleworth
Culliford/Mr. Survival Guide/Abraham Van..... Victor Morris

Production Crew

Dramaturg Shirley Fishman
Director of Education & Outreach Stephen McCormick
Youth Advisor Noah Wilson
Scenic Designer JR Bruce
Costume Designer Erick Sundquist
Sound Designer Nick Drashner
Stage Manager Leighann Enos
Production Assistant..... Kendra Stockton

A Lonely Boy's Guide to Survival (and Werewolves)

CHARACTERS

SKIPPER McCREADY: An upstanding, American 10-year-old boy.

VIVIAN McCREADY: Skipper's perfectionist, housewife mother.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE: The embodiment of all that is the Badger Scouts of America.

SALLY ANN JOHNSON: An intelligent and precocious 10-year-old girl.

JONATHAN VAN: A peculiar but edgy 12-year-old boy.

MR. JOSIAH (OLD MAN) CULLIFORD: An exasperated elderly neighbor.

ABRAHAM VAN: Jonathan's monster-hunting, hero father.

KRAMPUS: A hideous demon with a goat head.

WEREWOLF: A howling, lurking creature under the full moon.

SETTING

Rolling Meadows, USA:

The McCready family's backyard, on the street, the front door of the Van family home and the library.

TIME

1954.

A Lonely Boy's Guide to Survival (and Werewolves)

(It is 1954. Rolling Meadows, USA. The backyard of the McCready family home. SKIPPER McCREADY, an up-standing, American 10-year-old boy, bursts into the backyard. He carries a copy of The Official Badger Scout Guide to Survival.)

SKIPPER *(calling)*. Lucky! Lucky, I'm home. I got something to show ya. Where are ya? *(Pauses for second expecting LUCKY to enter.)* Come on out and quit playin'. As soon as I got this at the Scout meeting, I knew I just had to show it to you. *(Holds up a guidebook.)* The Official Badger Scout Guide to Survival. Jeepers.

(SKIPPER opens the book. As he reads, MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE is revealed.)

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE & SKIPPER. Congratulations!
This is a big moment ...

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. You are now officially one of the Badger Scouts of America.

SKIPPER. Jimminy Christmas!

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. You've joined because you are growing up in a complicated world ...

SKIPPER. Tell me about it. Have you ever learned fractions?

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. You've joined because you want to meet boys who will be your friends for the rest of your life ...

SKIPPER. That's a long time.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. You've joined because you seek to find out what it takes to survive in the wilderness of today—living your life according to The Five Pillars of Badger Scouting: obedience, courtesy, intelligence, craft and trust.

SKIPPER. Gosh. Those don't sound easy.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. They're not. But like the mighty badger, who keeps on digging no matter the circumstances, you must dedicate yourself to The Five Pillars of Badger Scouting and never give them up.

SKIPPER. I won't give them up. Badger promise.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. As you set your Badger compass, turn to someone for guidance. Reach out to that one soul who helps mold your character and keeps you quick on your feet.

SKIPPER. Then I'll get Lucky.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Luck has nothing to do with it, son.

SKIPPER. Not luck. Lucky, my best friend in the whole world.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Is he also a Scout?

SKIPPER. No, Mr. Survival Guide. He's a dog. You gotta meet him.

(Lucky does not come running. MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE disappears.)

SKIPPER *(cont'd)*. He must still be asleep in his doghouse, that Mr. Lazy. Luuuuuuckckckckcyyyyy?!

(SKIPPER starts in the direction of the doghouse. VIVIAN McCREADY, SKIPPER's perfectionist, housewife mother, quickly enters holding a covered CorningWare dish and stops SKIPPER before he can look inside.)

VIVIAN. Skipper! Goodness, Skipper. You're louder than last night's storm.

SKIPPER. I was just calling for Lucky, Mom. I want him to see my *Official Badger Scout Guide to Survival*.

VIVIAN. Skipper, there isn't time for that.

SKIPPER. But ...

VIVIAN. I need you to run an errand for me. There's still a lot to do before the members of the Rolling Meadows Ladies' Book Circle arrive. Everything has to be perfect or I'll never be able to show my face at meetings again. Here. (*Hands the dish to SKIPPER.*) Take this over straight away to ...

SKIPPER. What is it?

VIVIAN. Zesty lemon meringue surprise.

SKIPPER. It doesn't smell like lemon.

VIVIAN. There isn't any lemon in it at all.

SKIPPER. Then what's the flavor?

VIVIAN. Orange. (*Beat*) Surprise!

SKIPPER. Then why isn't it a zesty orange meringue?

VIVIAN. Because then it wouldn't be a surprise. I made three. One to impress the ladies at the meeting, a second for Mr. Culliford who helped me this morning and this one for our new neighbors at 1897 Harker Way. I met Mrs. Van at the store yesterday and ...

SKIPPER. Mrs. Van? Awww, jeezy creezy!

VIVIAN. Language, Skipper.

SKIPPER. Mom, I can't take this over there. Mrs. Van is Jonathan Van's mother. That kid's a real creeper, downright wacko. Sally Ann Johnson says he's a certifiable lunatic.

VIVIAN. How on earth did she learn those words?

SKIPPER. Working at the library. She's picked up all sorts of words and phrases like lunatic, neurotic, hypochondriac, Oedipus Complex ...

VIVIAN. Skipper, there simply isn't time for this. Now run along.

SKIPPER. Then can I show Lucky my survival guide?

VIVIAN (*quickly*). No. As soon as you're finished, go next door to Mr. Culliford's. He needs to speak to you about something important.

SKIPPER. Jeez Louise. What'd I do to Old Man Culliford now?

VIVIAN. Skipper, how many times have I told you, it's not polite to refer to our next door neighbor that way? It doesn't show respect. According to *Mother's Little Companion* magazine, "Manners reflect what's inside you."

SKIPPER. I thought it was just guts inside us.

VIVIAN. Skipper, calling our neighbor "old man" is bad Badger Scout behavior. Mr. Culliford is a kind and helpful gentleman who always looks in on us when your father's away. You wouldn't want me to mention your disrespectful attitude to you father when he returns from his business trip would you?

SKIPPER. No.

VIVIAN. Good. (*A telephone rings inside the house.*) Oh dear, I'm sure that's the president of the book circle calling to make sure that I have enough deviled eggs for the meeting. Martha Mukusky ran out last month which made the discussion of *The Great Gatsby* not so great. Now march on over to 1897 Harker Way and then straight next door to Mr. Culliford's. (*Kisses his forehead and quickly exits into the house.*)

SKIPPER. Aww for the love of Mike! (*Looks at his guide-book.*) Mr. Survival Guide, do I really have to do this?

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE (*appearing*). Yes, of course. You see the first Pillar of Badger Scouting is obedience. When your mother and father request you do something, you must do it immediately and cheerfully.

SKIPPER. Really? Even if ...

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Even if you happen to be in the middle of a game or an exciting television program.

SKIPPER. Well, this would certainly be easier if I could take Lucky with me?

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Go ahead. It's easier to take on a project with help from someone else. For friendship is like a mirror. With it you are never alone.

SKIPPER. Thanks Mr. Survival Guide, you're the best.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Well ... I am pretty amazing.

SKIPPER (*runs over to Lucky's doghouse and looks inside*).

Lucky. It's time to go on an errand. (*Pause. Sees there's no response.*) What are you doing, boy? I hope you're not chewing on one of Dad's shoes again ... (*Partially climbs into the doghouse.*) He's not in his house. (*Backs up and takes out a dog collar from inside the house.*) And this is his collar. What's he doing without it? He was wearing it last night when I came to say good night.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. You don't think he was frightened off by the storm, do you?

SKIPPER. Lucky's no scaredy cat. Unless ...

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Unless?

SKIPPER. The last time Lucky barked at Old Man Culliford, he threatened to ship him off to Siberia. You don't think that's why he wants to talk to me, do you?

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. I don't know. You gotta deliver that dessert so you can find out.

SKIPPER. I'm on it, Mr. Survival Guide!

(SKIPPER bolts from his backyard holding on to his mother's dessert, leaving MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE behind. After a distance, he almost runs right into SALLY ANN JOHNSON, who's face is deep into her book.)

SALLY ANN. Hey.

SKIPPER. Sally Ann!

SALLY ANN (*recovers from the near collision and recognizes who almost ran her down*). Skip?! What's the deal? You on the lam? Swipe some *do-re-mi* from your mom's purse?

SKIPPER. Huh?

SALLY ANN. Don't get my lingo? It's detective talk from *Nelly Darwin, Girl Detective, and the Mystery of the Run-away Robbery*. It just arrived at the library this week. I'm the first in Rolling Meadows to check it out.

SKIPPER. Does it teach you how to find a missing dog?

SALLY ANN. Don't tell me Lucky's been *lifted*.

SKIPPER. All I know is that he's missing and that Old Man Culliford wants to talk to me about "something."

SALLY ANN. A real life mystery! Let me have a crack at it, Skip. I'll solve it for sure.

SKIPPER. Detective Johnson, it's all yours.

SALLY ANN. My very first case. This is so exciting! It's just like Nelly Darwin in *The Mysterious Mystery* ... No, more like *Mystery for Breakfast*.

SKIPPER. I haven't read any of those books, Sally Ann.

SALLY ANN. Well, they all start with Nelly in her blue convertible with her friends ... and there's a storm ... and ...

SKIPPER. If you're going to be a detective, shouldn't you start by gathering the facts of my case, Sally Ann?

SALLY ANN. Yes of course. Let's *fan this sucker*. So, when was the last time you saw the sweet pea?

SKIPPER. Last night before I went to bed.

SALLY ANN. Interesting. Any suspects?

SKIPPER. Maybe. Old Man Culliford's always got some kind of problem with him.

SALLY ANN. Any clues on the scene?

SKIPPER. Like?

SALLY ANN. Animal hairs? Claw marks? Werewolf tracks?

SKIPPER. Werewolf what? (*Laughs at what he thinks is SALLY ANN's crazy suggestion.*)

SALLY ANN. Just something I read in a magazine. I'll find the *skunk* that did this *rip job*.

SKIPPER. Are you sure?

SALLY ANN. I can do this. Nelly Darwin saves orphans, old people and circus animals all the time.

SKIPPER. But she's just a character in a book.

SALLY ANN. Little do you know, the Nelly Darwin mysteries are endorsed by the FBI. Now we gotta cut the *squawk*, head down to the library, and get the skinny on pet crimes in the greater Rolling Meadows area. Let's breeze.

SKIPPER. Sorry, Sally Ann. I can't. I have to go to 1897 Har-ker Way and then ...

SALLY ANN. 1897? That's the lunatic's house?!

SKIPPER. I have to deliver this welcome dessert to his family.

SALLY ANN. You just don't welcome insanity like that to the neighborhood.

SKIPPER. My mother does I guess.

SALLY ANN. I gotta feeling that Jonathan kid's got some sort of racket going on.

SKIPPER. It's creepy the way he's always staring at people.

SALLY ANN. And he's smelly too. Yesterday he tried to *erase* Bertha Jenkins, tied her to a tree on the playground.

SKIPPER. Why'd he do that?

SALLY ANN. 'Cause all his *cups ain't in the cupboard!*

SKIPPER. Well ...

(SKIPPER, torn with conflicted feelings, quickly looks at his guidebook. MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE appears.)

SKIPPER (*cont'd*). Mr. Survival Guide, do I really have to go visit that nutcase?

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Absolutely. A good Scout is always practicing courtesy, the second of The Five Pillars of Badger Scouting. He looks for opportunities to be polite and do good deeds no matter the circumstances. These acts of kindness can be big things like saving a human life or fighting a forest fire, but they can also be as small as ...

SKIPPER. Delivering a dessert to a freaky new neighbor.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Exactly. So hop to it!

SKIPPER. Sorry Sally Ann, I can't go with you now. I have to take this to the Vans.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Now that's a Badger Scout.

SALLY ANN. Well then, you're gonna need my lucky rabbit's foot. I'll be waiting to rendezvous at the library. By then, we're bound to have discovered more clues to *The Case of the Missing Mutt*.

(SALLY ANN exits. SKIPPER travels to the front door of 1897 Harker Way, the Van's home.)

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Ready, Scout? No more slouching. *(Begins to shout like a drill sergeant.)* Left-right-left-right. Forward march.

SKIPPER. Yes, sir.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Stand tall.

SKIPPER. Yes, sir.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Shoulders back.

SKIPPER. Yes, sir.

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Ring the doorbell.

SKIPPER. Yes, sir. And?

MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE. Smile warmly and confidently. You're a Badger Scout after all.

(MR. SURVIVAL GUIDE exits. SKIPPER rings the doorbell. He waits a few moments. No one answers.)

SKIPPER. Hello anyone home? *(Rings the bell a second time. Stands tall and smiles again. No one answers.)* Mrs. Van? Mr. Van? *(Gulps.)* Jonathan? *(Pause. In reaction to JONATHAN's name, he takes out his rabbit's foot and rubs it. Rings the doorbell for a third time. No one answers.)* OK ... I tried. I'll leave this right here then.

(SKIPPER heaves a sigh of relief, leaves the dessert next to the door and begins to walk away when ... The door slowly creaks open and a voice is heard.)

JONATHAN *(from inside the house still)*. Don't I know you?

(JONATHAN VAN, an awkward, bookish boy of 12 steps out.)

JONATHAN *(cont'd)*. From school, Skippy something ... isn't it?

SKIPPER. Uh huh.

JONATHAN. What's this?

SKIPPER. A zesty lemon meringue surprise.

JONATHAN. Doesn't smell like lemon.

SKIPPER. That's 'cause it isn't.

JONATHAN *(takes a pause to figure things out)*. I don't get it.

SKIPPER. Well, you take a bite thinking it's lemon, but it's really orange. *(Beat.)* Surprise!

JONATHAN. Who would ever make such a lame dessert?

SKIPPER. My mom, you lunatic.

JONATHAN. Big word you got there Skippy, know what it means?

SKIPPER. It means that you're ... *(Struggles to find the right word.)* weird!

JONATHAN. I'm weird? What's that you're holding?

SKIPPER. A rabbit's foot.

JONATHAN. That's weird.

SKIPPER. No, it isn't. It's to give me good luck.

JONATHAN. Lucky you. Unlucky rabbit.

(Pause. SKIPPER thinks for a moment, looks at the rabbit's foot and then tucks it in to a pocket.)

SKIPPER. Hardy har-har. Listen, tell your mom that my mom will give her a call.

JONATHAN. She's not home. She's working at the hospital.

SKIPPER. Well, let your dad know ...

JONATHAN. Not here either.

SKIPPER. You're home all alone?

JONATHAN. Happens all the time, Skippy.

SKIPPER. Skipper. My name is Skipper. Skippy is peanut butter. I am not peanut butter. (*A quiet pause.*) Look, my mom's just trying to do something nice. Hope you like the dessert. See you at school Monday. (*Starts to leave.*)

JONATHAN. Hey, I didn't mean to be a jerk. We've lived here two weeks and no one's come to visit.

SKIPPER (*sarcastically*). I wonder why?

JONATHAN. I didn't know who was at the door. I thought you might be a zombie. (*Begins to moan and walk like a zombie.*)

SKIPPER. Is that why you tied up Bertha Jenkins at school? Because you thought she was a zombie?

JONATHAN. She's not a zombie. She's a witch.

SKIPPER. Bertha's not a witch. She's a Presbyterian.

JONATHAN. The only way to teach witches a lesson is to throw water on them and melt them.

SKIPPER. You've seen one too many monster movies.

JONATHAN. I don't need to see movies to know about monsters. My life is full of them.

SKIPPER. Instead of this monster malarkey you should fill your time with something worthwhile like the Badger Scouts.

JONATHAN. The Badger Scouts are pinheads.

SKIPPER. No they're not.

JONATHAN. They're fake heroes. Now if you want to see a real hero you should see my dad, Abraham Van. He deals with danger every day. He's a member of the W.W.O.M.H.

SKIPPER. Is that like the Kiwanis Club?

JONATHAN. No. It's the World Wide Order of Monster Hunters.