

PLAY SYNOPSIS:

This production of THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH will tell the story of your typical American family going through apocalypse after apocalypse, over and over and over again with all the resilience they can muster.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN:

- **MR. ANTROBUS** – Male. 30's – 50's. Inventor of the wheel, the lever and the alphabet. An intellectual, but a regular fellow and a self – made man. Robust, excitable, optimistic, enthusiastic and capable of wonder, he's someone you root for to succeed. He is also bound by certain traditional ways of viewing the world and his family, expects to get his own way at all times and gets angry when he doesn't. Deeply inspired by books and the ideas of great thinkers throughout history. He loves his family yet is distracted by temptations.
- **MRS. ANTROBUS** – Female. 30's – 50's. Devoted wife and loving mother. Endlessly smart, practical and steady. Persistent and fierce defender of her family. She endures her husband's flaws, her children's disobedience and each crisis with energy and determination to survive. Her driving force is her desire to keep her family and the home intact and stable. She's a wise and brilliant tactician who knows she must rely on her strength to lead her family to safety.
- **SABINA** – Female. 20's – 40's. She is both a stock character in the play and is also the actress who plays the character. Wildly comic and joyfully irreverent, she veers from glittering, mad optimism to deep cynicism and despair. You root for her even when she's tearing everything apart. She breaks the 4th wall with ease and the audience loves her for it. We see her in different eras and guises: as a maid in a suburban household; as the winner of a beauty contest in Atlantic City who has decided she will marry Mr. Antrobus; and as the survivor of a terrible war, profoundly affected by the experience.
- **GLADYS** – Female. Teens – 20's. Daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Antrobus. Somewhat naive, she's led a sheltered life, but is beginning to express a rebellious side and to make efforts to stand out regardless of how little attention is paid to her. Constantly being reprimanded by her parents to remain the innocent, well behaved, perfect young lady Mr. Antrobus thinks she is. We see her grow from a teen to a young woman. Role may be plaid by one or multiple performers.
- **HENRY** – Male. Teens – 20's. Son of Mr. & Mrs. Antrobus. Rebellious, alienated, full of angst and anger, he feels completely constrained by his father and the life he leads. Although he displays evidence of remorse and moments of sweetness, he sees violence as his only way to find a life of freedom. Role may be plaid by one or multiple performers.
- **FITZPATRICK**– Male. 30's – 50's. A professional stage manager. Practical, organized, responsible. Highly intelligent and capable, but anxious and neurotic. Tries hard to keep it together when things don't go as they are supposed to and when actors step outside the bounds of expected behavior. Comfortable behind the scenes, but awkward in front of an audience.
- **STAGE HANDS** – Two brief speaking cameos in Act I to repair scenery.
- **JUDGE MOSES** – Older, possibly physically imposing, has been on this Earth for many years. One of many refugees who arrive at the Antrobus home in Act 1. May sing. Masked character – pantomime experience a plus.
- **HOMER**– Older, meditative, thoughtful. One of many refugees who arrive at the Antrobus home in Act I. May sing and/or play guitar/ukulele. Masked character – pantomime experience a plus.
- **MUSES** – Three Sisters who enter the Antrobus home in Act I along with the other refugees. May sing. Masked character – pantomime experience a plus.
- **GREAT APE** – Master of Ceremonies for the Annual Convention of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Mammals. Will be performed wearing a rubber mask.
- **CONVEENERS** – Attendees of the Annual Convention of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Mammals who appear throughout Act II. They engage in all sorts of revelry despite the Fortune Teller's warnings about what's to come and taunt Mr. Antrobus about being domesticated and tied to his family. All will wear rubber animal masks.
- **FORTUNE TELLER** – Any gender identity. 40's – 60's. Vivid. Eccentric. World weary – but funny and likeable in their deep suspicion of the world. Gives advice to all and makes grand prophecies.
- **REPORTER** – Somewhat officious, has the exasperating task of coaxing and focusing Mr. Antrobus to prepare for his broadcast to the world.
- **CAMERA MAN** – Assisting the Reporter in covering the convention. Video technology experience a plus.
- **BACKSTAGE CREW & FRONT OF HOUSE STAFF** – Any gender identity. Four non-actors called forward in Act III for brief speaking cameos to replace actors who are sick with food poisoning.

AUDITION SCENES:

Auditions for *The Skin of Our Teeth* will consist of readings from the following scenes. No preparation is necessary, but if interested in a particular role, please review that character's scene. Otherwise, we'll give out scenes based on who is present at auditions.

Sabina and Henry

Sabina is the family maid. In this scene, she is shallow, practical, authoritarian. Henry, a teenager, has returned from fighting in a war.

Sabina. Goodness! It's Henry! – *[He makes an angry gesture.]* Oh, I'm not afraid of you. The war's over, Henry Antrobus, and you're not any more important than any other unemployed. You go away and hide yourself, until we calm your father down.

Henry. The first thing to do is to burn up those old books; it's the ideas he gets out of those old books that... that makes the whole world so you can't live in it.

[He reels and starts kicking the books about.]

Sabina. You leave those books alone!! Mr. Antrobus is looking forward to them. Gracious sakes, Henry, you're so tired you can't stand up. Your mother and sister'll be here in a minute and we'll think what to do about you.

Henry. What did they ever care about me?

Sabina. There's that old whine again. All you people think you're not loved enough, nobody loves you. Well, you start being lovable and we'll love you.

Henry. I never talk about it. The last thing I want is anybody to pay any attention to me.

Sabina. I can hear it behind every word you say.

Henry. I want everybody to hate me.

Sabina. Yes, you've decided that's second best, but it's still the same thing.

Gladys and Mrs. Antrobus

Gladys is a nice, somewhat temperamental girl, especially fond of her father; age uncertain, possibly early teens. Mrs. Antrobus is a matron who is particularly concerned about her children. In this scene, Gladys is wearing red stockings. She covers for her brother Henry who is up to trouble offstage. The scene is lighthearted.

Mrs. Antrobus. Gladys!

Gladys. Mama, here I am.

Mrs. Antrobus. Gladys Antrobus!!! [*Looking at Gladys' stockings*] Where did you get those dreadful things?

Gladys. Wha-a-t? Papa liked the color.

Mrs. Antrobus. You go back to the hotel this minute!

Gladys. I won't. I won't. Papa liked the color.

Mrs. Antrobus. All right. All right. You stay here. I've a good mind to let your father see you that way. You stay right here.

Gladys. I... I don't want to stay if... if you don't think he'd like it.

Mrs. Antrobus. Oh... it's all one to me. I don't care what happens. I don't care if the biggest storm in the whole world comes. Let it come. [*She folds her hands.*] Where's your brother?

Gladys. He'll be here.

Mrs. Antrobus. Will he? Well, let him get into trouble. I don't care. I don't know where your father is, I'm sure.

Gladys. [*Peers offstage.*] I think he's... Mama, he's talking to the lady in the red dress.

Mrs. Antrobus. Is that so? [*Pause.*] We'll wait till he's through. Sit down here beside me and stop fidgeting... what are you crying about?

Gladys. You don't like my stockings.

The Fortune Teller

The Fortune Teller plies her trade on the Atlantic City boardwalk. Open to almost any type of actor.

Fortune Teller. *[Speaks to the audience.]* I tell the future. Nothing easier. Everybody's future is in their face. Nothing easier. I see a face among you now – I won't embarrass him by pointing him out, but, listen, it may be you: Next year the watchsprings inside you will crumple up. Death by regret, – – Type Y... And now what's the immediate future of our friends, the Antrobuses? Oh, you've seen it as well as I have, – – that dizziness of the head; that Great Man dizziness? The inventor of beer and gunpowder? The sudden fits of temper and then the long stretches of inertia?

[Later.]

Fortune Teller. *[Speaks to the audience.]* You know as well as I what's coming. Rain. Rain. Rain in floods. The deluge. But first you'll see shameful things – shameful things. Some of you will be saying: "Let him drown. He's not worth saving. Give the whole thing up." I can see it in your faces. But you're wrong. Keep your doubts and despairs to yourselves.

Mr. Antrobus

Mr. Antrobus gives a speech on the Atlantic City boardwalk after being elected President of mammals. Mr. Antrobus can be loving and wise as well as stern and bombastic; in this scene, the latter qualities are on display.

Mr. Antrobus. I think I can say, I think I can prophesy with complete... uh...with complete...With complete lack of confidence, that a new day of security is about to dawn. The watchwords of the closing year were – Work, Survive. I give you the watchwords for the future – Enjoy Yourselves. Before I close, however, I wish to answer one of those unjust and malicious accusations that were brought against me during this last electoral campaign. Ladies and gentlemen, the charge was made that at various points in my career I leaned toward joining some of the rival orders – that's a lie. As I told reporters of the Atlantic City Herald, I do not deny that a few months before my birth I hesitated between... uh... between pinfeathers and gill-breathing – and so did many of us here – but for the last million years I have been viviparous, hairy, and diaphragmatic.

[Applause.]

Mr. Antrobus and Henry

Mr. Antrobus and his son Henry come into serious conflict after they both return from war.

Henry. You don't have to think I'm any relation of yours. I haven't got any father or any mother, or brothers or sisters. And I don't want any. And what's more I haven't got anybody over me; and I never will have. I'm alone, and that's all I want to be: alone.

Mr. Antrobus. You're the last person I wanted to see. The sight of you dries up all my plans and hopes. I wish I were back at war still, because it's easier to fight you than to live with you. War's a pleasure – do you hear me? – War's a pleasure compared to what faces us now: trying to build up a peacetime with you in the middle of it.

Henry. I'm not going to be a part of any peacetime of yours. I'm going a long way from here and make my own world that's fit for man to live in. Where a man can be free, and have a chance, and do what he wants to do in his own way.

Mr. Antrobus. [*Hopeful.*] Henry, let's try again.

Henry. Try what? Living here? Speaking polite downtown to all the old men like you? Standing like a sheep at the street corner until the red light turns to green? Being a good boy and a good sheep, like all the stinking ideas you get out of your books? Oh, no. I'll make a world, and I'll show you.

Mr. Antrobus. [*Hard.*] How can you make a world for people to live in, unless you've first put order in yourself? Mark my words, I shall continue fighting you until my last breath as long as you mix up your idea of liberty with your idea of hogging everything for yourself. I shall have no pity on you.

Sabina

Two different scenes below for Sabina as the family maid and as the Everywoman character. In the first scene, in Act I, the actor playing Sabina grows frustrated when another actor fails to make an entrance and then breaks character, revealing what she really thinks of the play to the audience. In the second scene, from the end of Act III, the character Sabina expresses what's in her heart.

Sabina. Well... uh... this certainly is a fine American home... and – uh... everybody's very happy... and – uh... *[Suddenly flings pretense to the winds and coming downstage says with indignation.]* I can't invent any words for this play, and I'm glad I can't. I hate this play and every word in it. As for me, I don't understand a single word of it, anyway – all about the troubles the human race has gone through, there's a subject for you. Besides, the author hasn't made up his silly mind as to whether we're all living back in caves or in New Jersey today, and that's the way it is all the way through.

Sabina. *[Outburst.]* I didn't make this war. I didn't ask for it. And, in my opinion, after anybody's gone through what we've gone through, they have a right to grab what they can find. *[In tears.]* Oh, the world's an awful place, and you know it is. I used to think something could be done about it; but I know better now. I hate it. I hate it. *[To Mr. Antrobus.]* Can I have... can I have one to go to the movies? *[Mr. Antrobus gives her a beef cube she can barter for a movie ticket.]* Thank you. Mr. Antrobus, don't mind what I say. I'm just an ordinary girl. But you're a bright man, you're a very bright man, and of course you invented the alphabet and the wheel... and if you've got any other plans, my God, don't let me upset them. Only every now and then I've got to go to the movies. But if you have any ideas about improving the crazy old world, I'm really with you. I really am. Because it's... it's... Good night.