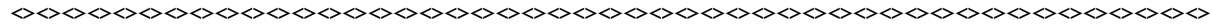


GRETCHEN GROUNDHOG, IT'S YOUR DAY!

By Abby Levine

Parts (17):	Narrator 1	Narrator 2	Narrator 3	Narrator 4	Narrator 5	Narrator 6
	Gretchen	Hester	Townsfolk(2)	Town Historian	Police Chief	
	Editor	Father Mayor	Visitor	Little Boy	Great-Uncle Gus	



Narrator 1: GRETCHEN GROUNDHOG, IT'S YOUR DAY!

Narrator 2: It was a dark and snowy night. Gretchen Groundhog sat in her burrow, worrying. In a few days it would be February 2, when the world would be watching the little town of Piccadilly.

Narrator 3: On that day, for the first time, Gretchen would step from her burrow to stand before TV cameras, newspaper reporters, tourists, all the townsfolk, and a brass band. Everyone would be waiting as Gretchen looked for her shadow.

Narrator 4: For as long as she could remember, it had been Great-Uncle Gus who searched for his shadow before the anxious crowd.

Narrator 5: If he saw it, there would be a roar of disappointment, for this meant winter would last six more dreary weeks. The band would play slow, sad music, and Gus would trudge back into his burrow.

Narrator 6: If there was no shadow, the band would play a lively tune, and everyone would cheer. Spring was around the corner!

Narrator 1: But now Great-Uncle Gus was too old. It was up to Gretchen, his only relative, to carry on. Gretchen told her great-uncle,

Gretchen: "I can't do it, I'm just too shy. I can't stand there with everyone looking at me."

Great-Uncle Gus: "You can do it. The first time is always the hardest,"

Narrator 2: said Great-Uncle Gus. But Gretchen knew she could not Go Out.

Narrator 3: "Gretchen's not Going Out!" The news flashed through Piccadilly.

Townsfolk: "What will we do?"

Narrator 3: the townsfolk asked each other.

Narrator 4: On January 30, there was a story about Gretchen on the front page of the Post. "PICCADILLY PUZZLED" the headline said.

Narrator 5: The story continued, "There has always been a Groundhog Day in Piccadilly. But this year, it seems Gretchen Groundhog will not Go Out. How will we plan if we do not know when winter will end?"

Narrator 6: The townsfolk stopped Gretchen on the street. They peppered her with questions.

Mayor: "Should we buy more salt to put on icy roads?"

Narrator 1: asked the mayor. A father asked,

Father: "Shall I chop more wood for my family?"

Little Boy: "When can the bears stop hibernating?"

Narrator 2: asked a little boy. Everyone begged.

Townsfolk: "Please, dear Gretchen, Go Out on Groundhog Day. Tell us when winter will end!"

Narrator 3: But Gretchen only shook her head.

Narrator 4: On January 31, Gretchen lit a cheery fire, but it did not help her mood. All day the doorbell chimed, the phone rang, e-mail erupted, and urgent letters plopped through the mail slot.

Narrator 5: Gretchen felt terrible. It seemed like the longest day of her life.

Narrator 6: On February 1, the town was in an uproar. Tourists filled the motels. In front of Gretchen's burrow, carpenters were building wooden stands for the crowd.

Narrator 1: The TV crews had arrived, and the band was practicing with squawky sounds. Groundhog Day was only hours away!

Narrator 2: "PICCADILLY PANICKED" read the Post. "Soon the eyes of the world will be upon us. What will happen if Gretchen does not Go Out?"

Narrator 3: KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! Three townsfolk were waiting when Gretchen opened her door.

Town Historian: "You must try, Gretchen, there has always been a Groundhog Day in Piccadilly."

Narrator 4: said the town historian.

Chief of Police: "Do, Gretchen. I'll stand beside you,"

Narrator 4: said the chief of police.

Editor: "I'll make you famous,"

Narrator 4: said the editor of the Post. But Gretchen only shook her head.

Narrator 5: All afternoon and evening, visitors came. KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Townsfolk: "Gretchen, are you there?" KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! "Gretchen!"

Narrator 6: That night, weary and sad, Gretchen fell asleep in her rocking chair. But she heard the townsfolk even in her dreams.

Townsfolk: KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! "Please, Gretchen, open the door!"

Narrator 2: Gretchen awoke, but the knocking did not stop. She hurried to the door and looked out the peephole. There, on the moonlit snow, stood a little girl. It was Hester, the town historian's daughter.

Hester: "May I come in?"

Narrator 3: Hester asked. Gretchen opened the door. She helped Hester take off her coat, soggy mittens, and wet boots and muffler. Hester said,

Hester: "I won't stay long. I wanted you to see these. I found them while I was helping my mother."

Narrator 4: She held out a wooden box with some yellowed pieces of paper in it. Gretchen could see that they had old-fashioned writing on them. Gretchen asked,

Gretchen: "What's this?"

Hester: "Records from our town history,"

Narrator 5: Hester explained. While Great-Uncle Gus made cups of steaming cocoa, Gretchen studied the first piece of paper.

Narrator 6: "Tomorrow I Must Go Out," it read, "to Stand Before the Pilgrims and the Indians. I Am Greatly Afeared." It was signed "Goody Groundhog." Gretchen was amazed.

Gretchen: "Goody Groundhog lived a long time ago! She came to America on the Mayflower, before there was a Piccadilly."

Hester: "My mother says Goody told everyone the Second Winter would be better than the first. They were very glad,"

Narrator 1: said Hester. Gretchen leafed through the papers. She exclaimed,

Gretchen: "Here's one by George Groundhog at Valley Forge! He says, 'I Am Affrighted to Go Out, but I Shall. The Winter Has Been Long and Hard. The Soldiers Must Know What Will Be.'"

Hester: "My mother says George told them the winter would go on a long time. Everyone was very sad,"

Narrator 2: said Hester. As Gretchen read through the papers, she became more and more excited.

Narrator 3: There was a page from brave General Grant Groundhog, who had fought in the Civil War. And Gene Groundhog, the tough cowboy. And Gloria Groundhog, who became a movie star.

Gretchen: "They were all afraid to Go Out!"

Narrator 4: Gretchen said. She read the last piece of paper. "I am scared, but tomorrow I will try to Go Out," it said. It was signed "Gus Groundhog."

Gretchen: "You?"

Narrator 5: said Gretchen to Great-Uncle Gus. Her great-uncle looked surprised. Then a dreamy look came into his eyes.

Great-Uncle Gus: "It was so long ago I had forgotten it. Now I remember-I couldn't eat or sleep the night before."

Narrator 6: he said. Gretchen asked

Gretchen: "What happened then?"

Great-Uncle Gus: "My great-uncle Grover helped me. He said, 'You can do it, Gus. The first time is always the hardest.'"

Narrator 1: The clock began to chime. "...nine, ten, eleven, twelve," they counted together.

Hester: "Oh, my gosh, I've got to go! I've never stayed up so late."

Narrator 2: said Hester.

Gretchen: "Thank you for everything, Hester,"

Narrator 3: Gretchen said. She and Hester gave each other a big hug. Gretchen went to bed and lay quietly in the darkness.

Narrator 4: She thought about the next morning, about all the townsfolk gathered, the TV cameras and the crowds, the blaring of the band.

Narrator 5: She turned on the light, wrote a few lines on a piece of paper, and put it in the history box. Then she closed her eyes and fell asleep.

Narrator 6: Gretchen's dreams were peaceful. She was awoken by the sound of voices and the screams of the band tuning up.

Narrator 1: She put on her coat and muffler, boots and mittens. She took a deep breath.

Gretchen: "You can do it,"

Narrator 2: she whispered to herself. Then Gretchen Groundhog flung open the door...

Narrator 3: and stepped out into the February morning.

Scripted by Jill Jauquet