

MRS. LITTLE. Thank you, Stuart.
STUART. Sure, Mom. *(He exits as—)*

(MR. LITTLE and GEORGE enter.)

MRS. LITTLE. Isn't he terrific?

MR. LITTLE. A fine fellow. *(A pause.)* But there will be problems, of course.

MRS. LITTLE. No child's perfect.

MR. LITTLE. And one of those problems we'll have to deal with right away.

GEORGE. What's that, Pop?

MR. LITTLE. There must be no references to "mice" in our conversations. *(MRS. LITTLE takes a book from a prop box and rips a page from it.)*

GEORGE. Mom, what are you doing with that songbook?

MRS. LITTLE. Getting rid of a song.

GEORGE. What song?

MRS. LITTLE. "Three Blind Mice...see how they run."

MR. LITTLE. Good idea. We don't want our son to grow up fearing that a farmer's wife is going to cut off his tail with a carving knife.

GEORGE. I guess we'd better do something about this, too. *(He takes a book from another prop box and opens it.)* * 'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house—"

MRS. LITTLE *(looking over GEORGE's shoulder)*. "Not a creature was stirring, not even a—" We can't say mouse.

MR. LITTLE. How about grouse?

GEORGE. I suggest souse.

MRS. LITTLE. What about louse?

MR. LITTLE. * 'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house—"

MR. and MRS. LITTLE. "Not a creature was stirring—" ALL. "Not even a louse."

MR. LITTLE. I believe that's the best substitute.

MRS. LITTLE *(taking a pencil and changing the word)*. "Then I'll just rub out "mouse" and change it to "louse."

(The boxes are rearranged to form a "mouse hole.")

MR. LITTLE. You know the thing that worries me the most?

GEORGE. What's that, Pop?

MR. LITTLE. That mouse hole over there. Stuart does look a good deal like a mouse. And I've never seen a mouse yet that didn't like to go into a hole.

MRS. LITTLE. There will be problems.

MR. LITTLE. No child's perfect. *(They begin to exit.)*

GEORGE. Was I perfect, Pop?

MR. LITTLE. No child's perfect.

MRS. LITTLE *(aside)*. Especially George. *(They exit as—)*

(NARRATOR enters.)

NARRATOR. The home of the Little family was a pleasant place. In the mornings the sun streamed in through the east windows. Stuart was an early riser. He was almost always the first one up in the morning. *(He exits as—)*

(STUART enters wearing a bathrobe and brushing his teeth.)

STUART. Ah, it's nice to have the place all to oneself in the morning. *(He begins to exercise as—)*

STUART LITTLE

NARRATOR. Stuart jumped off the bus and joined the others who were hurrying across to the sailboat pond in Central Park.

(He exits as an obnoxious bully, LEROY, enters hurriedly, carrying a model sailboat on which is written LILLIAN B. WOMRATH.)

LEROY. The Lillian B. Womrath is the fastest boat in Central Park. And I, Captain Leroy, have never been defeated.

(He exits as other PEOPLE enter carrying sailboats.)

PEOPLE. My boat's the fastest. No, mine is. *(Etc. They exit.)*

(STUART enters.)

STUART. Hey, wait for me!

(A MAN—DR. CAREY—enters carrying a boat named the WASP.)

STUART. Excuse me, sir. Are you the owner of the schooner Wasp?

DR. CAREY. I am.

STUART. I'm looking for a berth in a good ship, and I thought perhaps you might sign me on. I'm strong and I'm quick.

DR. CAREY. Are you sober?

STUART. I do my work.

STUART LITTLE

DR. CAREY. Well, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. You see that big racing sloop out there? *(He points off-stage.)*

STUART. I do.

DR. CAREY. That's the Lillian B. Womrath, and I hate her with all my heart.

STUART. Then so do I!

DR. CAREY. I hate her because she is always bumping into my boat and because her owner is a lazy boy, named Leroy, who doesn't understand sailing and who hardly knows a squall from a squid.

STUART. Or a jib from a jibe!

DR. CAREY. Or a luff from a leech!

STUART. Or a deck from a dock!

DR. CAREY. Or a mast from a mist!

STUART. Or a—

DR. CAREY. But hold on now, no more of this. My young friend, I'll let you sail the Wasp across the pond and back, and if you can beat that detestable sloop I'll give you a regular job.

STUART. Aye, aye, sir! *(They start to leave. DR. CAREY stops and STUART bumps into him.)*

DR. CAREY. By the by, you haven't told me your name.

STUART. Name is Stuart Little—second son of Frederick C. Little of this city.

DR. CAREY. *Bon voyage*, Stuart. Take care of yourself and bring the Wasp home safe.

STUART. That I will.

DR. CAREY. Then let's be off to the pond for the race! *(They exit.)*

(Two ACTORS enter carrying a large blue cloth, approximately four feet high, and stretch it across the

STUART. What do you mean?

MARGALO. I know who shot the arrow into Snowbell's ear that night.

STUART. How did you know?

MARGALO. Let's just say—a little bird told me. Hang on—we're going home! *(They exit.)*

(A moment later, SNOWBELL enters.)

SNOWBELL. I like the nighttime more than the daytime. Maybe it's because my eyes like the dark. Or maybe it's because so many worthwhile things are always going on in New York at night. Especially when my friends are in the neighborhood. Like the Maltese cat at the A & P.

(MALTY, a cat, enters.)

SNOWBELL. Evening, Malty.

MALTY. How is it by you, Snowbell?

SNOWBELL. Can't complain.

MALTY. Who would listen anyway—right? *(They laugh as MALTY exits.)*

SNOWBELL. Then there's the white Persian in the apartment house next door.

(BABETTE, a cat, enters.)

SNOWBELL. Nice night, Babette.

BABETTE. I love zee smells of zee spring in zee city.

SNOWBELL. Yes. I just got a whiff of Malarky's Fish Market myself.

BABETTE. And zee liver paté at Perloff's Delicatessen.
(*BABETTE exits.*)

SNOWBELL. The tiger cat in the basement of the branch library.

(*TIGE, a cat, enters reading a book.*)

SNOWBELL. Hello, Tige.

TIGE. Top of the evening to you, Snowbell.

SNOWBELL. What are you reading, Tige?

TIGE. Oh...just some poems by T.S. Eliot. (*TIGE exits.*)

SNOWBELL. And finally, the young Angora who recently escaped from a pet shop on Third Avenue.

(*ANGIE, a cat, enters.*)

SNOWBELL. Hey, what brings you to this neighborhood, Angie?

ANGIE. A rumor, my friend, a rumor.

SNOWBELL. A rumor?

ANGIE. I hear you live in a house with a mouse and a bird, and you don't do anything about it? If you get my drift.

SNOWBELL. I get your drift. But what can I do about it? The mouse is a member of the family, and the bird is a permanent guest, like myself.

ANGIE. Well, all I can say is, you've got more self-control than I have.

SNOWBELL. To tell you the truth, I have been terribly nervous and upset lately, and I think it's because I've been holding things in.

(*He and ANGIE whisper animatedly as NARRATOR enters.*)

NARRATOR. The two cats continued to talk about the bird and the mouse.

(*A PIGEON enters and perches atop a box as SNOWBELL and ANGIE continue whispering loudly.*)

NARRATOR. Soon they awakened a gray pigeon who had been sleeping in a vine a few feet above them. (*A pause as the whispering continues.*) The pigeon, who wasn't too fond of cats in the first place, listened carefully. (*He exits.*)

ANGIE. If I were you, I'd gobble up that bird in a second. SNOWBELL. I can't do that to my own family.

PIGEON. My, this sounds like an interesting conversation. Maybe I'd better stay around and see if I learn anything.

ANGIE. Look here. I admit a cat has a duty toward her own people. But I'm not a member of your family and there is nothing to stop me from eating that bird, is there?

SNOWBELL. Nothing that I can think of. ANGIE. Then here I go.

SNOWBELL. Wait until tomorrow night when Mr. and Mrs. Little will be out for the evening. You won't be taking such a risk.

ANGIE. All right. I guess I can wait.

SNOWBELL. Good. See you tomorrow.

ANGIE. I'm obliged to you, sir. (*He and SNOWBELL exit in opposite directions.*)

PIGEON. This is terrible! That cat plans to eat that bird. I need to find myself some writing paper and a pencil. I'll write a fair warning from one feathered friend to another. *(She leaves her perch, goes to a prop box, gets some paper and a pen and begins to write. The boxes are rearranged to form MARGALO's "bed.")*

(MARGALO enters and falls asleep. The PIGEON places a note in MARGALO's wing and exits.)

NARRATOR. The next morning Margalo found a note in her bed when she awoke. *(MARGALO rises and sees the note.)*

MARGALO. What is this? *(She reads the note.)* "Beware of a strange cat who will come in the night. Signed: A Well Wisher." *(A pause.)* Oh, no. What had I better do? I don't dare show this to anyone—not even to Stuart. I'm so frightened I don't know what to do.

NARRATOR. Finally, just before dark, Margalo hopped up to an open window, and without saying anything to anybody she flew away.

MARGALO. Good-by, Stuart. I hope we shall meet again someday, my friend. *(She exits, "flying" away.)*

NARRATOR. It was springtime and Margalo flew north just as fast as she could fly. Something inside Margalo told her that north was the way for a bird to fly when spring comes to the land.

(STUART enters quickly and in despair.)

STUART. She's gone! She's gone! I've looked everywhere and she's not here.

STUART LITTLE

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(*STUART enters driving a "car."* NOTE: The "driving" may simply be suggested by *STUART holding a steering wheel*.)

NARRATOR. He drove through Central Park to One Hundred and Tenth Street, then over to the West Side Highway, then north to the Sawmill Parkway.

STUART. This car runs beautifully. (If desired, two or three other *DRIVERS* may be on the "highway," with *STUART* waving to them. One may almost crash in surprise.)

NARRATOR. He kept on driving in the direction of Connecticut until he came to the loveliest town he'd ever seen. He stopped at the general store where the storekeeper was smoking his pipe. (*NARRATOR exits as—*)

(*STOREKEEPER enters.*)

STUART. Hello. Nice town you have here.

STOREKEEPER. Ames' Crossing. Goes back to the revolutionary days. Care for a smokc?

STUART. No, thank you. Don't smoke. Never will. But I am very thirsty. Do you have any sarsaparilla in your store?

STOREKEEPER. We carry everything. Sarsaparilla, hammers and nails, cotton shirts, comic books. We even carry stamps. This is the post office, too.

STUART. A sarsaparilla, please.

STOREKEEPER. You're pretty short, aren't you?

STUART. For a mouse, I'm pretty tall.

STOREKEEPER. There's somebody in this town you ought to meet. She's about your size. (*He hands STUART the bottle of sarsaparilla.*)

STUART. Who's that?

STOREKEEPER. Harriet Ames. Young and pretty. And from a prominent family with plenty of money.

STUART. Thank you, but I'm not much of a society man these days. Too much on the move. Here today. Gone tomorrow. Which reminds me, it's time I was on my way.

(*HARRIET AMES enters. She carries a letter and a parasol.*)

HARRIET. Good morning, Mr. Morrison. I'd like to mail this letter.

STOREKEEPER. Sure thing, Harriet. (*She hands him the letter which he posts and deposits into a box.*)

HARRIET. Thank you. (*She exits.*)

STUART. Who was that?

STOREKEEPER. Harriet Ames.

STUART. Harriet Ames. She is pretty. And she's the only girl I've ever seen who isn't miles and miles taller than me. (*Calling after HARRIET.*) Miss Am—No, that would be too bold. I shall write a letter. Sometimes it is easier to write than to speak. (*STOREKEEPER hands STUART a pen and sheet of paper.*) Thank you. (*He writes.*) "My dear Miss Ames. I am a person of modest proportions..."

(*NARRATOR enters.*)

NARRATOR. Stuart began to write a carefully-worded letter to Harriet Ames.

STUART (*to himself*). Maybe we could go canoeing together. (*To STOREKEEPER.*) Is there a river nearby?

STOREKEEPER. Ames' River.

STUART. Is there a place to put in a boat?

STOREKEEPER. Ames' Landing. A mile east of town. (*STUART begins writing again.*)

NARRATOR. Stuart asked Harriet to join him for a ride in his canoe.

STUART. "...at about five o'clock. I shall await your arrival with all the eagerness I can muster. Yours very truly, Stuart Little." (*He addresses and seals the letter.*) I hope she will come back to the post office this afternoon to check her mail.

STOREKEEPER. She usually does.

STUART (*handing the letter to STOREKEEPER who posts and deposits it into a box*). Good. Then I'll assume she will accept a ride in my canoe...Canoe? I don't even have a canoe. Do you sell canoes?

STOREKEEPER. We carry everything. Sarsaparilla, hammers and nails, cotton shirts, comic books—

STUART. A canoe, please.

STOREKEEPER. I think I've got a little canoe about your size in the back. I sell them for souvenirs. Seventy-five cents plus tax.

STUART. I'll take it.

STOREKEEPER. Drive around back, and I'll help you load it up. (*He exits as STUART "drives" away, exiting in the same general direction as STOREKEEPER. The boxes are rearranged to form a "riverbank." One box is set near the offstage area.*)

NARRATOR. Stuart drove to Ames' Landing down by the river. He was tired and hot. He struggled with the canoe and finally tied it to a stone on the riverbank. (*NARRATOR exits as—*)

(*STUART enters with a canoe named "Summer Memories" hoisted over his head. He ties the canoe to the box at the edge of the stage. As he speaks, the canoe becomes untied and drifts out of sight, pulled slowly by an offstage, unseen ACTOR.*)

STUART. I'm rather nervous. I've never taken a girl canoeing before. I'd better brush my hair and comb my whiskers. Goodness, my shirt is wet from nervous perspiration. Oh, my, it must be nearly five o'clock. And it looks rainy. What will I do if Harriet shows up and it should rain?

(*HARRIET enters.*)

HARRIET. Hello.

STUART (*nervously*). Hello there.

HARRIET. Are you Mr. Little?

STUART (*affecting an English accent*). Yes. It's nice of you to come.

HARRIET. It was very good of you to ask me.

STUART. Well, shall we take a ride in my—(*He turns and sees that the canoe is gone.*)—canoe? (*Dropping the accent.*) It's gone! Oh, gee. Oh, gee whizz. Miss Ames, I assure you I had everything beautifully arranged—*everything*. And now look!

HARRIET. That's all right. We don't have to go canoeing. We could go fishing.

STUART. With what? There's no fishing gear.

HARRIET. We could pretend we're fishing.

STUART (*sulking a bit*). I don't want to pretend we're fishing. (*A pause.*)

HARRIET. Would you like a peppermint?

STUART (*despondently*). No, thank you.

HARRIET. I don't see why you have to sit here and sulk. Would you like to come to my house? After dinner you could take me to the dance at the country club. It might cheer you up.

STUART. No, thank you. I don't know how to dance. Besides, I plan to be on the road by daybreak. I'll probably sleep here on the riverbank tonight. (*A pause as HARRIET looks skyward.*)

HARRIET. Well, it's starting to rain. I guess I'd better be running along. (*STUART doesn't respond.*) Good-by.

STUART. Good-by, Miss Ames. I am sorry our evening on the river had to end like this.

HARRIET. So am I, Mr. Little. (*She exits as—*)

(*NARRATOR enters.*)

NARRATOR. Harriet walked away along the wet path, leaving Stuart alone with his broken dreams and his missing canoe.

STUART. She called me Mr. Little!...I wasn't very nice to her. I was actually rude. I'm afraid I've got a lot of growing up to do before I can be called Mr. Little. (*Slowly, he lies down, yawns and goes to sleep.*)

NARRATOR. Stuart slept fitfully that night, tossing and turning and dreaming unpleasant dreams.

STUART (*muttering*). Miss Ames...canoe...a sarsaparilla please...(*The chirping of a bird is heard.*) Miss Ames...Miss...Margalo...Marga—(*He wakes abruptly as the chirping is heard again.*) Oh, good. It's morning. And it has stopped raining. And I heard a bird. Could it be—? No, not Margalo. But she's out there somewhere.