

**One**

*(A warehouse dotted with crates, some opened. The DONG enters, carrying a torch. He checks the warehouse. Turning, he sees the audience)*

**DONG** What are you doing here? No-one's allowed in without proper authority. Have you got that? You have? I suppose I'd better let you stay then. You'll have to keep to the rules, mind. That means no cameras, no phones - so switch them off now. And whatever you're thinking of doing, don't. That's enough chat. I've got my work to do. There's always people sneaking in who shouldn't.

*(DONG exits. CAT tiptoes on. She freezes as DONG returns)*

**DONG** Remember, I'm watching you.

*(DONG exits. CAT looks for a place to hide. As she is peering round the boxes OWL enters. He's looking in the direction of Dong's exit, so doesn't see CAT until he bumps into her. She swings round, ready for fight or flight)*

**CAT** Who are you?

**OWL** Ssh.

**CAT** Don't ssh me. You're the one making the noise.

**OWL** If that man hears us, we're in trouble.

**CAT** Why do you think I'm trying to hide?

**OWL** So am I.

**CAT** Not here you're not. You're much too noisy.

**OWL** I don't mean to be.

**CAT** Never mind the excuses. Just go, will you?

*(As OWL turns to go, he sees the audience)*

**OWL** Oh.

**CAT** Can't you even leave quietly?

**OWL** But...

**CAT** I don't want to be caught because of you. (*She sees them too*) Oh. Do you think they're friendly?

**OWL** They look friendly.

**CAT** Don't tell that man about us, please. If he catches us, he'll send us home.

**OWL** Home. That's a joke.

**CAT** They don't like us there. They say we're different.

**OWL** If it rains, it's all our fault. But if it doesn't rain enough, guess what? -

**OWL/CAT** It's all our fault.

**CAT** They threw stones at me.

**OWL** They said they'd burn down my house.

**CAT** They'd do it too. With you in it.

**OWL** All we want is somewhere safe.

**CAT** The sort of place where people say hello and give you a smile.

**OWL** Help us. Please. That man - if he asks whether you've heard anything, tell him it was rats.

**CAT** They call us rats back home, so you wouldn't be fibbing.

**OWL** If you do, I'll tell you a story.

**CAT** You're a storyteller?

**OWL** Since I was this high. Well, maybe this high.

**CAT** I'm glad you're good at something. Especially if it's stories. I really like them. Do you like stories too? Will you help us then?

**OWL** We ought to practice. You pretend to be that man.

**CAT** Why me?

**OWL** All right, I'll be him. (*He imitates the Dong*) Did you hear anything? Can you say it louder? He's not

very good at listening.

**CAT** I'll be him this time. Did you hear a noise?

**OWL** That's very good.

**CAT** They deserve a story after that. But you have to tell it quietly.

**OWL** Once, on the great Gromboolian plain, there was an owl. A very clever owl. Every morning he went hunting mice. Now it so happened that one day a cat was doing the very same thing.

**CAT** That's me?

**OWL** Yes. A most elegant cat.

**CAT** Type-casting. You should see me hunt.

*(They hunt, **OWL** scouring the ground, **CAT** stalking. They see prey. They strike, both getting the mouse at the same time)*

**CAT** Mine.

**OWL** I saw it first

**CAT** I caught it first.

**OWL** You did not.

**CAT** This says I did.

*(She pushes **OWL** away. The shoving escalates towards a fight)*

**OWL** He's coming back.

*(**CAT** dives for cover. **OWL** scurries around looking lost)*

**CAT** Oh, come on here. There's room for two.

**OWL** Thanks.

**CAT** Ssh!

*(**OWL** takes shelter. **DONG** enters)*

**DONG** Did you hear anything?

Cats, did you say? Oh, rats. *(He looks around)*  
You're right. Sort of, anyway. It's actually a  
mouse. This place is full of them. I keep telling  
higher authority we need a cat. Do they listen? Do  
pigs fly?

*(DONG clears up the mouse and exits)*

**CAT** He's taken my mouse. That's your fault.

**OWL** We should have shared.

**CAT** It was mine.

**OWL** Half's better than nothing.

**CAT** Not when it's mine, it isn't.

**OWL** Who saw it first?

**CAT** I caught it

**OWL** You did not. *(They square up for another round)* This  
is silly. It doesn't matter whose mouse it was.  
We've both lost it. We should have been friends and  
shared.

**CAT** Us? Friends?

**OWL** Why not?

**CAT** You're an owl.

**OWL** I'm different from you, so can't be friends? You  
know what happens when people say that?

**CAT** They throw stones.

**OWL** That's right. Suppose instead they thought about how  
they could do things together. Like you helped me  
just now. They might find they liked each other.

**CAT** You like me?

**OWL** Yes. Even though you do shout at me.

**CAT** I don't. I might whisper sometimes, yes, but only  
when you get annoying.

**OWL** We're friends?

**CAT** If you like.

**OWL** Let's hunt together.

**CAT** No way. I'd be doing all the work.

**OWL** I'll do my share.

**CAT** No thanks. I'd rather go stalking with a herd of elephants.

**OWL** OK, I am rubbish at stalking. But I can see what you can't.

**CAT** Prove it.

**OWL** There's a mouse over there, just to your left.

**CAT** Is there now? *(She begins to move with apparent aimlessness)* I suppose we could be friends if we like each other. The funny thing is I do sort of like you. *(She pounces)* One.

*(They high-five. They renew their patrol; OWL acting as scout and CAT running the prey down to make a second kill)*

**OWL** Two.

**CAT** You're right. Together does work.

*(Another high five and off on patrol again. They do not see JUMBLY GIRL enter. She's colourfully dressed - 60's hippie but not in a good way - with green hair)*

**CAT** Missed.

**OWL** I've got him.

**CAT** Three.

**GIRL** That looks a groovy game. Can anyone join in?

**CAT** Who are you?

**GIRL** A Jumbly girl. How's it hanging?

**OWL** How's what hanging?

**GIRL** Hold on a mo. (*She opens a phrase book*) How's it hanging. It's here somewhere. Ah! Bring me my nankeen pantaloons. (*Blank looks*) Sorry, I was looking at the wrong line. Are you well today?

**CAT** You're not from these parts, are you?

**GIRL** Jumblies come from so far away, you can't even imagine it.

**OWL** The man won't like that.

**GIRL** Who cares? He's a Dong. (*She consults the phrasebook*) Dong - someone dull, obstreperous, narrow-minded and grumpy.

**CAT** I still wouldn't let him catch you.

**GIRL** What can he do?

**CAT** Lock you up.

**OWL** Send you home.

**GIRL** He's not busting me - no way. My bag is to see the world.

**CAT** It is?

**GIRL** Believe it. You can't imagine where I've been. The Great Lakes, the Hills of the Chankly Bore. I've even sailed the Terrible Zone.

**CAT** How terrible.

**GIRL** It was tolerable. The trouble is, we've been sailing for so long, our boat's like a sieve. We keep patching it with best brown paper, but it still keeps leaking.

**OWL** Perhaps you need to use something different.

**GIRL** Another colour? I'd never thought of that. I must put it in my useful book.

**CAT** Is she meant to be in this story?

**OWL** She's in it now.

**CAT** I suppose she adds colour.