

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.