

PAUPER

THE MUSICAL

MUSIC, LYRICS, AND BOOK
BY
JEREMY DANIEL LYNCH

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
P. ALEXANDER

Playwright's Note

*Above all, love is that powerful force which can break barriers, carve new paths,
and create opportunity for those who lack fortune.*

*There will always be princes, and there will always be paupers.
Let there always be love for all.*

ACT ONE

#1 — Overture (Orchestra)

(Lights up. We see a small, simple home, not snootily decorated. There's a bookcase that hold PAUPER'S favorite title, "How to Cook a Meal for the Lady You Wished You Had." On the mantle sits a small, old portrait of PAUPER'S Great Aunt Earlamond, which he speaks to often. We see PAUPER in his most comfortable milieu—his own home. Immediately, we notice the chaos happening in the kitchen: a windup alarm clock is ringing and smoke is rising from the oven. PAUPER enters through the front door carrying a brown paper bag of groceries, which he drops upon seeing the calamity.)

PAUPER

Oh no!

(He rushes over to—quite literally—put out the fire.)

That's the last time I buy cheddar in the cheap section. The recipe clearly said to bake for thirty minutes. I've only been away for...

(Checks his pocket watch.)

Good gouda, time flies.

(Picking up the cookbook on the counter.)

"Easy, Romantic Recipes for Two"—my tail. Oh, Aunt Earlamond, what am I doing? I'll never ask Miss Polly to a proper dinner.

(Starts to throw cookbook away, but thinks better of it and starts toward the bookcase and files it away but not before noticing an old title.)

"How to Cook a Meal for the Lady You Wished You Had." Now, here's a book if I ever read one. Why, just listen to this: "A gentlemouse who can't cook is as useful as a blunt blade without a handle."—Brilliant!—"By reading this cookbook, he'll learn the art of love and cooking, and he'll surely win over the lady of his dreams." Perhaps Miss Polly would come to dinner. I wonder if I could save that cheese.

(Makes his way over to the kitchen and picks up the charred cheddar.)

Not unless she likes smoked cheddar.

(The cheese suddenly shoots out a puff of smoke.)

Heavy on the smoke.

(Throws it away. Flips through the pages and finds a good chapter.)

“Chapter Three: How to Ask a Lady to Dinner.” A good place to start. “Be bold as pepper and savory as salt, and approach the lady of your dreams with confidence. A good first impression goes a long way...”

#2 — *The Lady You Wished You Had (Pauper)*

(Reading from the cookbook as he sings.)

WHEN FIRST YOU GREET THE LADY WHO APPEARED IN
YOUR DREAM
MUST BE KIND, CONSIDERATE TO EARN HER ESTEEM
ABOVE ALL, IT’S VITAL THAT YOU DON’T BEHAVE A CAD
TO WIN THE LADY YOU WISHED YOU HAD

Why, confidence, Aunt Earlamond. It’s as simple as confidence. I have that...I think. “Proper planning is the food of confidence. Any mouse is sure to succeed if he has a plan.”

IF WELL PREPARED YOUR EFFORTS WILL NOT EASILY
SPOIL
EACH ROMANCE MUST SIMMER FIRST BEFORE IT CAN
BOIL
JUST A DASH OF TASTE ENSURES YOUR PLANS ARE
IRONCLAD
TO WIN THE LADY YOU WISHED YOU HAD

(Puts the cookbook down.)

THE LADY YOU WISHED YOU HAD
THE LADY YOU WISHED YOU HAD
COOK HER A MEAL TO BE SURE THAT SHE’LL FEEL
THE FLAME THAT YOU KNOW IS REAL
THROW IN THE CHIVES, IT’S THE NIGHT OF YOUR LIVES
OH WHAT COULD BE MORE IDEAL?

You know, Aunt Earlamond, there’s no reason I shouldn’t ask Miss Polly to dinner tonight. I’m sure I can whip up my signature wild rice and sage. She’ll be back from visiting her mother soon. Why it’s only...

(Checks his pocket watch.)

Come to think of it, she should be back from the train station by now...

MY WATCH IS HALF-PAST THREE

I WONDER WHERE IS SHE

SHE LEFT LAST SATURDAY

PERHAPS SHE'S LOST HER WAY

Court's Grove train schedules are famously unreliable. The house is a mess, anyway. Not fit for company, Aunt Earlamond. Not fit for a lady like Miss Polly. She deserves more...

AND IN A PROPER PARLOR, SIPPING SAVORY TEAS

WE COULD DINE LIKE ROYALTY ON GLORIOUS CHEESE

BUT TO EAT JUST MORSELS HERE AND THERE IS NOT

ALL BAD

IF YOU'RE WITH THE LADY YOU WISHED YOU HAD

THE LADY YOU WISHED YOU HAD

THE LADY YOU WISHED YOU HAD

IMPRESS HER WITH STYLE AND YOU'LL WALK DOWN

THE AISLE

WEARING A MOUSEY SMILE

INVITE HER IN, SPORTING A CHEESY GRIN

AND ROMANCE WILL SOON BEGIN

IF ONLY SHE KNEW HOW MY FEELINGS GREW

OH WHAT IS A MOUSE TO...

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We interrupt your regularly scheduled program to bring you this breaking news. To make matters worse in Court's Grove, a new and highly dangerous cat is on the prowl. The mayor has advanced curfew to 6 P.M. All businesses are to be closed and all mice off the streets and in their homes. All travel is strictly prohibited, except that which is approved by the mayor. This new cat is thought to be dangerous, unpredictable, and very, very hungry. Mice found to be in violation of this immediately effective curfew will be punished to the full extent of the law. Now back to your regularly scheduled program.

PAUPER

Well, that's terrible news. Better lock the deadbolt, then. Can't be too...Pauper, what are you thinking? Miss Polly is out there! Suppose she didn't hear the announcement? She'll be arrested. And with that cat on the loose...

(He's conflicted, but he finds courage.)

I must go find her. And if the cat should find me first? Well, I may be less than a meal, but I'm more than a snack! Time to get down to business. I'm coming, Miss Polly! But not without my pocket watch. Never know when it might come in handy. But first off, stealth exercises!

(He creeps along his wall, stealthily hopping on and off of his furniture.)

(Blackout.)

#3 — *Cats! (Ensemble)*

(Lights up on Court's Grove, PAUPER'S home town, which is in total panic. From the collective and rampant imagination of the frightened townsmice, we see them tormented by flashes of light followed by shadows of cat-creatures who possess vicious claws and fangs, which seem to be coming from all directions.)

ALL

CATS! FILTHY, WICKED CATS! LOUSY LURKING CATS!

ALWAYS OUT TO MAKE THE CATCH

CATS! NEVER TRUST A CAT, DIRTY AS A RAT

ON THE HUNT FOR MICE TO SNATCH! CATS!

NO ONE SCREAM, NOT A DREAM

FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES IT SEEMS

CLEAR THE FLOOR, SHUT THE DOOR

CREATURES WE'VE NOT SEEN BEFORE

CATS! NEVER SEEN A CAT

WHO KNOWS WHERE THEY'RE AT?

WHAT'S THAT? CATS!

MAYOR SAID DON'T PLAY DEAD

STAY INSIDE YOUR HOMES INSTEAD

SAVAGE CLAWS, WE HAVE LAWS

CURFEW CAN'T BE BAD BECAUSE

CATS! AWFUL, DREADFUL CATS! WAITING TO ATTACK

MICE MAKE TASTY SNACKS
SOME MICE

MICE MAKE TASTY
SNACKS

OTHER MICE
MICE MAKE TASTY
SNACKS

ALL
STONE-COLD KILLERS, THEY'RE BLOOD-SPILLERS
WHAT'S FOR DINNER? SOMETHING GRIMMER
THAN A NIGHTMARE, NOT JUST A SCARE
TOWNSMICE BEWARE, WE ARE FIGHTING
WICKED! VICIOUS! CATS!

ETHEL

I think I saw one!

GEORGE

Where?

CYNTHIA

Have you seen their claws?

ABRAHAM

Don't fear, my dear.

RUTH

Esther said she saw one prowling behind the corner store last Wednesday.

HILDA

Where's Esther?

AMBROSE

Is it past six?

ALL

Curfew everyone, curfew!

THEY'RE MALICIOUS! TWISTED!
VICIOUS! WICKED! CATS!

PAUPER

MISS POLLY, THREE NIGHTS SINCE YOU'VE BEEN GONE
MISS POLLY, BEFORE TOMORROW'S DAWN
WON'T YOU COME HOME?

MISS POLLY, YOU'RE MISSING FAR TOO LONG
MISS POLLY, THOUGH I KNOW YOU WILL BE STRONG
PLEASE COME BACK SOON
BEWARE OF THOSE WHO ROAM

OLD COURT'S GROVE
THEY ARE...

ALL
VICIOUS! WICKED! CATS!

CATS ARE CRUEL, DON'T BE FOOLS
SCURRY FAST, ESCAPE THOSE GHOULS
WHERE WE'RE FROM MICE ARE YUM
MUST OUTFIGHT THEM, HERE THEY COME!

CATS! TERROR ON THE LOOSE! CAN'T ESCAPE THE
NOOSE!

SOME MICE
CAN WE CALL A TRUCE?

OTHER MICE
MICE TAKE SUCH ABUSE

SOME MICE
TELL US, WHAT'S THE USE?

OTHER MICE
PLAY TOYS FOR THEIR USE

SOME MICE
TELL US, WHAT'S THE USE?

OTHER MICE
TELL US, WHAT'S
THE USE?

SOME MICE
TELL US, WHAT'S
THE—

ALL
MAYOR SAID WATCH YOUR HEAD
CATS WILL PAINT THE TOWN IN RED
HOW THEY STALK, HUSH YOUR TALK
ALWAYS WATCHING LIKE A HAWK

HILDA
I can't find Esther!

GEORGE
Leave the shops unlocked—no time to lose.

CYNTHIA

Are those cat paw prints?

ABRAHAM

Leave the cheese! Take only what you need.

RUTH

I just heard a meow in the distance!

AMBROSE

Hurry, everyone! Hurry!

(POLICEMICE enter.)

POLICE MICE

OFF THE STREETS AND IN YOUR HOMES

THIS IS NOW A MOUSE-FREE ZONE!

ALL

CATS! STEALTHY, SKULKING CATS! EVIL, WICKED CATS!

WHO CREATED CATS? FILTHY NASTY CRAZY KILLERS,

THEY'RE NOT QUITTERS, IT'S A THRILLER, A BONE-

CHILLER IT'S A NIGHTMARE PAID OUR FAIR SHARE

WHO SAID LIFE'S FAIR WHEN WE'RE FIGHTING

TWISTED! MALICIOUS! TWISTED! VICIOUS! WICKED!

PAUPER

MISS POLLY, WHEN WILL YOU RETURN? MISS POLLY,

THE TOWN'S ABOUT TO BURN, I'M COMING SOON, BE

CAREFUL ON YOUR OWN, OLD COURT'S GROVE IS FULL

OF

ALL

CATS!

(Without a break in the action, the POLICEMICE start into a chorus of "Mayor's Census" and commence with herding the crowd back into their homes. PAUPER lingers behind and finds a place to hide.)

#4 — Mayor's Census (Policemice)

POLICEMICE

BY NEARLY ROYAL DECREE

BY THE POWER THAT'S VESTED IN WE

REMAIN AT HOME OR ELSE YOU WILL PAY
THE MAYOR'S CENSUS IS TAKEN TODAY

(Two dumb policemice bark orders. Horace thinks he's in charge.)

HORACE

Get a move on! Two minutes to curf—

BILL

Two minutes until curfew!

HORACE

In your homes immediatel—

BILL

Inside your homes right now!

HORACE

Census starting to—

BILL

There's a census tonight!

HORACE

Curfew will take immediate ef—

BILL

There's a curfew at six—

HORACE

Bill!

BILL

Horace?

HORACE

Why don't you go take the corner, yeah?

BILL

Good idea, Horace. That young mother and her pup are looking highly suspect.

(To ELDERLY MOUSE.)

Hey, you! You think I don't notice you? Official policemice only!

(ELDERLY MOUSE exits hurriedly.)

HORACE

Everybody in formation. Briskens coming!

*(The stage is all clear now, except for PAUPER and the
POLICEMICE. PAUPER peeks his head out from behind a set
piece, when immediately MAYOR BRISKEN enters.)*

BRISKEN

Mice! The time is now past six. Curfew is in full effect. With the townsmice safely within their homes, it's time for us to do our business. The census must be taken very carefully. Any mouse found outside their home will be sentenced to prison. Understood? Where's Mallberry?

(BRISKEN'S mousey underling, Mallberry, enters.)

MALLBERRY

Here, sir.

BRISKEN

Come.

MALLBERRY

Yes, sir.

PAUPER

Mallberry? What could Mayor Brisken want with him?

(BRISKEN and MALLBERRY end up near PAUPER'S hiding place and PAUPER listens in. The other POLICEMICE assume their positions and begin rotations.)

MALLBERRY

Forgive me, sir, for asking, but if there aren't really any cats, then why pretend...

BRISKEN

Foolish! We can't let the cat out of the bag, so to speak. You know the plan.

MALLBERRY

To arrest Miss Polly and take her suitcase?

BRISKEN

Precisely.

MALLBERRY

Do we have to arrest her? Couldn't we just threaten her a little?

BRISKEN

Oh?

MALLBERRY

(Acting it out with his baton.)

Miss Polly, if you don't hand over that suitcase, we'll have to start breaking things. Starting with your favorite teapot.

BRISKEN

(Losing his patience.)

Excellent, Mallberry. And if that doesn't work, we'll threaten to eat her leftover chutney!

MALLBERRY

(A beat)

But suppose she only has rye crackers?

BRISKEN

Arrest her, Mallberry! You know the consequences if you fail. . .and get me that suitcase!

(The policemice march around town square in perfect unison, meanwhile PAUPER stealthily emerges from his hiding place to knock out a nearby officer then drags him offstage. The policemice march in formation.)

#5 — Mayor's Census — Tag (Policemice)

POLICEMICE

BY NEARLY ROYAL DECREE

BY THE POWER THAT'S VESTED IN WE

WE DO DEMAND YOU STAY IN YOUR HOMES

A CAT IS LURKING AND LOOKING FOR BONES

(PAUPER returns, now donning the police officer's vest. HE joins the POLICEMICE as they dance in formation until finally HE draws attention.)

HORACE

Stop! Imposter!

(The POLICEMICE sing and chase after PAUPER. There is a flurry of action.)

POLICEMICE

WE DO DEMAND YOU STAY WHERE YOU ARE

MALLBERRY

Pauper?

(PAUPER escapes and all the policemice are after him. Blackout.)

SCENE THREE: MISS POLLY'S TRAIN

(Lights up. A large, old-style train takes up the stage and on it are many passengers. MISS POLLY enters, and it is known. The CONDUCTOR is impatiently awaiting tickets to be produced by two TICKETLESS PASSENGERS.)

FIRST TICKETLESS PASSENGER

I'm sorry, sir. We had the tickets.

SECOND TICKETLESS PASSENGER

Yes, we did. But I'm afraid I've misplaced them.

CONDUCTOR

If you can't produce tickets, you'll be asked to stand—provided there's room after all other passengers have been seated.

MISS POLLY

Here, they can take mine. I have two tickets.

CONDUCTOR

Two tickets for one passenger?

MISS POLLY

One for me, one for my suitcase. I have both tickets here.

(She hands over the tickets.)

CONDUCTOR

Very well, you may stand so long as you don't block the aisle way.

FIRST TICKETLESS PASSENGER

(To MISS POLLY.)

Thank you so much.

SECOND TICKETLESS PASSENGER

Yes, thank you.

(MISS POLLY curtsys and makes her way to her spot. One particularly odious mouse, HENDERSON, eyes her unabashedly as she passes by him.)

HENDERSON

Good day, miss.

MISS POLLY

Good day.

HENDERSON

Need a hand?

MISS POLLY

No, thank you.

HENDERSON

Bag looks awful heavy for a pretty little thing, like you.

MISS POLLY

I can manage.

HENDERSON

Very well.

(HENDERSON gives a small salute, along with his signature toothy grin. MISS POLLY finds her seat. Her solitude is interrupted by a NOSEY LADY sitting next to her.)

NOSEY LADY

Difficult, isn't it?

MISS POLLY

What is?

NOSEY LADY

Being so beautiful, of course.

MISS POLLY

I imagine it is.

NOSEY LADY

My darling, there's no need to be coy.

#6 — *Who I Am Deep Inside (Miss Polly, Ensemble)*

IF A MOUSE HAS A DELICATE BEAUTY
SHE COMMANDS ALL THE EYES IN THE ROOM

MALE MOUSE

SOME ARE SHAMELESS WHILE OTHERS ARE SNOOTY

FEMALE MICE

EVEN STILL, SHE WILL BLOSSOM AND BLOOM

MALE MICE

OTHERS STARE AND GAWK UNSEEMLY

FEMALE MICE

IF SHE CATCHES THEM, THEY RUN AND HIDE

MISS POLLY

EVEN STILL, I WISH THEY WOULD SEE ME
FOR THE MOUSE WHO I AM DEEP INSIDE
I AM MORE THAN MY FUR AND WHISKERS
I AM MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE

I CAN SPEAK LOUDER THAN A WHISPER
I CAN CALMLY COMMAND MY OWN GRACE

BUT I LONG FOR THE CHANCE TO TAKE CHANCES
TO BE MORE THAN THE SUM OF THEIR GLANCES
SPEAK MY MIND AND THEY'LL FIND MY TRUE BEAUTY
IS MUCH DEEPER THAN SIMPLE JEWELRY
AND I LONG TO DO SOMETHING THAT MATTERS
CHANGE A MIND, CHANGE A HEART AND SOON AFTER
MAKE A SPLASH, CARVE A PATH IN THIS TIRED TOWN
COULD A MOUSE TURN THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN?

FEMALE MICE

SUCH A MOUSE IS A PICTURE OF BEAUTY
DON'TCHA WISH YOU COULD JUST FIND A FLAW?

MALE MICE

SHE SEEMS NICE, BUT DEEP DOWN SHE IS SNOOTY

FEMALE MICE

NOT TO MENTION, HER OUTFIT IS BLAH

MISS POLLY

BUT I LONG FOR THE CHANCE TO BE NOTICED
FOR MY HEART, GIVE THE WORLD JUST TO SHOW IT
TO BE MORE THAN THE MEEK MOUSE EXPECTED
TO HAVE MORE THAN MY BEAUTY ACCEPTED
AND I LONG TO RISE UP AND INSPIRE
DO FOR MICE WHAT I KNOW IS REQUIRED
BEAUTY BESIDE, CHANGE THE WORLD
IN A SINGLE WORD
HOW CAN I IF I'M SEEN AND NOT HEARD

FEMALE MICE

NO MORE PRECIOUS THAN HER PRECIOUS JEWELRY
IS A MOUSE OF A DELICATE BEAUTY

MALE MICE

MOUSE OF BEAUTY
MOUSE OF BEAUTY

(Train comes to a screeching halt, and all mice return to their seats as TRAIN ENGINEER announces over the intercom.)

TRAIN ENGINEER (V.O.)

Good evening, passengers. Bit of an unusual situation. It appears that part of the track ahead has been...err...removed. Keep calm, no one's in danger—yet. We have the situation under control. Please enjoy a free beverage while you wait. Thank you.

(MISS POLLY gets up from her seat, collects her things and begins to exit. She is interrupted by an odious mouse.)

HENDERSON

Off so soon, miss?

MISS POLLY

I'm afraid I've no time to wait.

HENDERSON

Careful out there. Never know who you'll run into.

#6a — Who I Am Deep Inside — Playoff (Orchestra)

(MISS POLLY gathers her things and exits the train, though not before the odious mouse gives a small salute and a toothy grin. HE exits in tow. The train disappears as MISS POLLY explores her new surroundings. She is unaware of him lurking in the shadows. As MISS POLLY walks, and he follows. SHE notices HIM.)

MISS POLLY

You?

HENDERSON

You'll be handin' over that case, miss.

MISS POLLY

(THEY struggle over the case.)

I most certainly will not. Thief! Thief!

VOICE OF OFFICER

Oy! What's going on over there?

HENDERSON

You're making a big mistake.

(The OFFICER comes running into the scene. The odious mouse disappears back into the shadows.)

OFFICER

What's going on?

MISS POLLY

Oh, officer. I'm so glad you've come. That thief nearly attacked me.

OFFICER

Right. And what are you doing outside at this hour?

MISS POLLY

My train. You see a piece of track was missing, and...what do you mean, "this hour?"

OFFICER

New cat in town. Curfew's up to six now. Which means you're breakin' the law. I'll have to take you in myself.

MISS POLLY

You can't be serious. New cat? I've never even seen one cat!

OFFICER

Hush up, miss.

(Going for the suitcase.)

I'll be takin' that, now.

MISS POLLY

Oh no, you won't.

(SHE swings the case over his head and knocks him out cold. The scene changes as SHE runs away. SHE stops to rest and gather herself. MISS POLLY opens her suitcase to reveal the half-broken teacup. Brokenhearted, SHE picks up the pieces.)

#6b — The Mouse Who I Am Deep Inside — Reprise (Miss Polly)

MISS POLLY

HOW I WISH I COULD MEND WHAT WAS BROKEN

GIVE A DEAR, DARLING FRIEND A SMALL TOKEN

(SHE begins to sob and puts the cup back into her suitcase, closing it shut.

PAUPER enters frantically.)

PAUPER

Miss Polly!

MISS POLLY

Pauper?

PAUPER

No time to lose. They're after us!

MISS POLLY

Who?

(MALLBERRY, HORACE, BILL and the rest of the POLICEMICE enter. The chase is afoot.)

PAUPER

Them!

(PAUPER and MISS POLLY escape just in time, leaving all the POLICEMICE behind.)

MALLBERRY

Everybody hold!

HORACE

Everybody hold? But they're right there! We should be after them.

MALLBERRY

Everybody hold!

BILL

I'm with Horace! I say we...

MALLBERRY

I said hold!

(All's quiet.)

They've just crossed the boundary for Castle Heights. We don't have any jurisdiction there.

BILL

But Mayor Briskin has chums in Castle Heights.

HORACE

If we don't go after 'em, Briskin will have our heads!

MALLBERRY

I'll deal with Briskin. We're playing this one by the book. Let's head back.

HORACE

(Addressing the POLICEMICE.)

You heard the mouse! Move it!

#7 — *Mayor's Census — Reprise (Policemice)*

(As they're marching out. MALLBERRY stays center until blackout.)

POLICEMICE (NO MALLBERRY)

YOU CANNOT HIDE WHEREVER YOU RUN
THE MAYOR'S CENSUS HAS ONLY BEGUN

#8 — *Mice On the Run (Ensemble)*

(Hard blackout.)

SCENE FOUR: THE TOWNS

(Lights up. We see the townsmice from within their homes, scattered about the stage, listening worriedly to their radios.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We interrupt your regularly scheduled program to bring you this breaking news. Two mice have evaded police capture as of last night. I repeat, two armed and dangerous mice are at large within the house after breaking curfew and attacking and impersonating an officer. One is thought to be carrying a suitcase and the other still wearing the police uniform which he stole. These fugitives are dangerous. If found, turn them in to the police immediately.

ALL

MICE! WANTED, HUNTED MICE!
RUNNING, CUNNING MICE!
TURN THEM IN AND DON'T THINK TWICE
MICE!
VILLAINS MUST BE CAUGHT
INNOCENT OR NOT
APPREHEND THEM ON THE SPOT
MICE!
WATCH AND WAIT, LOCK THE GATE
THEY'LL BE TRYING TO ESCAPE
ON THE TRAIL...THAT A TAIL?
FUGITIVES BELONG IN JAIL

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Beware: These mice are resourceful, dangerous, and willing to go to any lengths to incriminate The Mayor and his cohorts. Be watchful, be ready, and report any

suspicious activity to the Mayor's office without hesitation. We now return you to your regularly scheduled program.

ALL

MICE! MAYOR SAYS BEWARE

COULD BE ANYWHERE

FIND THEM FAST NO TIME TO SPARE

MICE! MUST BE ON YOUR TOES

THEY'RE NOT FRIENDS, THEY'RE FOES

LEAST THAT'S HOW THE STORY GOES

*(The homes all disappear as PAUPER and MISS POLLY appear on stage,
continuing to walk briskly toward their destination.)*

PAUPER

Got to keep going, Miss Polly!

MISS POLLY

I am!

PAUPER

Do you hear them still?

MISS POLLY

No, I don't hear anything.

PAUPER

Neither do I.

MISS POLLY

Maybe we should stop to rest.

PAUPER

Good idea.

(They slow down.)

MISS POLLY

(Pointing to the street sign.)

I think we're within Castle Heights city limits by now.

PAUPER

Quite right.

MISS POLLY

What time is it?

PAUPER

(Taking out his precious pocket watch.)

Seven-thirty.

MISS POLLY

What a terrible evening.

PAUPER

Miss Polly, you don't know the half of it.

MISS POLLY

Pauper, there's something very wrong about all of this.

PAUPER

I overheard Mallberry talking to Mayor Brisken. They were planning to arrest...

MISS POLLY

Yes?

PAUPER

Important thing is, they're not to be trusted.

MISS POLLY

Neither are the police. I was nearly arrested.

PAUPER

Arrested?

MISS POLLY

In the corridor just after I left the train. He tried to arrest me after a thief nearly took my suitcase.

PAUPER

A thief attacked you?

MISS POLLY

Very nearly. I was able to get away, but not without...

PAUPER

What?

MISS POLLY

You see, I have a gift for you.

PAUPER

Really?

MISS POLLY

It's not much. Just this beautiful teacup I found in one of the shops. It reminded me of you.

(She retrieves the broken teacup from her suitcase.)

It's not valuable, but it's pawcrafted and very unique.

PAUPER

Oh, Miss Polly. It's splendid. What beautiful stencil work. The crafts-mouse-ship is exquisite.

#9 — *The Mouse About Town/Payday Rag (Ensemble)*

MISS POLLY

The artistry is what drew my eye.

PAUPER

Thank you. We'd better get going.

MISS POLLY

Whatever we do, Pauper, we must expose Mallberry and Briskin for the frauds they are.

PAUPER

Agreed. Let's get to Castle Heights.

(THEY continue on toward Castle Heights and the stage is transformed from a bare corridor to a dazzling, bustling city. The whole city is finely dressed in black and white. A streetcar is making a stop as several well-to-do mice step off.

PAUPER and MISS POLLY do their best to fit in.)

ALL

ISN'T IT SUCH A LOVELY EVENING?

HEAVEN'T A WORRY IN THE WORLD

STROLLING ALONG IN PERFECT FASHION

EVEN OUR LITTLE PUPS ARE PEARLED

ARISTOCRATIC MOUSE

But who has time for children these days, anyway?

ALL

SHOPS ALL AROUND US, CASH FOR BUYING

CHOC'LATES AND COFFEES, CLOTHES AND CHEESE

ASK ALESSANDRO—HE'S OUR FAVORITE

ALESSANDRO

MORE PARMIGIANO?

ALL

YES PLEASE!

WHEN YOU'RE THE MOUSE ABOUT TOWN

THE WORLD'S YOUR OYSTER

WHEN YOU'RE THE BIG CHEESE AROUND

NOTHING CAN SPOIL YA

WHEN YOU'RE THE MOUSE ABOUT TOWN

YOU'RE REALLY SOMETHING
 YOU'VE GOT THE WORLD BY THE TAIL
 YOU WANT FOR NOTHING

(A DESPERATE FAMILY enters. All stop, and you can feel the gasp among them.)

DESPERATE MOUSE

Excuse me, does anyone have any work to give? We're on our last crumb of bread...

ARISTOCRATIC GENTLEMOUSE

Where are you from?

DESPERATE MOUSE

The Counter.

(An audible gasp from the crowd.)

ARISTOCRATIC GENTLEMOUSE

Say no more! Alessandro!

(ALESSANDRO comes forth.)

This family is hungry and desperate. Have you any of yesterday's cheeses left for sale?

ALESSANDRO

No, signore. Out with the garbage yesterday night.

ARISTOCRATIC GENTLEMOUSE

Pity. Sincerest apologies.

(A beat, then pushing DESPERATE MOUSE away with his cane.)

Off you go.

(DESPERATE MOUSE exits.)

ARISTOCRATIC LADY

How kind you were to that poor street family.

ARISTOCRATIC GENTLEMOUSE

Yes, well, we must do our part. Let's celebrate our goodwill. Another round of Parmigiano-Reggiano, Alessandro.

ALESSANDRO

As a-you wish-a.

ALL

ISN'T IT JUST A PERFECT EVENING?
 DO WHAT WE CAN TO HELP THE POOR
 CHARITY NEVER FALLS FROM FASHION
 THE BEGGAR IS GONE—NOW SHUT THE DOOR

BACK TO OUR LIVES OF STYE AND COMFORT
 LIVING A LIFE SO UPPER CRUST
 CALL TO THE WAITER, PLATE IS EMPTY

ALESSANDRO
 MORE CHEESE AND WAFERS?

ALL
 IF WE MUST

WHEN YOU'RE THE MOUSE ABOUT TOWN
 THE WORLD'S YOUR OYSTER
 WHEN YOU'RE THE BIG CHEESE AROUND
 NOTHING CAN SPOIL YA
 WHEN YOU'RE THE MOUSE ABOUT TOWN
 YOUR WORK IS BREEZY
 NOTHING CAN TOPPLE YOUR CROWN
 YOUR LIFE IS EASY

(Spotlight on PAUPER and MISS POLLY as Castle Heights quickly fades and disappears behind them.)

MISS POLLY
 Pauper, I think we should be going. We're standing out like a sore paw.

PAUPER
 You're right. Who knows what kind of chums Brisken has in this town.

MISS POLLY
 The Counter's just up there.

PAUPER
 I've heard the mice there are of ill-repute, but what choice do we have?
(They walk on toward The Counter and see a set of doors with a sign above that says, "Common Cheddar House.")

MISS POLLY
 How about this place, Pauper? I'm sure they serve coffee.

PAUPER
 It'll probably be alright.
(The doors swing open to reveal a raucous barroom full of dancing and ragtime piano. HOST is standing near the entrance.)

PAUPER
 Excuse me, miss. What are they celebrating?

HOST

You're not from around here, are ya?

PAUPER

No.

HOST

It's payday. It's like this once a month.

ALL

PAYDAY! THAT BLESSED DAY OF THE MONTH
 YOU KNOW IT'S PAYDAY WHEN YOU
 SPEND YOUR WHOLE CHECK AT ONCE
 TOMORROW'S TROUBLES CAN
 TAKE CARE OF THEIR OWN
 TONIGHT WE'RE KINGS AND QUEENS ÉLÉGANT
 WE MAY NOT HAVE MUCH
 WE MAY NOT HAVE THOSE OR THESE
 NO MOZZARELLA, NO CHEDDAR, GOUDA, OR BRIE
 BUT WHAT WE HAVE, WE THANK THE STARS UP ABOVE
 FOR PRECIOUS CHEESE, GLORIOUS CHEESE!

A ROUND AND ROUND WE GO
 WE SLOG AT WORK ALL DAY
 BUST OUR TAILS AND SLAVE AWAY FOR LITTLE PAY
 WHEN PAYDAY COMES—ONE PLACE BETCHA CAN
 FIND US AS WE LAUGH OUR TROUBLES AWAY
 DAY IN DAY OUT WE SWEAT
 TRY NOT TO BREAK OUR BACKS
 KEEP OURSELVES ON TRACK
 WE PAY THE GOV'NER'S TAX
 WHEN PAYDAY COMES—ONE PLACE BETCHA CAN
 FIND US, LEAVE OUR PROBLEMS, PAUSE, AND RELAX

(All the mice continue celebrating with a rowdy ragtime two-step dance. PAUPER and MISS POLLY reluctantly join in. The mice continually send PAUPER back to the milktender throughout the dance.)

A ROUND AND ROUND WE GO
 WE SLOG AT WORK ALL DAY
 BUST OUR TAILS AND SLAVE AWAY FOR LITTLE PAY

WHEN PAYDAY COMES—ONE PLACE BETCHA CAN
FIND US AS WE LAUGH OUR TROUBLES AWAY

(ALL dance.)

WHEN PAYDAY COMES—ONE PLACE BETCHA CAN
FIND US AS WE LAUGH OUR TROUBLES AWAY

PAUPER

(Giddily.)

I like it in The Counter.

MISS POLLY

That's enough milk for you, Pauper.

MILKTENDER

Say, love, I think I heard about you.

PAUPER

I'm quite unsure of what you mean.

MILKTENDER

No, I think I did. Heard it on the radio. You fit the description. Two mice on the
run. A lady with a suitcase and a very handsome officer.

PAUPER

Ah, see, that can't be us.

MILKTENDER

Hey fellas! Aren't these the mice from the radio?

PATRONS

Yeah! That's right! Looks like it, to me!

MISS POLLY

Thank you for your hospitality.

(They begin to leave.)

MILKTENDER

Secret's safe with us, love. Isn't it, fellas?

ALL

Here, here!

MILKTENDER

(Begins a round of "He's a Jolly Good Fellow.")

FOR...

ALL

HE'S A JOLLY GOOD RODENT

FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD RODENT

HE'S A JOLLY GOOD RODENT
WHICH NOBODY CAN DENY

(PAUPER and MISS POLLY exit. The barroom becomes the main street of the town. PAUPER and MISS POLLY enter a clothing store.)

SALESMOUSE

Good evening! How may we best outfit you today?

MISS POLLY

Yes, excuse me. Do you know how we might make a report about corruption in our local government?

SALESMOUSE

I can't imagine anything like that happening in this wonderful town. Perhaps I can assist you with a new pair of trousers?

PAUPER

Got anything casual? It's been a long day on the force, and we're, err, traveling.

SALESMOUSE

You've come to the right place. We offer style, comfort, and affordability.

PAUPER

Splendid!

MISS POLLY

Is there no one I can speak with about—

PAUPER

Everything is blue and gray.

SALESMOUSE

Yes, well, those colors compliment our fine city very well.

PAUPER

I'm no stranger to wearing the blue, being an officer of the peace, you know. Just ask Miss Polly, here. She can tell you.

MISS POLLY

Oh, yes. Officer Pauper is a most faithful servant of our towns.

(Noticing some slacks on display.)

And he'd look sporting in those slacks.

PAUPER

(His heart melts.)

We'll take one of those.

MISS POLLY

And he'll be smashing in this vest.

PAUPER

(Losing his faculties.)

One of those, too, please.

MISS POLLY

And this shirt would bring out his eyes quite nicely.

(PAUPER is lost in her eyes.)

SALESMOUSE

One of those, too?

PAUPER

(Still lost.)

Uh, yes.

SALESMOUSE

We have a changing room right over here. Where did you say you were from?

PAUPER

Court's Grove.

SALESMOUSE

I'm sorry, did you say...Court's Grove?

MISS POLLY

What he means to say is that we were just passing through Court's Grove.

(SALESMOUSE is visibly disturbed, though tries to keep cool.)

SALESMOUSE

How lovely. Right this way.

(PAUPER and SALESMOUSE exit. The slow ragtime music is interrupted by

RADIO ANNOUNCER.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We interrupt your regularly scheduled program to bring you this important update. The identities of the two rogue mice have now been discovered. The mouse impersonating a policemouse goes by the name of Pauper, and his female companion is Miss Polly. I repeat: Their names are Pauper and Miss Polly. They were last seen fleeing the Common Cheddar House in The Counter and are expected find a change of clothing. If you have any information, you are compelled by the law to report any and all information that could lead to the arrest of outlaws Pauper and Miss Polly. We now return you to your regularly scheduled program.

(The sad ragtime music continues. SALESMOUSE reenters, looking as though he has seen a ghost.)

SALESMOUSE

Your...friend will just be a moment. Please, feel free to have a look around. I just need to make a brief phone call. Please, browse our selection until I can be of more help to you.

MISS POLLY

Wouldn't you know it...I just realized we have an appointment with...the governor. You see, we have some information that will be of interest to him.

(In Pauper's direction.)

P...Hopper, we've got to get to that...appointment. So, let's get hopping.

PAUPER

(Emerging from the dressing room.)

Why are you talking like that, Miss Pol—

MISS POLLY

Holly!

(To SALESMOUSE)

I'm Miss Holly, and this is Hopper. It's a nickname. It's because he's always hopping. Isn't that right, Hopper?

PAUPER

Right, Miss...Holly. I just can't stop hopping.

MISS POLLY

Now, we must be getting to our very important appointment. Isn't that right, Hopper? With the Governor?

PAUPER

Right, Miss...Holly...the appointment. With the Governor. Much to do in our line of work. How much do we owe you?

SALESMOUSE

No charge.

PAUPER

No charge?

SALESMOUSE

It's...a...new policy. All out-of-town visitors get one free spree. Thank you for coming in. It's been a pleasure.

PAUPER

Well, I say...thank you!

(Before you can say, "Bob's your uncle," SALESMOUSE pushes PAUPER and MISS POLLY out the door.)

MISS POLLY

Well, that was a disaster.

PAUPER

Very nearly. The authorities might be onto us by now. We'd better be going.

MISS POLLY

But where? Just how do we report a corrupt mayor?

(FRANCENE enters from behind the store.)

FRANCENE

Excuse me...

PAUPER

Who are you?

FRANCENE

Someone who can help.

MISS POLLY

How do you mean to help us?

FRANCENE

I know who you are, Miss Polly. I know that you are running from illegitimate authorities. Come, you need to find cover immediately if you don't want to get caught.

PAUPER

Why are you telling us this?

FRANCENE

I mean you no harm, but in order for you to remain free, you must trust me and follow me to a safe place where we can talk.

MISS POLLY

How can we trust you? We don't know you!

FRANCENE

You speak of deception and corruption in these towns. I've seen it. And believe me, it doesn't stop at Mayor Briskin.

(A beat.)

Do you know where you'll go from here? Will you hide, or will you fight? How will you defeat Briskin? I, too, want liberation for our mice, but we must leave now.

(The sounds of marching and singing can be heard in the distance, offstage.)

POLICEMICE (OFFSTAGE)

WE DO DEMAND YOU TURN YOURSELF IN

WE HAVE DETERMINED THAT YOU'LL NEVER WIN

FRANCENE

We must act quickly! Do you trust me?

(PAUPER and MISS POLLY proceed forward with FRANCENE.)

PAUPER

Lead on.

(As they traverse to their new surroundings, a large, high platform with stairs leading to an upper walkway is brought downstage and secured to the revolve within the stage.)

MISS POLLY

Where are you taking us?

FRANCENE

Somewhere safe that we can talk.

MISS POLLY

It seems awfully far.

FRANCENE

We'll be there soon.

(The set changes, revealing an abandoned corridor.)

We're safe here. Do you know why Mayor Brisken, and ultimately Governor Wimble, are so intent on capturing you?

MISS POLLY

Governor Wimble?

FRANCENE

Let me see your suitcase.

MISS POLLY

My suitcase? What could you possibly want with that?

FRANCENE

I haven't enough time to explain everything.

MISS POLLY

I won't let you go through my things.

FRANCENE

Your lives depend on it. Do you want to go back to The Counter? Brisken's mice are already swarming by now.

MISS POLLY

Fine. But there's nothing in there of value there. A broken teacup, a few trinkets.
A soldier's name tag...

(FRANCENE finds the name tag and reads it.)

FRANCENE

Cordon...

MISS POLLY

Excuse me?

(FRANCENE pockets the name tag.)

MISS POLLY

What are you doing with that?

FRANCENE

Taking it for safe keeping. Briskin wants to keep it for himself, but we mustn't let him.

MISS POLLY

Give it back to me.

FRANCENE

Trust me, this is for your own good.

HENDERSON runs up the platform to meet them.)

HENDERSON

Don't trust her!

FRANCENE

Henderson?

HENDERSON

(Waving a makeshift knife.)

Now, why don't you tell them who you really are—Mayor Francene?

PAUPER

Mayor Francene? Mayor of what?

FRANCENE

No, Henderson. I don't think that will be necessary. Step aside.

(Two GUARDS comes up from behind HIM, ready to apprehend.)

HENDERSON

You're gonna tell 'em the truth. The truth about who you are and why you want that name tag.

FRANCENE

No, I won't. Instead, the three of you will go down the garbage chute together, and I'll deliver this name tag to its rightful owner.

(The GUARDS apprehend PAUPER, MISS POLLY, and HENDERSON, securing the knife without much of a struggle. The garbage chute is a slide attached to the back of the platform, out of audience view.)

GUARD

Alright, one at a time or all together?

PAUPER

All together.

(They all agree.)

Miss Polly, I...

MISS POLLY

Yes?

PAUPER

If we don't make it out alive, I just wanted to tell you that I...I...

MISS POLLY

Yes?

PAUPER

I love...

MISS POLLY

Yes?

PAUPER

(And down they go.)

I loved the teacup!

(All three mice go down the garbage chute.)

FRANCENE

(To guard.)

Let's go. Brisken will be waiting. And there's a Governor who'll be very pleased have what I've found.

(Blackout.)

SCENE SEVEN: THE COUNTER

(All's a riot in town square. The buzz is going around everywhere that The Governor is coming. It's day and the streets are full. BRISKEN enters amidst the chaos.)

GEORGE

The Governor's coming! The Governor's coming!

ETHEL

That's what I heard yesterday in the market!

AMBROSE

My sources confirm, yes, the Governor is on his way!

BRISKEN

You there, what sources do you have?

AMBROSE

Well, George told Esther, who told Ethel, who heard from her gardener, whose brother went to school with...

BRISKEN

Pish-tosh. A ridiculous rumor!

(Brisken bumps into large rat and falls to the ground.)

BRISKEN

Don't you know who I am?

DRAKE

Actually, I do.

BRISKEN

Oh, Drake....I didn't realize it was you.

DRAKE

Consider yourself forgiven, Brisken.

BRISKEN

It's Mayor Brisken. So it's true then. Is it?

DRAKE

What?

BRISKEN

That Governor Wimble is coming.

DRAKE

Of course, it's true.

BRISKEN

And he sent you to inform me personally, I suppose.

DRAKE

Naturally.

BRISKEN

Very good. Well then, thank you. The message has been received.

DRAKE

The Governor has plans to meet with Mayor Francene. He requires that you attend.

BRISKEN

Indeed. Well, as I serve at the pleasure of The Governor...

DRAKE

At the obligation of The Governor.

BRISKEN

Yes, indeed. I'll be delighted to be in attendance. Tell me the time and location and I'll be...

DRAKE

Governor Wimble has commanded me to escort you there personally.

BRISKEN

Very well, then. Lead the way.

(The town disappears and Library Ridge, an old and abandoned ski resort, appears.)

BRISKEN

Library Ridge? This place has been shut down for years.

DRAKE

The Governor will be here soon enough.

BRISKEN

Are you quite certain of The Governor's intentions? I'm starting to think you brought me here on your own.

DRAKE

He knows that you intended to keep the name tag for your precious collection.

BRISKEN

The name tag?

DRAKE

The very one that Mayor Francene has recovered.

BRISKEN

What would I want with a worthless trinket like that?

DRAKE

Makes no difference to The Governor what you'd do with it.

BRISKEN

Then why take me all the way out here, with no other mice around?

DRAKE

Governor Wimble has plans for that name tag, and he can't have you getting in the way.

BRISKEN

When have I ever betrayed The Governor?

DRAKE

(He reveals a small bell from within his jacket pocket.)

We can't afford to take any chances.

BRISKEN

What is that for?

DRAKE

You'll see.

BRISKEN

You expect me to just stay here until—

DRAKE

I wouldn't go far, if I were you. Never know what creatures may be lurking about.

BRISKEN

What are you talking about? What creatures?

DRAKE

Shall I ring this bell and show you?

BRISKEN

I don't understand... You don't mean cats, do you?

DRAKE

See for yourself.

BRISKEN

Don't be ridiculous, we all know there are no...

DRAKE

Look into his eyes, Brisken.

(DRAKE rings the bell three times, and the shadow of a large, menacing cat appears on the backdrop. BRISKEN is unable to move.)

BRISKEN

Is he vicious?

DRAKE

Let's find out, shall we? Two rings sends him away.

BRISKEN

Drake...

DRAKE

Four rings and he attacks.

BRISKEN

Drake, please...

(BRISKEN pushes DRAKE, knocking him to the ground. BRISKEN takes the bell and rings it four times. MOURBURN'S shadow appears, and MOURBURN shows his fangs. MOURBURN'S shadow appears to give chase to DRAKE, allowing BRISKEN to begin escaping in the opposite direction. BRISKEN is stopped by MAPLE, while ALBERT comes up from behind and knocks BRISKEN out with a wooden board.)

MAPLE

Well done, boy-o!

ALBERT

Leave it to judge Albert to get the job done. Maple, help me drag this good fer nuthin' mayor outta here.

(Blackout.)

SCENE EIGHT: THE BASEMENT

(We are now down the garbage where PAUPER, MISS POLLY, and HENDERSON have landed amongst some trash, chiefly apple cores and newspapers.)

PAUPER

Miss Polly! Are you alright?

MISS POLLY

My ankle hurts a little, but I think I'm fine.

PAUPER

(To Henderson.)

And just who are you?

MISS POLLY

Pauper, he's the one who tried to steal my suitcase after I left the train.

PAUPER

What? You're the scoundrel?

MISS POLLY

(PAUPER starts after him, but MISS POLLY intervenes.)

Pauper, he can't possibly mean any harm. He saved me in the garbage shoot by softening my fall. And he tried to warn us about that Francene lady. I trust him.

PAUPER

(To Henderson.)

Trust him? I should...

(He grabs an appleseed.)

I should throw this in his eye! Who are you and what do you want with Miss Polly?

HENDERSON

I was trying to warn her.

PAUPER

About what?

HENDERSON

About Mayor Brisken's plan to arrest her. That he wanted Miss Polly's name tag.

MISS POLLY

Why so much interest in a simple name tag?

HENDERSON

I don't know for sure, but I know they were obeying orders from up the chain of command...from The Governor.

MISS POLLY

Why would The Governor care about a simple trinket like a name tag?

PAUPER

Why should we trust anything you say? We've already been crossed more than once.

HENDERSON

I suppose you can't fully trust me, but can you really trust anyone?

PAUPER

(Pausing to think it over for a moment.)

What's your name, thief?

HENDERSON

Henderson.

PAUPER

How have you come by all this information?

HENDERSON

I am...I was an officer of Court's Grove.

PAUPER

Another strike against you.

HENDERSON

I was at the top of the force. I had the full trust of Mayor Brisken. That is, until I went rogue.

MISS POLLY

What happened? Why did you leave?

HENDERSON

When I first joined the force, I wanted to help mice. But I found I could do that better when carrying out my own orders.

MISS POLLY

I trust him, Pauper.

PAUPER

Well, we'll see.

(The three sit in silence for a few moments.)

MISS POLLY

What is this place?

HENDERSON

I'm not sure.

PAUPER

Well, wherever we are, someone certainly likes apples.

(A voice comes from offstage, ominous and foreboding.)

A VOICE

Apples, among other things, make a very tasty snack.

PAUPER

Who is that?

A VOICE

Of course, apples aren't always the main course.

PAUPER

Who are you?

A VOICE

Sometimes, apples make a delectable dessert.

PAUPER

Show yourself!

(An old cat enters, and movement draws precious energy for this creature, whose name is CORDON.)

CORDON

Three mice all together! Hmm...

PAUPER

Look here, you cat-creature! We're not afraid of you!

CORDON

(Showing his fangs.)

Oh? What if I show you my fangs?

HENDERSON

That is a little scary.

PAUPER

Listen, cat! We're not afraid of you. Do your worst!

MISS POLLY

Why are you provoking him?

PAUPER

Alright...Look, cat. What do you want from us?

CORDON

Want from you? Who says I want anything to do with you?

PAUPER

Well, you're a cat. Cats eat mice.

CORDON

Do they? Actually, I'm quite partial to apples.

PAUPER

Apples?

(Cordon whistles, and a small horde of mice come from the shadows. Among them is LARBY, his closest mouse companion.)

MISS POLLY

Who are all these mice?

CORDON

These are my friends. I can't fit through the hole that goes outside anymore, so they bring me apples.

LARBY

Are ya hungry?

CORDON

A little peckish.

LARBY

No problem. Be right back.

PAUPER

So, these mice bring you apples. And you eat just the apples? You don't eat the mice?

(PAUPER, MISS POLLY, and HENDERSON slowly walk up the set to meet CORDON.)

CORDON

Not in all my years as the presiding king of the basement.

MISS POLLY

You're...you're nothing like...

CORDON

Like you expected?

MISS POLLY

Not at all. You're very sweet.

HENDERSON

She's right. You're not the kind of vicious, bloodthirsty monster that I've heard about.

MISS POLLY

Henderson!

HENDERSON

What? I said he's not. It was supposed to be a compliment.

CORDON

It's quite alright. False rumors can be difficult to avoid. The trick is to not believe everything you hear.

(CORDON yawns.)

Cats do take catnaps, though. There's a rumor you can believe.

LARBY

(To PAUPER, MISS POLLY, and HENDERSON.)

Come on. I'd like to introduce you to the others.

#10 — Welcome Home (Ensemble)

(The BASEMENT MICE gather 'round PAUPER, MISS POLLY, and HENDERSON and ad lib introducing themselves. A fiddle starts to play, and they start to dance. PAUPER, MISS POLLY, and HENDERSON slowly start to warm to the dance until they're dancing and having fun. ALL dance and sing a song. The scene fades to the background, but the mice continue dancing, except PAUPER, MISS POLLY, and HENDERSON. THEY catch their breath and see CORDON awake, staring off into nothing. As THEY approach, he wipes tears from his eyes.)

MISS POLLY

Cordon? Are you alright?

CORDON

Me? I'm fit as a fiddle.

MISS POLLY

Really? You seem a little teary.

CORDON

Never been more cheery.

(A beat.)

I'm alright. Sometimes, I sit here and think.

HENDERSON

Is something on your mind?

CORDON

No. Just the usual.

MISS POLLY

If you'd like to talk about it, we have time...now.

CORDON

There's nothing to say, my friend. I mostly just like to sit right here, looking through that window at the stars. The basement door is locked, so I'm afraid I'm stuck in this dusty old room. Been that way for many years. But it's alright. I can still smell the rose garden in the summer, and I get plenty of apples in the fall. And evenings, I sit and think. And remember.

MISS POLLY

Remember what?

CORDON

Oh. Isn't it bedtime? I hate to bore you with an old cat's chatter.

PAUPER

Go on, Cordon. Tell us.

CORDON

Well, I was just sitting here remembering a time, very long ago. Long before the mice came and built the towns in this house. There was a wonderful family by the name of Adderly. I like to remember them, sometimes.

HENDERSON

Who were this family, the Adderly's?

CORDON

The kindest humans I ever knew. They seemed to have many friends. They loved to have people stay with them. The Adderly's were the kind of humans who helped people. Sometimes, their friends would stay in this basement for a little

while, then go somewhere else. In those days, I thought I knew what it meant to be loved.

MISS POLLY

Didn't they love you?

CORDON

(Fighting back the tears.)

Oh, yes. Until I learned what it meant to be truly loved. A sweet little girl, not ten years old. She loved me more than I'd ever known before. She'd bring me fresh apples, sometimes bits of apple cake. She'd sing to me, and whisper secrets in my ear. The night she left...

MISS POLLY

Where did she go?

CORDON

I'll never know. But she gave me a soldier's name tag with the name Cordon on it. It belonged to her father. The night she left, she brought me the last piece of her apple cake, and put the name tag 'round my neck. The sweetest girl, so full of dreams and love. She said our friendship was like a rose.

MISS POLLY

What was her name?

CORDON

Antonette.

#11 — Antonette (Cordon)

After I'd finished my apple cake, she sang to me for the last time.

WHEN YOU PLANT A SEED AND NURTURE IT TO GROW
IT WILL GROW THROUGH THE YEARS
IF THE ROOT IS CUT, DON'T FORCE AWAY THE TEARS
YOU'LL FIND IT ALL THE HARDER TO LET GO
YOU'LL FIND IT ALL THE HARDER TO LET GO

Then she scratched my neck and sang...

WITH A LITTLE CARE A BUD BECOMES A ROSE
AND IT GROWS THROUGH THE YEARS
IF YOU ACCEPT THE THORNS AND
LEARN TO FACE YOUR FEARS
YOU'LL FIND THAT YOU ARE
STRONGER THAN YOU KNOW

YOU'LL FIND THAT YOU ARE
STRONGER THAN YOU KNOW

TAKE HEART...A THORN HURTS FOR A MINUTE
IN TIME, THE PAIN WILL FADE AWAY
ADVENTURE'S WAITING, JUST BEGIN IT
TAKE HEART...REMEMBER ME SOMEDAY

And then she whispered in my ear...

TAKE HEART, OUR FRIENDSHIP WON'T BE PARTED
I'LL NOT FORGET WHILE I'M AWAY
TOO TRUE, NEW CHAPTERS MUST BE STARTED
TAKE HEART...THE DAWN BRINGS A NEW DAY

And then she was gone. Forever.

*(Cordon climbs down from his perch and disappears behind the set. Larby,
Pauper, Miss Polly, and Henderson stand in silence for some time.)*

MISS POLLY

I can't believe what I just heard. That's got to be the saddest story of any creature
in this house.

HENDERSON

The bit about the towns being built. My grandfather helped build them. Before
Wimble was governor. Even before Wimble's father was governor.

PAUPER

Is Cordon that old?

(LARBY enters.)

LARBY

Cordon's that old.

MISS POLLY

Larby! You frightened me.

LARBY

I'm sorry. I just came to show you where to sleep.

MISS POLLY

Larby, how long ago did the Adderly family live in this house?

LARBY

Ages ago. Because we've been down here for ages since.

HENDERSON

And how did you all get down here?

LARBY

Same as you. Down the garbage chute.

HENDERSON

What, the governor threw you all down here?

LARBY

Afraid so.

PAUPER

Why would he do that?

LARBY

Some of us knew things about him and couldn't keep quiet. So he got rid of us.

PAUPER

Well, there's enough of us here to stand a fighting chance. How do we get back up there?

LARBY

There's no way back. The basement door is locked, and there's no way in from the outside.

PAUPER

Outside? Outside the house? As in the outdoors?

LARBY

That's right.

PAUPER

If you can go outside, why can't you find a way back in?

LARBY

Mice have tried over the years, but it's dangerous. Look, we're used to life down here. It's not easy, but we wouldn't go back even if we could.

PAUPER

But home is upstairs. Do you really want to keep living like this?

LARBY

This is our home now. And it's yours, too.

PAUPER

No. This isn't my home. Court's Grove is my home.

LARBY

What are you going back to up there? Corrupt rulers? Wanna be a part of a society that throws you out like yesterday's cheese? No, thanks. Not me.

PAUPER

But we can't let them get away with this! Don't you want to fight back?

LARBY

What fight? They've got a killer cat up there named Mourburn, who they've trained to attack on command.

HENDERSON

What?

MISS POLLY

But I thought there weren't any cats.

LARBY

There aren't. There's just one. Mourburn. When they ring a bell, he attacks.

HENDERSON

How do you know all this?

LARBY

We have a mouse who's been watching them.

HENDERSON

A spy?

LARBY

Look, fight all you want. But it's not going to end well. You've been warned.

We're happy to welcome you here. I've got to get the pups ready for bed.

(He exits.)

PAUPER

What are we going to do? We can't stay here. Court's Grove is our home.

HENDERSON

But we can't go back, they'll throw us back down here. Or worse...

MISS POLLY

We've got to fight.

#11 — *We'll Bring the War to Their Door (Miss Polly, Henderson, Pauper)*

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

HENDERSON

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR?

MISS POLLY

NEVER BEEN A BETTER NIGHT

TO GO UPSTAIRS AND START A FIGHT

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

PAUPER

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR?

MISS POLLY
 TIME TO STAND UP AND BE STRONG
 AND GET THE MICE TO COME ALONG

PAUPER, MISS POLLY, HENDERSON
 WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

LARBY
 WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR?

PAUPER, MISS POLLY, HENDERSON
 EVERY MOUSE DESERVES TO BE
 IN A LAND WHERE THEY ARE FREE

PAUPER, MISS POLLY, HENDERSON
 WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
 NOW WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

PAUPER
 I have a plan! I'll go outside and see if I can open the basement door.

MISS POLLY
 But how will you get inside the house?

PAUPER
 I'll figure something out.

HENDERSON
 You'll need some reinforcements with you, in case you come across Mourburn or Governor Wimple.

PAUPER
 No, it's better for you to stay with Miss Polly and help her rouse the troops. If we're going to win this fight, we're going to need every mouse and cat to help fight.

MISS POLLY
 But Pauper, you must be careful. You don't know what kind of danger could be outside.

PAUPER
 I'll be careful, Miss Polly.

PAUPER
 WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
 WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
 I PROMISE I WON'T BE TOO LONG
 I'LL BE SMART AND I'LL BE STRONG

MISS POLLY
GO BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

HENDERSON
GO BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
GO BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

PAUPER, MISS POLLY, HENDERSON
FOR EVERY MOUSE DESERVES TO BE
IN A LAND WHERE THEY ARE FREE
WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
NOW WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR

(Pauper starts to leave, then turns around.)

MISS POLLY
Pauper...

PAUPER
Yes?

MISS POLLY
I...

PAUPER
Yes?

MISS POLLY
What I'm trying to tell you is...

PAUPER
Yes?

MISS POLLY
Come back to me in one piece, alright?

PAUPER
Would you like to have dinner with me on Thursday night?

MISS POLLY
Why...I'd love to.

PAUPER
Splendid.

(Pauper walks the revolve as the stage transforms to reveal a large window, from which smoke is pouring. Pauper ascends it to exit the basement into the outside.)

PAUPER

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

NOW WHAT AM I WAITING FOR?

(He jumps down out the window and there's an immediate blackout.)

(END ACT ONE.)

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE: THE OUTSIDE

#12 — *Entr'acte (Orchestra)*

(Pauper is now outside, and it is glorious. Never having known anything of the outdoors, he takes in everything. Fog abounds. Raindrops fall from the sky.)

#13 — *Can't Stop to Smell the Roses (Pauper)*

PAUPER

Amazing. Oh, Aunt Earlamond, if only you could be here. I've never seen anything like it! The great outdoors! I've heard of it, of course.

(Leaning down to touch the ground.)

I've heard of dirt, but I've never touched it.

(Looking up to the sky, letting the raindrops fall on his face.)

I've read about raindrops, but I've never felt one before!

RAINDROPS! BEAUTIFUL RAINDROPS

SKY FULL OF WONDERFUL RAINDROPS IN THE AIR

RAINDROPS! THEY MAKE THE GRASS GROW

TALL AS THE TREETOPS, WITHOUT COMPARE

WHO COULD HAVE KNOWN

THERE'S A WHOLE WORLD OUT THERE?

SOIL AND STONES AND

FRESH EARTH EVERYWHERE

(Wild flowers appear.)

FLOWERS! WILD FLOWERS

GROWING HIGHER IN THE MIRE

A TRUE TREASURE BEYOND MEASURE

ENDLESS EXPLORING IN GOD'S OPEN AIR

MY SOUL IS SOARING THERE'S SO MUCH TO DARE!

I HEAR IT CALLING ME

I WONDER COULD IT BE

I can't get distracted. They're counting on me

*(A beautiful, well maintained rose bush appears. Pauper is constantly tempted to
snap one off for himself.)*

ROSES...CAN'T STOP TO SMELL ANY ROSES

But they're amazing!

ROSES...FRESH FRAGRANT ROSES

Can't stop for gazing!

SURELY, A PERSON IS TENDING TO THESE

A FARMER, A GARDENER, OR SOMEONE LIKE ME

(The rose bush disappears as Pauper traverses the revolve.)

FARMERS WORK THE LAND AND YIELD A CROP

THE BUNNIES HOP, IT'S CLEAR THEY'RE

RUINING THE GARDEN STEALING

SWEETS THEY LIKE TO EAT

MOLES DIG HOLES DEEP IN THE GROUND

THEY'RE SAFE AND SOUND FROM

COYOTES, WOLVES, AND HAWKS AND OWLS

AND OTHER FOWL

(A wolf howls.)

WAS THAT A HOWL?

CLEAR OUT HERE IS PERIL THERE ARE

FERAL CATS AND MAMMOTH RATS

SWAMPS AND PONDS AND FISH AND FROGS

SALAMANDERS IN THE BOGS

WILD MICE WITH WILD EYES

WHO BASK BENEATH THE WILD SKIES

FREE FROM STRIFE THEY SPEND THEIR LIFE

JUST ANYWAY THEY LIKE!

POLLY...SWEETEST MISS POLLY

PATIENT MISS POLLY, WAITING FOR ME

MOUSE ON A MISSION, A WAR'S ON BACK THERE

I'VE HAD A VISION, I'LL BE BACK HERE I SWEAR

(The rosebush reappears.)

ROSES...BRIGHT RED ROSES

CAN'T STOP TO SMELL ALL THE...

(He very nearly breaks off a rose from the rosebush, but before he can, a menacing dog bark interrupts him and stops him in his tracks. The creature casts a large, ominous shadow upon the cyc, and it grows larger as the dog draws nearer.)

DOG'S VOICE

Get away from that rosebush!

PAUPER

I'm sorry! I was just looking. I've never seen a rose before...

DOG'S VOICE

And does that give you the right to take that which doesn't belong to you?

PAUPER

Dreadfully, sorry. I'll just be going...

DOG'S VOICE

My eyes see a pitiful mouse, but my nose smells a more pitiful cat.

PAUPER

You, sir, have an excellent nose. I'll just be on my way...

DOG'S VOICE

You reek of Cordon.

PAUPER

I'll be sure to tell him you said hello. Toodaloo.

DOG'S VOICE

If you make it back alive.

PAUPER

Things may get hairy, but I'll get back.

DOG'S VOICE

If I let you.

(The dog starts a low growl. Pauper stands stunned, but suddenly thinks of his pocket watch.)

Listen, you big oaf. I have a weapon, and I am very dangerous with it.

DOG'S VOICE

Excellent. You can time how quickly I eat you.

PAUPER

Well, if you're going to do it, then do it!

(The dog continues to growl without making a move.)

Don't dawdle, dog. I'm very tasty!

(The dog stops growling. The shadow becomes smaller and smaller and we see the dog for the first time.)

THE DOG

I have no taste for a mouse. But I do have an agreement.

PAUPER

What agreement is that?

THE DOG

Safe passage through the courtyard in exchange for two things.

PAUPER

And what is that?

THE DOG

The rosebush remains sacred. No one is to touch it except for my master, who will return to tend to it.

PAUPER

And the other thing?

THE DOG

My presence here remains hidden.

PAUPER

Why?

THE DOG

The less I am known, the better I can protect.

PAUPER

The roses?

(The dog remains silent and begins to exit.)

Can I smell them?

THE DOG

Yes. But you may not touch.

(The dog is gone. Pauper continues, and the side of a house appears at the side of the stage, extending upward to the top of the proscenium. On it are nails that make up a ladder.)

PAUPER

Well, this looks promising.

(HE picks up a rock and climbs up the nail-ladder.)

So sorry about this!

(HE breaks a window on the side of the house.)

SCENE TWO: THE CLOTHING SHOP

(The shop is quiet, and there stands the same salesmouse as before. FRANCENE enters.)

SALESMOUSE

Good evening, ma'am. What can I help you with today?

FRANCENE

I'm just having a look around while I wait to meet a friend.

SALESMOUSE

Very well. I'm at your service when you're ready.

(A rat enters the store, has a look around, then beckons Governor Wimble to enter.

Wimble is smooth and sleek; always calculated, he never speaks higher than a medium tone. When he speaks, he displays his sharp, poisonous teeth.)

WIMBLE

Good evening, Mayor.

FRANCENE

(Bowing.)

Governor Wimble. Shall we go to the back room?

WIMBLE

No. Whatever is said may be heard by those present.

FRANCENE

(Producing the name tag.)

I went to great lengths to get this. Earned their trust. And getting Henderson was a bonus.

WIMBLE

Excellently executed. And the three of them are...?

FRANCENE

Taken care of, sir.

WIMBLE

(To the salesmouse.)

You there.

SALESMOUSE

How can I be of assistance to you gentlemen, this evening?

WIMBLE

This rat needs a new suit. Find him something professional.

SALESMOUSE

Coming right up.

(The mouse quickly suggests a suit, and the rat goes offstage to change into it.)

FRANCENE

Now that I've secured the name tag, what do you plan to do with it? It seems like a trinket, to me.

WIMBLE

(Reading the name tag.)

Cordon...quite a peculiar name, don't you agree?

FRANCENE

Absolutely.

WIMBLE

You're too young to remember. But I remember.

FRANCENE

Remember what, sir?

WIMBLE

Cordon.

FRANCENE

I don't understand.

WIMBLE

When I was young, my father built these towns. Cordon, the cat, lived at peace among us, and there was nothing to fear. But fear is a very powerful agent. Without fear, control is simply not possible. What have you heard about Cordon?

FRANCENE

I've heard stories. Is it true that he doesn't eat mice?

WIMBLE

It is.

FRANCENE

What about the name tag, sir?

WIMBLE

Do you know where he got his name?

FRANCENE

No, sir.

WIMBLE

The idiot always wore a soldier's name tag. This name tag.

(Holds up Cordon's name tag.)

A little girl named him Cordon and gave him this worthless trinket.

FRANCENE

I don't understand...

WIMBLE

I have already started a rumor that Cordon has returned and is lurking in the shadows. Tonight, I will address the towns and warn them that Cordon is evil, as all cats are. But they won't believe me. They'll remember Cordon as a kind cat, a friend to mice. And just as all the mice are gathered at The Counter, we will secretly summon Mourburn, wearing this old name tag. But the mice will have no fear, for they remember Cordon. But with four rings of a little bell, Mourburn will attack. And having warned them upon warning never to trust a cat, I will have all the trust I need.

(The rat comes back in with his new suit. Wimble beckons the salesmouse.)

You there. Do you know who I am?

SALESMOUSE

Yes.

WIMBLE

And what have you heard about me?

SALESMOUSE

That the poison in your teeth could make a grown mouse sick for weeks.

WIMBLE

Do you believe it?

SALESMOUSE

I don't know, sir.

WIMBLE

Let's find out.

(Bites him on the shoulder, and the salesmouse begins to shake as he lowers himself to the ground.)

Thank you for the suit.

(To the rat.)

The place is yours now.

(The salesmouse continues shaking as Wimble and Francene exit. Blackout.)

SCENE THREE: THE HOUSE

(PAUPER is now in the dining room of the house. MALLBERRY enters hurriedly.)

PAUPER

Mallberry!

MALLBERRY

Pauper?

PAUPER

Why are you running? And why did you betray Miss Polly?

MALLBERRY

(Continuing to run.)

I don't have time to explain. So sorry!

PAUPER

I thought you were my friend!

MALLBERRY

(He stops. He speaks before turning around.)

I was...I am.

PAUPER

Then why did you betray us?

MALLBERRY

Pauper, I want to tell you everything—everything that happened. But I don't have time. You don't have time!

PAUPER

What do you mean?

MALLBERRY

The Governor has plans to attack The Counter with a monster named Mourburn, disguised as a cat named Cordon.

PAUPER

Cordon?

MALLBERRY

Yes, that's why The Governor wanted to arrest Miss Polly. She had the name tag.

PAUPER

So Mourburn, disguised as Cordon, is going to attack The Counter?

MALLBERRY

Yes.

PAUPER

When?

MALLBERRY

Tonight.

PAUPER

Is there anyway to stop it?

MALLBERRY

I can't think of how. They've trained him to respond to a special bell, but they don't know he's just playing along.

PAUPER

The bell doesn't work?

MALLBERRY

He's just pretending, I know that for sure. I've studied him. But he's planning something, and I don't know what.

PAUPER

I thought you were on their side.

MALLBERRY

I'm just trying to keep my family alive.

(Mallberry starts to exit.)

PAUPER

Where are you going?

MALLBERRY

Somewhere they can't find us.

PAUPER

Do you think they'll stop looking? Think they'll just give up?

MALLBERRY

What other choice do I have?

PAUPER

You can stand and fight! Come with me. It's the only chance we have.

#14 — *We'll Bring the War to Their Door (Pauper, Mallberry)*

PAUPER

COME BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

MALLBERRY

COME BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR?

PAUPER

TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO STAND
TO RISE UP AND TAKE COMMAND

MALLBERRY

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR?

PAUPER

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

MALLBERRY

DO YOU REALLY THINK WE'LL WIN
OH, THAT REALLY MAKES ME GRIN
WE'LL END UP IN MOURBURN'S MOUTH
WHEN THINGS GO SOUTH

PAUPER

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

MALLBERRY

TRULY WISH THE BEST OF LUCK
I'M AFRAID I'LL PASS THE BUCK
GO BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
NOW WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

(Mallberry exits. Pauper calls after him.)

PAUPER

Where's your sense of honor and duty? Your sense of adventure? Your loyalty?
The basement mice are depending on us. And Miss Polly...

#15 — Miss Polly (Pauper)

MISS POLLY, YOU'RE THE ONE I'M LIVING FOR
MISS POLLY, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO I ADORE
I'M COMING SOON
MISS POLLY, I'LL FIGHT AND STAND MY GROUND
ONE MOUSE FOR ALL, UNTIL YOU'RE SAFE AND SOUND
MY WATCH IN HAND, I'LL LOOK MOURBURN IN THE
EYES

I WON'T GIVE UP, SO DON'T BE FOOLED BY MY SIZE
 CAT DO YOUR WORST, I HAVE IN STORE A BIG SURPRISE
*(The lights fade on PAUPER as the lights come up on MISS POLLY in the
 basement.)*

SCENE FOUR: THE BASEMENT

#16 — *Can You Be the Same Again? (Miss Polly)*

MISS POLLY

TO LIVE AND LOVE IS WELL ENOUGH
 FOR MANY OTHER MICE
 THE QUIET LIFE IS NICE
 BUT ONCE YOU'VE TASTED AND YOU'VE SEEN
 A LOVE LIKE THERE'S NEVER BEEN
 CAN YOU BE THE SAME AGAIN?

FOR ONCE YOU'VE FOUND YOUR ONLY LOVE
 NO ONE ELSE WILL DO
 AS CERTAIN AS THE STARS ABOVE
 SHINE DOWN ON US, REMEMBER I LOVE YOU

TO LIVE AND DIE IS WELL ENOUGH
 FOR MANY OTHER MICE
 THE SIMPLE LIFE IS NICE
 BUT ONCE YOU'VE TASTED AND YOU'VE SEEN
 A LIFE LIKE THERE'S NEVER BEEN
 CAN YOU BE THE SAME AGAIN?

FOR ONCE YOU'VE TAKEN CHANCES
 YOU'LL HARDLY LIVE FOR LESS
 AND SHOULD YOU LOSE YOUR ONLY LIFE
 SINCE YOU ARE LOVED
 THEN SURELY YOU ARE BLESSED

SOME DESIRE HAVING FAME AND RICHES
 SOME MICE LIVE A LIFE OF WOES AND WISHES

OTHERS DREAM OF TIME GONE BY AND MISS IT
LIFE IS FOR LOVE, AND LIVING IS FOR US

FOR LOVE'S THE TRUE ADVENTURE
NO OTHER LIFE WILL DO
AS CERTAIN AS THE STARS ABOVE
SHINE DOWN ON US
FOREVER, I'LL LOVE YOU

(Henderson and Larby and huddled beside the furnace.)

This doesn't feel right. Pauper should have been back by now.

HENDERSON

Don't worry yourself too much. He'll get that door open soon.

MISS POLLY

I can't wait any longer. I'm going to try again.

(She stops in the middle of the room and tries to address the room.)

Excuse me, everyone.

(No reaction.)

May I have your attention, please.

(Still not much reaction.)

You see, Pauper went upstairs because he believes we can fight Governor Wimble. But to do that, we need your help.

GRUFF MOUSE

You want us to fight a war for you?

MISS POLLY

Not for me. For you. For freedom.

#17 — *We'll Bring the War to Their Door — Reprise (Miss Polly)*

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
TRUE, A WAR IS ON THE RISE
SO LET'S GIVE 'EM A SURPRISE

*(Not a budge. Suddenly, a knock comes from the other side of the
basement door.)*

PAUPER

Miss Polly? Henderson?

MISS POLLY

Yes!

PAUPER

Oh, Miss Polly! It's worse than we thought. They think they've trained Mourburn to respond to a bell and attack The Counter on their command, but he's only pretending to obey the bell. Who knows what Mourburn's planning to do. We need the help of every basement mouse—and cat—if we're going to stop him.

(A beat.)

Is Henderson hearing this?

MISS POLLY

Yes!

HENDERSON

(After a moment of internal deliberation.)

Alright, mice, listen up! Miss Polly's right. What kind of freedom do we really have? Freedom to fetch apples...keep the furnace hot...and moan about life back in the old days? Not to mention the killer cat upstairs? Are we going to watch from the sidelines?

GRUFF MOUSE

Why should we care? It's not our fight anymore.

MISS POLLY

What do you think is going to happen up there?

GRUFF MOUSE

Suppose that cat will have a nice meal.

MISS POLLY

And do you think he'll stop with just the mice upstairs?

GRUFF MOUSE

What are you talking about?

MISS POLLY

Once he's had his fill upstairs, don't you think he'll want his fill down here?

GRUFF MOUSE

Basement door is locked. We're safe.

MISS POLLY

I suppose he couldn't come down the garbage chute like all of us did. You're right, we must be safe down here.

LARBY

Listen up, everybody. Miss Polly's right. Mourburn will stop at nothing. He'll be down here to make us into cat food, just like Miss Polly says. This is just as much our fight as it is theirs.

HENDERSON

Well, come on! You heard the mouse. Everybody...up on your feet! I said now!
(All stand at attention.)

SCARED MOUSE

But we don't know how to fight.

APPREHENSIVE MOUSE

Many of us are old!

#18 — *We Can Manage (Henderson, Miss Polly, Cordon, Ensemble)*

HENDERSON

WE CAN MANAGE, WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM
 WE CAN MANAGE, WE CAN CONQUER AND REDEEM

WE CAN FIGHT ANY FOE
 GIRD YOUR LOINS AWAY WE GO
 WE CAN MANAGE, YES THIS I KNOW

I am now your commanding officer. For the good of this establishment, and for the good of mousekind, we will come to the aid of our upstairs neighbors. We will fight Mourburn and Governor Wimble, and we can manage. Is that understood?

ALL

Yes, sir!

APPREHENSIVE MOUSE

WE CAN MANAGE, WE SALUTE YOU AS WE KNEEL

SCARED MOUSE

WE CAN MANAGE TO CONTAIN
 OUR FRIGHTENED SQUEAL

LARBY

NO SUCCESS IS GUARANTEED

APPREHENSIVE MOUSE

BUT IF WE FIGHT WE COULD BE FREED!

ALL THREE

WE CAN MANAGE TO FIGHT, INDEED

WE'LL CARRY ON, WE'VE TARRIED LONG
 WE'LL BOLDLY FLY OUR FLAG AND SING OUR SONG
 ONE MOUSE FOR ALL, ALL MICE FOR ONE
 THE BATTLE HAS JUST BEGUN!

ALL

WE CAN MANAGE, GIVE THE GOVERNOR WHAT FOR
 WE CAN MANAGE, IF WE COULD JUST GET
 PAST THAT DOOR
 WHAT WITH PAUPER ON THE WAY
 WE'VE NO DOUBT HE'LL SAVE THE DAY
 AND WE'LL MANAGE A GLAD HOORAY!

WE'LL FIGHT TO SEE EQUALITY
 AND PRAISE THE DAY WE SAY WE'RE PROUD TO BE
 ONE MOUSE FOR ALL, ALL MICE FOR ONE
 THE BATTLE HAS JUST BEGUN!

(Guff Mouse cuts everyone off.)

GRUFF MOUSE

Everybody, hold up! Have ya'll gone mad. We can't fight Mourburn on our own.
 That is, not without some feline protection.

APPREHENSIVE MOUSE

He's right! We need Cordon with us!

CORDON

What? An old cat like me?

THE TROUBLE UPSTAIRS IS CAUSE FOR WORRY
 HOW CAN I GET THERE WITHOUT THE DOOR KEY?

SCARED MOUSE

Pauper will get the door open!

CORDON

And if he doesn't?

THE ONLY WAY OUT IS THROUGH THAT DOORWAY
 I HAVE MY DOUBTS—RIGHT HERE IS WHERE I'LL STAY

MISS POLLY

You lazy old thing! Pauper will get that door open, and you will rise up and help
 your friends!

CORDON

See here, Miss Polly. I have great contempt for what's happening up there. I just...I...I'm content here. This is my home. This is where I would eat apple cake. Where she used to pet me, and whisper secrets in my ear.

MISS POLLY

My dear friend, there's a whole world of adventure out there to explore.

TAKE HEART, THE PAIN LASTS FOR A MINUTE
YOU'VE LIVED A LIFE CONTENT TO STAY
ADVENTURE'S WAITING, JUST BEGIN IT
TAKE HEART, YOU'LL MEET AGAIN SOMEDAY

YOU CAN MANAGE, YOU CAN OVERCOME THE PAST
YOU CAN MANAGE TO LET GO AND NOT HOLD FAST
YOU CAN REMEMBER EVERYTHING
SHED A TEAR AND START TO SING

CORDON

I CAN MANAGE TO LET JOY RING!

ALL

WE CAN MANAGE, COME TOGETHER AS A TEAM
WE CAN MANAGE, OLD OUR LIVES CAN BE REDEEMED
IF WE CHAMPION OUR CAUSE WE'LL ABOLISH
WIMBLE'S LAWS, WE CAN MANAGE
WE CAN MANAGE, WE CAN MANAGE
BY CORDON'S CLAWS

WE'LL CARRY ON, WE'RE STEADY ON
TOGETHER WE WILL SEE TOMORROW'S DAWN
WE'RE ONE FOR ALL, AND ALL FOR ONE
THE BATTLE HAS JUST BEGUN
THE BATTLE HAS JUST BEGUN

(At the height of the mice's celebration, Pauper finally opens the massive basement door. All the mice rejoice.)

ALL

Hooray! He did it! Pauper opened the door! We're free!

(Pauper finds Miss Polly and they share an embrace and a kiss. All mice, and Cordon, exit through the door. Blackout.)

SCENE FIVE: LIBRARY RIDGE

(Lights up on a desolate Library Ridge, where Mayor Briskin is tied up, unconscious in a chair, and Albert, the naked mouse, is crazily waving a makeshift knife in Briskin's direction. Briskin wakes up.)

ALBERT

Well, look what the cat dragged in.

BRISKIN

Who are you?

ALBERT

You don't know me, but I know you! And I know things you don't know that I know!

BRISKIN

Make some sense, mouse.

ALBERT

You want sense? What sense is it for sinister shrews and malicious mice to rule and profit on the backs of common folk?

BRISKIN

What are you talking about? It's no matter. Untie me!

ALBERT

Court's in session. The defendant will remain seated.

BRISKIN

Let me go, you crazy mouse!

ALBERT

Your crimes will not go unpunished, Briskin. Fear-mongering the mice of the towns with your made up cats...conspiracy to attack the towns with your killer cat, Mourburn...

BRISKIN

What are you talking about? I know nothing about that!

ALBERT

Of course you don't! And I'm the king of Castle Heights!

BRISKIN

Untie me right now, you undercooked cat food! Or else you will pay!

ALBERT

Pay? No, Mayor Brisken, it's your turn to pay!

BRISKEN

I'll pay you whatever you want. Just let me go!

ALBERT

Just what are you gonna pay me with? One of the worthless trophies you keep in your office? You think I don't know about those?

BRISKEN

I'll give you all of it if you just let me go.

ALBERT

I don't give two whiskers about any of that. Unless you got a soldier's name tag on that desk of yours.

BRISKEN

How did you know about that?

ALBERT

As high judge of every town in this house, it's my duty to investigate and deliver the sting of justice.

BRISKEN

Listen, mouse. Let me go, and I vow upon my soul that I will help you.

ALBERT

Help me? It's too late for that! The judge has decided and the verdict arrived: Guilty on all counts!

BRISKEN

I'll change my ways! I'll use my power for good!

ALBERT

You expect me to believe that? Ha!

BRISKEN

I will change, I will! I was selfish. I wanted things. Trophies. Nothing more than trinkets, really. But I knew nothing of Wimble's plan. Please, untie me.

ALBERT

Overruled!

(ALBERT polishes his stained-glass knife, and raises it slowly to the air.)

BRISKEN

I beg mercy of you!

(BRISKEN closes his eyes and speaks to himself in reflection.)

What does it profit a mouse to gain the world but lose his soul?

ALBERT

What did you say?

(DRAKE appears behind ALBERT and knocks him out with a wooden board.)

DRAKE

Brisker!

(DRAKE begins untying BRISKEN.)

BRISKEN

Why are you helping me?

DRAKE

When I was running away from Mourburn—running for my life—I vowed that if I made it out alive, I would do anything and everything in my power to stop that monster, Wimble, from deploying Mourburn on the towns. That cat is vicious. I wouldn't wish that fate on anyone. Not even you.

BRISKEN

Thank you.

DRAKE

Come on!

BRISKEN

The bell!

(Drake picks up the bell, and the two make their exit. Blackout.)

SCENE SIX: DINING ROOM

(The mice and Cordon have fully exited the basement and are now in some kind dining room. All are awestruck, especially by seeing the chandelier. They're all taking in the novelty of their surroundings.)

ALL

Is this the dining room? Is there where all the other mice live? What's that up there? Is that a chandelier?

PAUPER

(On a mission.)

Got to keep moving, everyone!

MISS POLLY

Pauper, they've spent all their lives in the basement. Can't we spare a few minutes to look around?

PAUPER

I suppose. Henderson, keep an eye out for Mourburn.

HENDERSON

Aye, aye.

(He gives a small salute and a toothy grin.)

LARBY

It's even bigger than I remember.

MISS POLLY

What is?

LARBY

The chandelier. Isn't it beautiful?

MISS POLLY

It's extraordinary.

LARBY

We used to hold school dances here.

MISS POLLY

What a lovely place for it.

LARBY

Even the smell hasn't changed.

(Albert interrupts abruptly, breaking through the crowd from the back, waving his knife crazily, as usual. All gasp and are taken aback.)

ALBERT

Get back! All of you, get back!

LARBY

Calm down, Albert!

ALBERT

I am calm!

LARBY

Then put the knife down.

ALBERT

So you can use it against me? Think again!

CORDON

What's wrong, Albert?

ALBERT

He got away!

LARBY

Who did?

ALBERT

And my sister, Maple. I think Mourburn got her.

LARBY

What?

ALBERT

And now I don't have the bell to call him off. She's gone, and I lost the bell...

(He drops the knife and begins to sob.)

PAUPER

The bell doesn't work, anyhow.

BRISKEN

What do you mean the bell doesn't work? It seemed to work fine when Mourburn attacked us earlier.

PAUPER

*(Picking up Albert's knife from the ground and wielding it toward
Brisken and Drake.)*

Stay back! Don't come near us!

BRISKEN

Pauper...

PAUPER

Miss Polly doesn't have the name tag anymore.

DRAKE

You don't understand...we're here to help.

HENDERSON

Help?

BRISKEN

We know about Mourburn and Wimble's plan to attack the towns. We want to stop him.

PAUPER

Why?

BRISKEN

Albert convinced me.

DRAKE

And Mourburn convinced me.

PAUPER

How can we trust you?

#19 — *We'll Bring the War to Their Door (Briskin, Drake)*

BRISKIN

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

DRAKE

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

BRISKIN

HARD TO TRUST WE'VE SEEN THE LIGHT
BUT WE'RE TRYING TO DO RIGHT

DRAKE

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

BRISKIN

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR

DRAKE

WIMBLE'S EVIL PLANS ARE SICK
BUT WE HAVE A USEFUL TRICK
WE'VE A BELL THAT WE CAN RING
TO OUST THE KING

BOTH

WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
FOR THE FREEDOM WE DESERVE
FOR OUR FREEDOM WE WILL SERVE
WE'LL BRING THE WAR TO THEIR DOOR
NOW WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

PAUPER

But the bell doesn't work. Mourburn's been pretending all along.

DRAKE

Does Governor Wimble know about this?

PAUPER

I don't think so. But Mourburn's definitely planning something...something terrible, I think.

DRAKE

I have an idea. Quick, come with me. There's no time to lose.

(Blackout.)

SCENE SEVEN: THE TOWNS

(Lights up and the towns are all abuzz. They all gather together to wait for Wimble's address.)

(Wimble appears at the top of the set, along with the rat who accompanied him in the store. Wimble is about to address the towns.)

WIMBLE

(Quietly to the rat.)

Call for Drake.

(The rat exits.)

Mice, I stand before you with gratitude, honor, and duty. Gratitude that you would call me your Governor. Honor that you would obey my laws and commandments. And duty that I would warn you of danger. You've all heard of a cat named Cordon.

(Murmurs among the crowd until he speaks again.)

No doubt you've all been told he's good, that he's a friend to mice. None would like to believe that more than me. But hear me when I say that such rumors are a falsehood, created by the mice who opposed my father.

(More murmurs among the crowd.)

You may have been told that Cordon will come back someday, that he will be a friend to mice again. You may even believe it. But listen well: Cordon is no friend to mice!

(The rat enters and speaks to The Governor in a hushed tone that the crowd is unable to hear.)

RAT

Drake isn't here, sir.

WIMBLE

Not here? But he has the bell. Find him.

(The rat exits. Wimble addresses the crowd again.)

No matter what you've heard, Cordon is not to be trusted.

(From the crowd, an old mouse speaks up.)

OLD MOUSE

I remember Cordon. He was a sweet, kind cat. He never ate anything but apples.

ANOTHER MOUSE

That's true!

BOLD MOUSE

Don't believe what Wimble says! Cordon was and will always be a friend to mice!

(There's an uprising of the crowd, which is quickly quieted by Wimble.)

WIMBLE

Cordon is, and will always be, a cat! And cats can never be trusted!

#20 — Cats! — Reprise (Wimble)

MICE! WIMBLE'S HUMBLE MICE!

TRUST IN MY ADVICE

HEED MY WORDS OR PAY THE PRICE

MICE! LISTEN AND OBEY

DON'T BE FOOLISH PREY

DON'T BE BRAVE AND SAVE THE DAY! MICE!

HOW HIS TEETH'LL BE A LETHAL

WEAPON SHARPER THAN A NEEDLE

MIND THE CLAWS IN HIS PAWS

DON'T BE CAUGHT WITHIN HIS JAWS

MICE! YOU CAN TRUST IN ME

AND BE WORRY-FREE

I'LL HANDLE DANGERS YOU CAN'T SEE! MICE!

DON'T DISTRESS, I'LL CLEAN THIS MESS

I'LL KILL THE KITTY—FEEL NO PITY

SHOW NO MERCY, HE'S BLOODTHIRSTY

WE'RE DONE HIDING, WE ARE FIGHTING

WICKED! VICIOUS! CATS!

*(The RAT has reentered. By now, Wimble has caused an uproar amongst the mice.
The mice are nearly on the edge of mutiny.)*

ALL

You're a liar! Don't believe a word he says! Cordon is good! It's time for a new Governor!

WIMBLE

(To RAT, no longer in a hushed tone.)

Where is Drake?!

(Drake enters hurriedly next to Wimble.)

DRAKE

Here, sir.

WIMBLE

Where have you been? Never mind, do you have the bell?

DRAKE

Right here, sir.

WIMBLE

Well, use it!

DRAKE

Right away, sir.

*(Drake rings the bell three times to beckon Mourburn. A hush comes
over the crowd as the shadow of a cat appears on the backdrop.)*

ANOTHER MOUSE

Is that Cordon?

*(The shadow grows smaller as a black, sleek young cat appears at the top of the
set, above all the others. MOURBURN bears CORDON'S name tag.)*

BOLD MOUSE

It is Cordon! See? He's wearing his old name tag. Isn't that Cordon?

WIMBLE

(To Drake.)

Ring the bell again.

(Drake doesn't.)

I said ring it again!

(He still doesn't.)

Fine, I'll do it!

(WIMBLE bites DRAKE on the shoulder and DRAKE falls to the ground, shaking. WIMBLE rings the bell four times. MOURBURN doesn't respond. WIMBLE tries again. Still nothing.)

MOURBURN

Go ahead. Ring it again. See what happens.

(WIMBLE rings the bell. MOURBURN doesn't move.)

All the mice, all in one place.

WIMBLE

Obey your command! Attack The Counter like I trained you, you spineless monster!

MOURBURN

Yes, master. But appetizers, first.

(MOURBURN prepares to eat WIMBLE, but WIMBLE gets away just as CORDON enters with all the BASEMENT MICE.)

CORDON

Give me my name tag back!

MOURBURN

Is it really you? That old, flabby tabby cat who won't eat mice?

CORDON

You're only as old you feel!

(CORDON takes swing with his paw; MOURBURN evades. THEY continue to occupy each other's attention with their sparring. The POLICEMICE begin fighting the BASEMENT MICE and BRISKEN. MISS POLLY notices WIMBLE starting to exit.)

MISS POLLY

Pauper! Stop Wimble!

(PAUPER and MISS POLLY go after WIMBLE and stop him at the edge of a higher platform of The Counter. The lights fade on the fight below as it continues.)

WIMBLE

Why, you're that annoying Pauper and adorable Miss Polly. I've heard so much about you.

PAUPER

Same goes!

WIMBLE

Why don't you come a little closer so I can take a look at you?

PAUPER

Stay back! I've got a weapon, and I'm not afraid to use it.

WIMBLE

What a lovely pocket watch. I'd love to get a closer look at it.

(WIMBLE flashes his sharp, poisonous teeth. HE and PAUPER have an altercation, and HE sends PAUPER to the ground. HE grabs MISS POLLY. SHE struggles but can't break free.)

I can't describe it, but my teeth start to itch, and it just feels good to bite!

PAUPER

(Rising from the ground.)

Get off my Miss Polly!

(WIMBLE opens his mouth to bite MISS POLLY, but before HE can do it, THE DOG'S shadow appears on the cyc. THE DOG'S bellowing bark knocks WIMBLE off balance, and MISS POLLY bites his arm. THE DOG barks again, and EVERYONE freezes. PAUPER swings his pocket watch and strikes WIMBLE on the face, sending WIMBLE'S poisonous teeth shooting through the air as Wimble falls off the counter to his death. THE DOG continues to bark and MOURBURN runs away.)

THE DOG

(The shadow gets bigger and bigger until THE DOG comes onstage. HE shouts at offstage MOURBURN.)

Stay away, and never come back! I'll sniff you out from a mile away, so don't even think about setting paw in this house ever again. You just might catch me on a bad day.

(EVERYONE cheers!)

PAUPER

(To THE DOG.)

I thought you wanted to remain hidden.

THE DOG

Eh. I smelled a cat.

(THE DOG exits.)

HENDERSON

Three cheers for Pauper and Miss Polly! Hip hip!

ALL

Hooray!

HENDERSON

Hip hip!

ALL

Hooray!

HENDERSON

Hip hip!

ALL

Hooray!

#21 — *Change Is A-Comin' Our Way (Pauper, Company)*

PAUPER

With Wimble gone, who's to stop us from doing anything? Who's to say we can't
lend a hand? Make new friends? Carve a new path? The future is ahead of us,
friends. I don't know about you, but I can feel a change.

GONE ARE THE OLDEN DAYS
BAD TIMES ARE WASHED AWAY
CHANGE IS A-COMIN', I SAY

NOW THAT THE COAST IS CLEAR
NOW THAT NEW FRIENDS ARE HERE
NOTHING AND NO ONE TO FEAR
NOTHING AND NO ONE TO FEAR

ONE MOUSE

NO MORE DISTRESSING US

SECOND MOUSE

NO MORE DEPRESSING US

ALL

NO MORE OPPRESSING US NOW
THERE'S A NEW DAWN TODAY
FINALLY, WE CAN SAY
CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR WAY
CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR WAY

CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR WAY
 THE SUN'S A-RISIN' HERE
 A NEW HORIZON'S HERE
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR WAY
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR WAY

CASTLE HEIGHTS MICE

WE WERE LIVING BUT WE WEREN'T REALLY LIVING

THE COUNTER MICE

WE WERE WORKING JUST TO SEE ANOTHER DAY

ALL

EVERY MOUSE FOR HIMSELF, NOT A MORSEL TO SPARE
 IN OUR OWN SEPARATE LIVES CONTENT TO STAY

CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR WAY
 THE SUN'S A-RISIN' HERE
 A NEW HORIZON'S HERE
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR WAY
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR WAY

GONE ARE THE OLDEN DAYS
 BAD TIMES ARE WASHED AWAY
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN', I SAY
 THERE'S A NEW DAWN TODAY
 FINALLY, WE CAN SAY
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR WAY
 CHANGE IS A-COMIN' OUR WAY

CORDON

I'd like to nominate a new governor...Governor Pauper.

ALL

Yes! What a wonderful idea! Be our governor, Pauper!

PAUPER

I couldn't accept. But I can think of no mouse better for the job than my friend, Henderson.

HENDERSON

Me? Well, I...of course, I'd...I mean, I couldn't...well, not without a vote.

PAUPER

All in favor?

ALL

Aye!

MISS POLLY

I'd like to be secretary of education.

HENDERSON

Hired!

BRISKEN

And I'd like to be Mayor of Court's Grove again.

(Silence.)

Please? I'm a changed mouse.

MISS POLLY

I second that motion.

HENDERSON

Done.

(ALL gleefully celebrate and ad lib.)

PAUPER

Miss Polly.

MISS POLLY

Yes, Pauper?

PAUPER

About that dinner. I just wanted to say I...

MISS POLLY

Yes?

PAUPER

I love...

MISS POLLY

Yes, Pauper?

PAUPER

I love cheese soufflé.

MISS POLLY

Oh, of course. Who doesn't—

PAUPER

I'm in love with you, Miss Polly! I've always loved you, and I always will!

MISS POLLY

I'll always love you, Pauper!

(THEY embrace.)

#22 — *Can You Be the Same Again* — Reprise (Pauper, Miss Polly, Company)

BRISKEN

It's a new world! New beginnings!

HENDERSON

All thanks to Pauper and Miss Polly!

ALL (NO PAUPER AND MISS POLLY)

Hooray!

PAUPER & MISS POLLY

TO LIVE AND LOVE IS WELL ENOUGH
FOR MANY OTHER MICE
THE QUIET LIFE WAS NICE
BUT NOW WE'VE TASTED AND WE'VE SEEN
A LOVE LIKE THERE'S NEVER BEEN
CAN WE BE THE SAME AGAIN?

MISS POLLY

FOR ONCE WE'VE TAKEN CHANCES

PAUPER

WE HARDLY LIVE FOR LESS

PAUPER AND MISS POLLY

AND SHOULD YOU LOSE YOUR ONLY LIFE
SINCE YOU HAVE LOVE, THEN SURELY YOU ARE
BLESSED

(THEY kiss.)

COMPANY (NO PAUPER AND MISS POLLY)

SOME DESIRE HAVING FAME AND RICHES
SOME MICE LIVE A LIFE OF WOES AND WISHES
OTHERS DREAM OF TIME GONE BY AND MISS IT

PAUPER & MISS POLLY
LIFE IS FOR LOVE, AND LIVING IS FOR US

FOR LOVE'S THE TRUE ADVENTURE
NO OTHER LIFE WILL DO

COMPANY
AS CERTAIN AS THE STARS ABOVE
SHINE DOWN ON US
FOREVER I LOVE YOU

(Blackout.)

(END ACT TWO.)