

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

The Enchanted Attic

By

LINDE' HAYEN HERMAN

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play that are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MCMLXXVIII, ©MMI by
LINDE' HAYEN HERMAN

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(THE ENCHANTED ATTIC)

ISBN: 978-0-97155-753-6

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

Characters

Lance, a 13-year old boy
Freida, Lance's sister, about 11 years old
Josh, Lance's brother, about 8 years old
So-Dumb, Great Aunt Agnes' cat
Blackbeard, a pirate
Two Cronies, Blackbeard's side-kicks
Certainly Fairweather, a marionette
Great Aunt Agnes

Setting

A fall afternoon in the 1920's, in Great Aunt Agnes' attic.

Music

Background music underscores the magical effects and mood. A complete CD composed for the play by Todd Hayen is available from the publisher for \$12.

Notes

While the setting calls for '20s costuming and furnishings, there is no reason not to set it in the late 1800's, as one production did, or in the present, depending on the director's (or costumer's) resources.

Casting for *The Enchanted Attic* is also flexible in gender and age. When the part of Josh was played by a girl, the name was changed to Josie. The Cronies may be played by either males or females. And the ages of the actors have varied, from college students playing all the parts with excellent believability, to the Hill Playhouse production where the cast ranged in age from 7 to 60. Whatever the director's choice of period, ages and genders, keep the play magical and filled with imagination—only then will both audience and characters blend into a joyful event.

P.S. A real cat in the first scene is tremendously appealing to audiences!

The Enchanted Attic was premiered under the title *The Erratic Attic* in 1978 at the Children's Theatre of Shenandoah College and Conservatory of Music under the direction of Linde Hayen Herman with music by Todd Hayen. The Scenic and Lighting Designer was William McConnell Bozman, the Costume Designer was Maida Jones.

Cast

Lance	Becky Adams
Freida	Deborah Tropea
Josh	Mary Ellen O'Brien
So-Dumb	David Hart
Certainly Fairweather	William Lavonis
Blackbeard	James Ferrara
Cronies	Sue Trinka and Shelly Edwards
Aunt Agnes	Renee Wheeler

A revised production was given by the Children's Theatre of Shenandoah University in 1992. The Scenic and Lighting Designer was Rick Conway, the Costume Designer Celia Friedman; the Stage Manager Glenn Wade Lawrence, with background music by Todd Hayen

Cast

Lance	Robert J. Cooke
Freida	Arlene Kulis
Josie	Tamara Yates
So-Dumb	Charles Gill Graswell
Certainly Fairweather	Matthew T. Sawyer
The Cronies	Mary Ennis and Petrina Jones
Great Aunt Agnes	Shirley Maddox

In 2001 *The Enchanted Attic* was presented by the Hill Playhouse Children's Theatre of the Hill School in Middleburg, Virginia. It was directed by Tom Sweitzer, designed by Rick Conway, with music by Nancy Prestipino and costume construction by Laurie Farnsworth.

Cast

Lance	Chris Aldrich
Freida	Clelia Hart
Josh	Nicholas Weeden
So-Dumb	Craig Snyder
Blackbeard	Chris Knapp
The Cronies	Gilles Bryant, Nick Fleming
Certainly Fairweather	Casey Johnson
Great Aunt Agnes	Maxine Bean
Little So-Dumb	Muffin Croft

ACT ONE

Scene One

Music Cue #1 begins and plays through as lights go up on attic. Attic door opens on last strain of music. Darkness, as actors take places and stage lights begin a slow rise, revealing the attic in a pale glow. The window is its most prominent feature. The space is crammed with an old trunk, boxes of all shapes and sizes, old clothes hanging from racks, and rafters packed with objects too interesting and nostalgic to be thrown away.

The scene is held in shimmering anticipation until a door bursts open and Lance comes into the attic. He is carrying a candle which he lifts high to throw light around the attic. He then calls to Freida, who is waiting outside the door with Josh.

- LANCE:** It's all right, Freida, come on in.
- FREIDA:** What's up there? Can you see it?
- LANCE:** Of course not. We have to look for it. *(He spies two lanterns on either side of the window and hurries to light them with his candle.)* But there is a window that gives some light and I am lighting the two lanterns.
- FREIDA:** *(Poking head around the door.)* But it is still dark, isn't it?
- LANCE:** Our eyes will grow accustomed to it soon.
- JOSH:** *(A distant small voice.)* No, no, I won't come up there. I've changed my mind!
- FREIDA:** Lance, please help me with Josh.
- LANCE:** *(Goes to door.)* It's all right, Josh. We're going to have an adventure. Here, give me your hand. *(He guides a reluctant Josh into the attic.)* There you are.
- JOSH:** I don't like it up here already.
- FREIDA:** Now Josh, you aren't going to spoil our adventure, are you? You promised if we let you come along to look for the treasure that you would behave.
- JOSH:** But it's spooky up here. You didn't tell me it was going to be spooky.
- LANCE:** It's not spooky, Josh. It's just dark.
- JOSH:** Spooky is dark and dark is spooky. *(Lance crosses to shut door.)* Don't do that!
- LANCE:** Don't do what?
- JOSH:** Shut that door.
- LANCE:** But we have to, Josh, just in case Great Aunt Agnes comes home before we finish our search.
- JOSH:** What are we looking for anyway?
- FREIDA:** You know very well that we are looking for the treasure.
- JOSH:** What kind of treasure is it?
- LANCE:** *(Looking through pile of junk.)* We really don't know, Josh. All we know is Great Aunt Agnes lost something very valuable up here, and we intend to find it.
- JOSH:** Is the treasure something to eat or something to keep?

FREIDA: We told you, we don't know what it is, Josh. (*Spying boxes in corner.*) Oh, my goodness, just look at all those boxes! I'm going to open every one of them. (*Runs to boxes.*)

JOSH: If you don't know what the treasure is, how will you know if you find it?
Low tremor sound. Window begins to have a pale glow.

FREIDA: (*Noting the light change.*) That's odd . . . Just anyone would know a treasure if they found one, Josh. (*Picks up a large floppy hat with a plume.*) Look at this! (*Plops it on her head.*) I think I'll go and have tea with Mrs. Oglebee and Aunt Agnes. (*Struts about.*)

JOSH: Why doesn't Aunt Agnes look for her own treasure? She's the one who lost it!

LANCE: (*Poking about, trying to change the mood.*) Look at all of these things. I'll wager that some of this belonged to our great, great, grandparents.

Music Cue #2 begins.

JOSH: (*Eying clothes rack.*) What did they look like?

LANCE: Who?

JOSH: Our great, great, great grandparents.

LANCE: How should I know, Josh? I never met them.

FREIDA: Why do you ask, Josh?

JOSH: (*Pointing a trembling finger toward the clothes rack.*) Because I think I see them standing over there in that corner.
Freida and Lance turn to see what Josh is pointing to. They are both silent for a moment, then break into relieved laughs.

LANCE: Those are only old clothes, Josh, hanging on a rack. (*He walks bravely to the clothes rack and sweeps up a long cape.*) See, only a cape!

FREIDA: (*Coughing*) Lance, stop! You're stirring up dust. (*Walks toward window.*) Let's open that window. (*Stops in awe.*) What an odd shaped, beautiful window. (*Josh takes a few steps in for a closer look.*)

LANCE: It is, isn't it? I noticed it first off.

FREIDA: I don't remember seeing a window like this from outside the house.

LANCE: It's probably hidden by the walnut tree branches. Remember, we've only visited here in the summer when the leaves are full. One window in this big house could be easily overlooked.

FREIDA: I suppose so . . .

JOSH: (*Running forward.*) I'll bet I can see Mr. Henderson's farm from here. (*Freida follows.*) It's dirty!

FREIDA: It certainly is. (*Music ends. Freida rubs pane with the palm of her hand.*) Impossible.

LANCE: Here, let me open it for you.

FREIDA: How? There isn't a latch. (*Squeezing fingers between sash.*) Perhaps if I could get a hold, we could pull it open. (*They all try opening window.*)

LANCE: No use . . . it's shut tight. (*Gives up, then—*) Wait a minute Maybe it opens out!

(Begins pushing and pounding.)

JOSH: I'll help!

LANCE: Not so hard, Josh! It might break!

FREIDA: *(Exasperated.)* Oh, I do wish it would open! *(On Freida's wish, there is a low tremor of sound. The colored panes take on a slight glow.)* What was that? *(Lance continues his efforts with the window.)* Lance? Stop . . . listen. *(Lance turns to look at her.)* Did you hear anything?

LANCE: No, I didn't. *(Listens.)* And I don't now.

JOSH: *(Looking out with a frozen expression.)* I did! I heard it! And did it sound spooky!

LANCE: You two are letting your imagination get the better of you. If there was a noise, it was probably the wind causing a branch to rub across the roof. What say we give up on this old window? Aunt Agnes will be home before we have had a chance to look for the treasure. Let's start with this trunk. *(Moves to trunk. Freida follows.)*

FREIDA: That's a good start. Come on, Josh. Perhaps we'll find something you will like.

JOSH: How about a sandwich?

FREIDA: Don't be silly. You just had your lunch.

JOSH: But I'm hungry again . . . right now! Let's go downstairs and have a sandwich.

FREIDA: Not until I've seen what is in this old trunk! Can you open it, Lance?

LANCE: I don't know. . . the lock is rather rusty. Perhaps if you put your weight across the top, I could force it open.

FREIDA: *(Leaning across the trunk.)* Like this? *(The children do not see the window behind them slowly open.)*

LANCE: Fine.

JOSH: I'll help. *(Flops across Freida on top of trunk.)*

FREIDA: Josh, stop it!

LANCE: Ugh. It won't budge!

FREIDA: Wouldn't you know that it wouldn't. *(Window is now fully opened.)* Brr-rr. *(Stands up, rubbing arms.)*

LANCE: What's the matter, Freida?

FREIDA: I know it seems silly . . . but I'm cold.

LANCE: *(Catching sight of window, he gets slowly to his feet.)* Golly . . .

FREIDA: What is it, Lance?

LANCE: The window. . . *(Freida and Josh turn to stare unbelievably at open window.)*

JOSH: It's open!

FREIDA: How did that happen?

LANCE: *(Clearing throat.)* Well, I'm sure there is a very logical explanation. It was probably painted shut and, we loosened it with the pounding we gave it.

FREIDA: Of course. That's the reason . . . probably.

JOSH: *(Crawling up on trunk.)* I want my sandwich now.

FREIDA: *(Mock gaiety.)* Well, what are we waiting for? Now that it's open, let's look out.

LANCE: Sure, let's do that.
FREIDA: Well?
LANCE: Well?
FREIDA: Aren't you going?
LANCE: I am . . . after you.
JOSH: Well, I'm going . . . downstairs! (*Scurries off trunk and starts for door.*)
LANCE: (*Catching Josh.*) Oh, no you don't! You are staying with us.
JOSH: Let me go, Lance!
LANCE: It was only the wind that opened the window! We loosened it, and the wind blew it open.
JOSH: Are you sure, Lance?
LANCE: Well, pretty sure.
JOSH: I don't want a pretty sure! I want a real sure.
LANCE: All right, all right! I'm real . . . sonably sure.
JOSH: That's better.
LANCE: Let's look out and see what we can see.
JOSH: You first!
LANCE: (*Looking to Freida who nods.*) Me . . . first.
Music Cue #3 begins. Lance starts across with Freida holding tightly to his belt and Josh bringing up to the rear. They slowly cross to the window.
 It really is a very unusual window.
FREIDA: It is indeed . . . a very unusual window.
JOSH: (*Peeking from behind.*) Unusually . . .spooky! (*He hiccups, very loudly.*) Hic-cup (*Lance and Freida wheel about.*)
FREIDA: What was that?
JOSH: I think it was me. (*Not so sure.*) I hope it was me. Hic-cup! (*Pleased and relieved.*) It was me!
LANCE: Hold your breath, Josh, and they'll go away.
JOSH: I don't think so. I always get the hiccups when I'm scared. Hic-cup. (*Music ends.*)
FREIDA: Just try, Josh.
JOSH: I'll try. (*Takes breath and holds.*)
FREIDA: (*To Lance at window.*) What do you see, Lance?
LANCE: Not a thing. There's a thick fog out there.
FREIDA: My goodness! It is foggy . . . how did the weather change so quickly? It was all sunny when we came up here.
LANCE: Well, there isn't a ray of sun now. That fog is as thick as pea soup.
JOSH: (*Letting out breath with a noisy sigh.*) There! They're all gone. (*Running and pushing between Lance and Frieda at window.*) Where is the pea soup?
LANCE: That's just a saying, Josh.
JOSH: It's all foggy! I can't see Mr. Henderson's farm . . . I can't see anything! It's like being on a ship. You don't suppose we are on a ship, do you, Lance?

LANCE: Of course not. How could that be? We're in Aunt Agnes's attic. But I'll tell you what, Josh . . . why don't you pretend you are on a ship. That would be an adventure for you.

JOSH: I'd like that! (*Turns to window.*) I'm on a ship! (*Begins to sing.*) Sailing, sailing over the bounding main . . .

FREIDA: (*Pulling Lance aside.*) Let's try the trunk again.

LANCE: Sure. Good idea.

FREIDA: (*Busy with the pretense of working on trunk.*) Lance, don't you think it's strange that the window opened? There isn't any wind out there.

LANCE: I know, but I had to stick to my explanation. Josh was so frightened.

FREIDA: I don't think I want to look in the trunk just now. We had better go downstairs. Aunt Agnes should be coming home soon.

LANCE: (*Going toward door.*) Sure. Perhaps another time. (*Tries to open door.*) It won't open!

JOSH: (*Turning from window.*) What's the matter? Can't you get the trunk open?

FREIDA: (*Rushing back to trunk.*) Still trying. Josh, is our ship still on course?

JOSH: Aye, aye, cap'n! And methinks I see an island out there.

LANCE: Good work, matey. Keep me posted.

JOSH: Aye, Cap'n.

FREIDA: (*To Lance.*) That old window gives me the creeps. I wish it were closed.
Panes around the window brighten, and the opened sash begins to move in slowly.

LANCE: Don't wish that, Freida! The window might be the only way to get out of here!

FREIDA: I didn't think of that! Then I surely *don't* wish that it were closed. (*Window opens back.*) Oh, what are we going to do, Lance?

LANCE: The only thing we can do, except climb out of the window, is wait for Great Aunt Agnes to come home and then call for help. There! The trunk is open.

FREIDA: I'll look first. (*Rummages inside.*) Oh, my goodness!

LANCE: Did you find something?

FREIDA: No. Just old newspapers and some more old clothes. No treasure.

JOSH: (*Turns from window. To Freida, pushing her aside to look in the trunk.*) Treasure? Did you find the treasure?

FREIDA: No, Josh . . . sorry.

JOSH: You said we were going to have an adventure and find a treasure. All we've found is a lot of old junk and a window that I can't even see Mr. Henderson's farm out of because of the pea soup. (*Has closed lid of trunk and now crawls on top.*) I'm not even scared any more. It was more fun when it was spooky. I really want to go downstairs now because I am really hungry and there's nothing to do.
Behind Josh's back Lance gives Freida a high sign, letting her know that they must keep Josh occupied so that he will not attempt to open the door and find it locked. It is understood that they will play a game of hide-and-seek. Freida takes the boxes as her hiding place and Lance goes to the clothes rack area.

I don't want to pretend I'm on a ship any more either. I want to go downstairs, now! (*Starts toward door and stops, turns. Music Cue #4 begins.*) Freida? Lance? I know you are hiding from me. I was just teasing. I don't want it to be spooky any more. (*Listens.*) I'm going to tell Great Aunt Ages that you played tricks on me. (*Pause.*) No, I won't tell Aunt Agnes . . . if you come out now. (*Pause.*) I won't complain any more. I'll even look at what you found in this old trunk! (*Opens trunk and looks inside. Music ends.*) I'm looking in the trunk now! Oh, oh, oh, look what I found. (*Holds up limp marionette with broken strings and faded clothes.*) A puppet! (*No response.*) You're trying to scare me . . . and I'm not scared one bit! Hi-cup . . . well, just a little bit . . . hic-cup. (*Scratching sound.*) Lance! Freida! (*Scratching sound again.*) Aunt Agnes! (*Bellowing.*) Aunt Agnes! Aunt Agnes!

LANCE: (*Coming out from hiding place.*) Josh! Josh! It's me, Lance.

JOSH: You scared me . . . hic-cup.

LANCE: Shh . . . listen. (*Scratching sound again.*)

JOSH: It wasn't you! It's Freida!

FREIDA: (*Coming out.*) It wasn't me!

JOSH: Oh. (*Scratching sound.*) Hic-cup, hic-cup, hic-cup! (*Lance and Freida cover Josh's mouth with their hands.*)

LANCE: I don't hear it now. (*Sound.*)

JOSH: (*Pulling down their hands.*) I do!

FREIDA: Me too!

LANCE: It came from over there . . . behind those boxes.

FREIDA: It's probably just a mouse.

JOSH: Or a ghost! (*Sound.*)

LANCE: Well, I'm going to see what it is. (*Walks bravely toward boxes.*)

FREIDA: Be careful, Lance! (*Lance leaps behind boxes. There is a sound of a shuffle.*) Are you all right?

LANCE: Yes, and so is our ghost!

JOSH: I told you it was a ghost! (*Jumps down and hides behind trunk.*)

LANCE: And here he is! (*Coming out holding a very confused cat.*)

FREIDA: (*Greatly relieved.*) So-Dumb!

LANCE: He must have followed us up here.

JOSH: (*Laughing through his tears.*) It's dumb old So-Dumb, the cat!

LANCE: That's right, Josh. Your terrible ghost! And just as frightened as we were. Feel him tremble.

FREIDA: (*Taking the cat.*) Poor thing! (*Takes a comb out of pocket and soothes So-Dumb by combing his fur.*) But you were a naughty cat, you know. You gave Josh the hiccups. (*Leaves comb stuck in So-Dumb's fur.*)

LANCE: Don't scold him, Freida. It's not his fault that he got locked in the attic.

JOSH: Locked in the attic?

FREIDA: You mean *trapped* in the attic, don't you, Lance? Oh, my goodness.

JOSH: Trapped in the attic?

LANCE: (*Puts arm around Josh to reassure him.*) She means marooned in the attic.

JOSH: What does that mean, "Marooned?"

LANCE: Well . . . if you were on an island and your ship sailed away and you didn't have a raft or any other way to get off the island . . . then you would be marooned on the island.

JOSH: So-Dumb is marooned in the attic because . . . you shut the door!

LANCE: That's right!

JOSH: (*Going to Freida.*) Then let's open the door and let him out. (*Takes cat.*)

LANCE: No! I've got a better idea!

FREIDA: You do?

LANCE: Sure. Let's . . . put him out the window!

FREIDA: That's an excellent idea, Lance! He can climb down the walnut tree.

JOSH: What about the pea soup? He won't be able to find his way!

LANCE: Oh, he'll find his way all right. His instinct will lead him down.

JOSH: What's "in-stinct?"

LANCE: His animal skills, Josh. His urge from within to find a safe place. I only wish he were intelligent. (*Music Cue #5 begins. Window panes dimly glow.*) Then he would know why we are putting him out the window.

JOSH: Why are we?

FREIDA: He's a cat and just gets in the way.

JOSH: I wish he was big like us. (*Window glows brighter.*)

LANCE: So do I, Josh. And intelligent so people wouldn't dare call him stupid old dumb cat. (*Panes around window get brighter with every wish.*) But he isn't, so—out he goes! (*Puts cat out window.*)

FREIDA: My comb! Get my comb. It's still in So-Dumb's fur. Aunt Agnes gave me that comb!

JOSH: I can't see him!

FREIDA: Neither can I. The fog is too thick.

JOSH: Cat's can swim, can't they?

LANCE: They're fine swimmers. Why, Josh?

JOSH: Because if this were really a ship, like I was pretending it to be, So-Dumb wouldn't hurt himself if he lost his balance and fell. He'd land in the water.

LANCE: Cats land on their feet, Josh.

JOSH: Anyway . . . I really do wish this was a ship! (*Panes glow very bright.*) A pirate ship! That's an idea. Pirates always know where lost treasure is!

Low rumblings can be heard, and the articles hanging from the rafters begin to sway slightly.

LANCE: I think a storm must be coming up.

FREIDA: Smells like sea air!

JOSH: Like at the seashore. (*Rumbles increase and lights begin to flash.*)

FREIDA: We had better close the window, Lance. (*Freida is thrown off balance and runs downstage, catching on the trunk before she falls.*) Help, Lance, shut the window

LANCE: (*As he and Josh struggle to shut the window.*) I wish I could, but it won't budge. (*Window shuts with a bang. Boys crawl to the safety of the trunk.*)

FREIDA: What's happening?

LANCE: It must be a tornado. (*Puppet has been knocked to the floor in shuffle.*)

JOSH: Hic-cup . . . My puppet, get my puppet! (*Lance reaches out and hands marionette to Josh. Outside the window a large shadow appears and groping paws can be seen against the panes. Josh sees it first.*) Look!

FREIDA: Oh my goodness! What is it?

JOSH: A monster! It's a monster!

LANCE: Let's get out of here! (*He helps Freida and Josh to their feet and all run for the door. They beat on the panels and clamor in panic.*)

ALL: Aunt Agnes! Help! Let us out! Aunt Agnes! Aunt Agnes-s-s! (*Music ends.*)

Blackout

Scene Two

When lights go up a large So-Dumb is sitting on window sill. He is gently swaying from side to side as though on board a ship. The children are huddled together watching the cat.

SO-DUMB: Oh me . . . ow . . . wow, wow! I'm getting sick as a dog! I do wish this window would stop rocking! (*Change in window lights as wish is granted.*) Ahh! That's better.

FREIDA: (*Whispering.*) It talks!

LANCE: Shh . . . maybe it won't notice us.

JOSH: Hic-cup! (*Freida covers Josh's mouth.*)

SO-DUMB: (*Regains breath and begins to pull the comb through his long tail.*) Oh, me . . . ow . . . my poor tail! I won't be able to do a thing with it! (*Tries to fluff tail into shape.*) Tic, tic, tic, so many tangles.

JOSH: (*About to explode, pushes Freida's hand away.*) Hic-cup!

SO-DUMB: (*Stops combing and looks up at children.*) Stop that! Of course I see you. My vision is very sharp in the dark, so don't try any more of your mischief. (*He holds up his tail.*) This is all your fault.

LANCE: (*Starting up.*) OUR fault? (*Freida pulls him down.*)

SO-DUMB: I had to swim for my life out there. (*Resumes combing.*) That's just the best I can do with the tail. (*Jumps from window and begins combing body with purrs and exclamations of ecstasy.*) La, la, la . . . la, la la . . .

LANCE: I know this seems absolutely unreal, but I'm thinking there is something very familiar about . . . whatever that is.

JOSH: (*No doubt.*) It's So-Dumb!

FREIDA: That's what I was thinking. How did that happen?

SO-DUMB: You are talking about me! (*Points comb and advances a step or two.*) Don't deny it! (*Children shake heads and huddle closer together.*) If you find my appearance alarming how do you think I feel? One minute an insignificant, ordinary small feline . . . the next minute a magnificent, extraordinary, tall feline! If I didn't know who I am, I wouldn't even recognize myself!

JOSH: You're So-Dumb!

SO-DUMB: You see! He knows who I am!

LANCE: How could that be?

SO-DUMB: You're asking me? I'm supposed to be the dumb one of this household. Just look at me! I don't know if I'll be able to stand the weight of myself. Oh, me-ow, oh, meow. (*Sits heavily on trunk.*) Some burden of a body to carry around.

LANCE: You certainly seemed to be enjoying yourself when you first crawled in here.

SO-DUMB: Oh, you know how it is. Always wishing to be something that you aren't . . . and then, when you get to be what you weren't—and think about it for a while—you aren't so sure that as you were wasn't better than being what you are. (*Shakes head in confusion.*) Did that make any sense?

LANCE: I'm not so sure. I'll have to think about it for a while.

SO-DUMB: (*Jumps up, confronts Lance.*) You see, that's the trouble . . . thinking! I never had a thought when I wasn't what I am now. I'm not used to thinking about so many things at one time. (*Holds head and rocks in agony.*)

LANCE: Calm yourself. It's not so bad. You just have to get organized, that's all.

SO-DUMB: Organized?

LANCE: Put your thoughts in a row . . . concentrate on one thought at a time.

FREIDA: Yes, that's the way to do it! There, there, tell me, were you more miserable before or now?

SO-DUMB: You mean when I was that insignificant outside cat? Before you threw me out of the window?

LANCE: That's right.

SO-DUMB: I think I was born miserable . . . holy cats! I'm thinking—I'm feeling better already.

LANCE: Great! Now, think harder if you can. How did you get to be what you are now from who you were before we put you out of the window!

SO-DUMB: It's all your fault.

JOSH: You said that before.

FREIDA: How could it be our fault?

SO-DUMB: You put me out the window, and that's when it happened.

LANCE: Just what DID happen? That's what we want to know.

SO-DUMB: Oh, me-ow . . . I've got to get organized again!

FREIDA: It gets easier every time. Go ahead, think!

SO-DUMB: Well, I came up to the attic . . . to . . . catch mice. That's it! I came up to the attic to catch mice!

LANCE: Very good. How did you get in?

SO-DUMB: Like always . . . up the walnut tree and under the eaves.

FREIDA: Not through the window?

SO-DUMB: Oh, no. The window is always locked.

LANCE: So, you came to the attic to catch mice. Then what happened?

SO-DUMB: You came in.

FREIDA: And then?

SO-DUMB: I was very quiet. (*Pussyfoots across.*) I didn't want to you to find me.

JOSH: Why not?

SO-DUMB: Because I didn't want to play any of your silly games, that's why! I saw a fat mouse and couldn't resist cornering him. That's when you found me. When I was just about ready to POUNCE! You caught me instead, and threw me out the window!

LANCE: PUT you out the window. Then what happened? Did you land on the roof?

SO-DUMB: No, I landed in the water.

FREIDA: Water?

LANCE: You landed in the water?

JOSH: He landed in the water!

SO-DUMB: That's right. Deep water . . . up to here (*Measures over head*) with waves that tossed me all over the place. I'd have been a goner if this boat hadn't come along.

FREIDA: What boat?

SO-DUMB: (*Stamping his feet.*) THIS boat! (*The children stop and really observe their surroundings.*)

LANCE: I can't believe it . . . we ARE moving!

FREIDA: How could that be? We're in Great Aunt Agnes's attic!

LANCE: How could So-Dumb be THAT? (*Points to cat.*)

SO-DUMB: Don't be insulting.

LANCE: Come on! (*Runs to window; Freida, Josh follow.*) I still can't see anything!

FREIDA: But we most certainly are moving. How could the attic suddenly become a ship?

JOSH: (*Jumping up and down with excitement.*) Because I wished for it! Don't you remember?

LANCE: Easy, Josh! You also wished it would be a pirate ship, and I don't see any pirates about.

Two pirates (the Cronies) emerge suddenly from behind the hanging clothes. They are shabbily but colorfully dressed and jingle with an over-supply of bangles, beads and earrings. They are shifty-eyed, comic and mute. Blackbeard pops up from behind the corner stack of boxes. He is dressed in the traditional pirate attire: knee breeches, deep-cuffed coat, cape and large hat with a sweeping plume. A sword is stuck in his wide buckled belt and he carries a whip.

BLACKBEARD: Look again, Maties, and you shall see! *The Cronies, behind So-Dumb, tap him on the shoulder and give him a wave and snaggle-tooth grins.* Come on, you lunkheads . . . after them! *(The Cronies come to attention and start a high-stepping advance.)*

LANCE: *(Mustering courage, steps out.)* Stop! Stay where you are! *(Cronies, obeying all orders, stop short, falling over one another in a heap.)*

BLACKBEARD: *(Popping whip.)* Get up from there, you rascals! I'm the only one that gives ye orders! Make it snappy, or I'm goin' to part ye hair with the leather of this whip! *(The Cronies pull themselves together and quickly show their respect by "spiffing up" Blackbeard's boots, brushing coat, shining sword, etc.)* Enough! Get in line and proceed from where ye left off. *(Cronies hurry into place and go into a pose, one foot up and their faces set with grimacing expressions.)* On ye mark! Ready . . . stalk! *(They start advance.)*

LANCE: *(Braver still.)* I said . . . stop! *(They halt.)* Who are you?

BLACKBEARD: *(Furious, snapping whip.)* I give the orders! And I ask the questions!

SO-DUMB: *(Warning Lance.)* Let him ask the questions.

BLACKBEARD: *(Really seeing So-Dumb for the first time.)* What manner of monkey are you? *(Wild laughter. Cronies follow suit, holding their sides in convulsive silent glee.)* Ha, ha, ha, ha . . .

SO-DUMB: I'm not a monkey! I'm a cat!

BLACKBEARD: *(Stops laughing abruptly. Cronies do the same.)* A cat is it? *(Pokes Crony.)* He said he be a cat! Ha, ha, ha. *(Cronies mimic cat characteristics, pawing and rubbing against Blackbeard. He gives them both a kick that sends them rolling.)* No more tomfoolery! That's what I think of cats on my sloop! They tote bad luck with 'em.

JOSH: *(Tugging at Lance.)* What's a sloop?

LANCE: A small sailing ship, Josh.

JOSH: *(Crossing to Blackbeard.)* Well, this isn't his sloop, it's mine! My sloop!

SO-DUMB: That's right! You're trespassing. This is private property.

BLACKBEARD: *(Snapping whip; So-Dumb jumps back into place.)* Private property is it? Yours? Ha! It be more like "pirate property" and mine! I being Teach! Sometimes known as Thatch, often called Tach, but most feared and revered as Blackbeard . . . the most sought-after pirate that ever brought panic to the middle Atlantic! *(Cronies pantomime description of Blackbeard.)*

JOSH: Blackbeard! I didn't know that!

BLACKBEARD: *(Indicating So-Dumb.)* Now, you!

SO-DUMB: Who? Me?

BLACKBEARD: Yes, you . . . whatever you be!

SO-DUMB: *(Innocently.)* Cat, by birth. So-Dumb, by name. *(Cronies start antics again when they hear the name of So-Dumb.)*