

"Mouse Spell"

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CAT'S HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

A white, single story house of 1950's vintage with a generous porch and wide front steps framed by wooden pillars.

A light shines from the front window.

NARRATOR(V.O.)

Mr. Cat and Mr. Mouse had lived happily together for many years. Mr. Cat had inherited the rather old, but comfortable house, from a distant relative.

EXT./INT. CAT'S HOUSE - CONTINUING

Up the steps, through the window, to reveal Mr. Cat, attired in a vintage smoking jacket, situated in an overstuffed armchair reading the newspaper, before a cheery fire.

NARRATOR(V.O.)

His small income as a writer afforded him the luxury of an overstuffed armchair, a warm fire on cool evenings, and a subscription to the metropolitan evening news.

INT. MOUSE QUARTERS - SAME TIME

Mr. Mouse sits before a small stove, sipping tea and reading a book. In the b.g., an efficiency kitchen with older appliances and linoleum counter tops.

NARRATOR(V.O.)

And, his meager income was supplemented by the Mouse's rent. Mr. Mouse, who was employed at the local cheese factory, occupied small but cozy quarters that opened onto the hallway.

Mr. Mouse looks around briefly, turns the page and continues reading.

NARRATOR(V.O.)

While improvements were needed, the rent was cheap and the house was but a short walk to work.

(beat)

All in all, life was good.

INT. CAT'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Cat turns the page of his newspaper to reveal a full page furniture ad.

NARRATOR(V.O.)

The problem began when Mr. Cat spotted a furniture advertisement in the evening news.

CLOSE UP

Newspaper ad: Close Out Sale. A compelling photo of a leather armchair before a blazing fire. "LUXURIOUS, THREE-POSITION RECLINER with MATCHING OTTOMAN."

MR. CAT (V.O.)

My, my, my. Luxurious...three-positioned...matching ottoman.

BACK TO SCENE

Closing his eyes, Mr. Cat envisions just how wonderful this might be.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAME PLACE - DREAM TIME

And, there he is, outfitted in a snappy new smoking jacket, sequestered in the very armchair pictured so eloquently in the ad...his slippered feet resting lightly on the matching ottoman.

MR. CAT (V.O.)

Ahhhh.

CUT TO:

INT. SAME PLACE - MOMENTS LATER

Suddenly, his own ratty old chair snaps back into focus: its worn armrests, its coffee-stained upholstery, its...its missing ottoman.

Mr. Cat wistfully shakes his head.

MR. CAT

"Sale Ends Soon."

(sigh)

May as well end today! I could never afford such luxury.

From the hallway comes the unmistakable FOOTSTEPS of Mr. Mouse returning from the bathroom. Mr. Cat turns toward the sound, the glimmer of a smile crosses his face, his ears perk up.

MR. CAT
Or...perhaps I could!

INT. CAT'S HOUSE - MORNING

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Mr. Cat, wearing his "Birds of the World" pajamas, sips coffee and nibbles toast points at his writing desk. At the sound of a DOOR OPENING, he's instantly alert, glancing toward the hallway.

Mr. Mouse, waves merrily as he passes.

MR. MOUSE
It's off to work I go!

Mr. Cat springs to his feet.

MR. CAT
Ah, my friend, a word, if you please.

The Mouse hesitates uncertainly.

MR. MOUSE
Yes?

The Cat is immediately...

IN THE HALLWAY

at his side, smiling warmly, his arm draped nonchalantly about the Mouse's shoulders.

MR. CAT
Mr. Mouse, we have lived happily
side by side for a good many years.
Have we not?

Mr. Mouse nods cautiously.

MR. MOUSE
That is so.

MR. CAT
And, you have been an excellent
tenant. You are still employed at
the Cheese Factory?

MR. MOUSE
 (holding up his lunch bucket)
 Yes, as I think you know.

MR. CAT
 Ah, good...good. But, times change
 do they not? Expenses go up.
 (looks about)
 Everything is so costly these days
 that I...I feel I must approach you
 for a modest increase in your rent.

Mr. Mouse extracts himself at once from the Cat's clutches.

MR. MOUSE
 How modest? There are rumors the
 Cheese Factory could close, you know.

Mr. Cat, drawing inspiration from the ceiling, replies breezily.

MR. CAT
 Oh, say in the neighborhood of...25
 percent.

Mr. Mouse is completely taken aback.

MR. MOUSE
 Twenty...twenty-five percent? I
 can't pay it...I won't pay it. My
 rent far exceeds the poor plumbing,
 wretched decor and peeling paint
 I'm paying for now.
 (righteously)
 TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT!

Mr. Cat tries replacing his arm about the Mouse's
 shoulder. But Mr. Mouse will have none of it.

MR. CAT
 I could advertise for a new tenant
 you know.

MR. MOUSE
 (distraught)
 You would put me on the street? Our
 friendship down the drain...after
 all these years? Twenty-five percent?

MR. CAT
 Now let's not become upset. Surely
 we can agree upon...

Mr. Mouse, however, STOMPS back to his rooms, throws open
 his door and fixes the Cat with a glower.

MR. MOUSE
 You have my notice sir...effective
 IMMEDIATELY.

Mr. Cat addresses an indignantly SLAMMED door.

MR. CAT
 I can advertise for a new tenant,
 you know. In fact, I will do so
 THIS VERY MINUTE!

INT. CAT'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Mr. Cat is sprawled on the floor surrounded by art supplies. In the hallway, the sound of Mr. Mouse's DOOR OPENING and CLOSING.

MR. MOUSE(O.C.)
 I bid you Good Day and GOOD BYE.

The front door SLAMS shut with finality. Mr. Cat listens for a moment, then SIGHS.

MR. CAT
 (under his breath)
 Silly mouse!

He then carefully prints out the words to a large yard sign. "Room For Rent", "Single Mouse Preferred." "Inquire Within."

MR. CAT
 That should do it.

EXT. CAT'S HOUSE/FRONT YARD - DAY

Mr. Cat hammers the yard sign prominently in place next to the walk. He steps back to admire his craftsmanship, repeating the advertisement to himself.

MR. CAT
 Room For Rent. Single Mouse
 Preferred. Inquire Within.
 (admiringly)
 Well done. Well done!

Mr. Cat smiles, retires to his home, closing the door quietly behind him.

EXT. CAT'S HOUSE/FRONT YARD - NEXT MORNING

Mr. Mouse, walking past the house carrying his lunch pail, pauses to view the new yard sign.

MR. MOUSE
(reading)
Room for Rent. Single Mouse
Preferred. Inquire Within.
(dismissive)
Inquire Within, indeed.

The Mouse looks about and seeing no one, extracts a pen from his pocket. He makes a few deft strokes-- changing the "U" in MOUSE to an "O". Smiling, he backs away to admire his artwork.

MR. MOUSE
That should do it.

And, he continues his walk to work, WHISTLING a little tune, swinging his lunch pail.