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Dramatic Publishing

SUCH A NICE LITTLE KITTY

A One-Act Comedy

By
PAT COOK



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(SUCH A NICE LITTLE KITTY)
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*To
Gwendolyn
and
Tiger*

SUCH A NICE LITTLE KITTY
A One Act Comedy
For Two Men, One Woman, and One Offstage Cat

C H A R A C T E R S

WALTER HEBERT a nail-biting thirty-five-year-old man.
He is slightly paunchy around the middle and
is prematurely graying around the temples.

EDNA HEBERT also in her mid-thirties, she is Walter's
wife of twelve years. She is rather overweight
and her voice has a whine in it that sounds
like a buzz saw on a particularly rough plank
of wood.

OFFICER KELLY an "on the beat" policeman,
around forty.

CLEOPATRA an offstage fifty-seven-pound kitty.

TIME: The present, three o'clock in the morning.

PLACE: The living room of Walter and Edna Hebert.

NOTE ON SET

The living room of the Hebert's is an average room, with a couch, two matching chairs and a desk. A telephone sits on top of the desk. There are two doors. One is at DL and it leads to the outside. The other at UC leads to the bedroom. Situated about the room are end tables, lamps, and many books.

SUCH A NICE LITTLE KITTY

BEFORE THE LIGHTS COME UP we hear the most quarrelsome, complaining meowing ever emitted by a feline since the days of the saber-toothed tigers. This solitary, somber cat song goes on for a while.

AS THE LIGHTS COME UP: WALTER is standing beside the light switch, dressed in a robe and pajamas and carrying a rolled-up magazine in one hand. (The meowing stops.) WALTER looks around madly, then gets a fiendish look on his face.

WALTER. Here, kitty, kitty, kitty. Here, kitty, kitty, kitty. Nice kitty. Come here. (He looks all around the room in hopes of ambushing the cat.) Cleopatra. Where are you? Come on out. I got a new copy of *Life Magazine* for you. Where are you, you complaining furball — you spawn of Beelzebub. Come on out so Uncle Walter can get a shot at you, you hairy bag of tuna fish.

EDNA (from offstage UC). Walter?

WALTER. What is it, whining Edna?

EDNA (still offstage). What're you doing, Walter?

WALTER. Nothing, dear. Just trying to find out where puss-puss is. (To himself.) And when I do I'm going to bury that fat cat. Come on out, kitty, kitty, kitty. You can't live forever, you know.

(EDNA comes out of the bedroom UC. She also wears a robe and pajamas and has rollers in her hair. She walks up behind WALTER and taps him on the shoulder. WALTER turns and jumps.)

EDNA. It's me, dear.

WALTER. Don't sneak up on a fellow like that. Especially looking like the Scarecrow of Romney Marsh.

EDNA. What're you doing? You woke me up.

WALTER. I woke you up? I woke you up? You mean to stand there in your cold cream, your robe and my pajamas and tell me I woke you up?

EDNA. I'm not wearing any cold cream.

WALTER. You always wear cold cream. Don't lie to me when I got a rolled-up magazine in my hand.

EDNA. I was so sleepy tonight that I didn't put any on.

WALTER. You're kidding. (He rubs his thumb over her face.) How come your face is sticky?

EDNA. I don't know. Isn't that the strangest thing? (She sits in a chair.)

WALTER. Oh, no. It's finally happened, Edna.

EDNA. What?

WALTER. Evolution. Your face has evolved.

EDNA. What're you talking about now? (She yawns.)

WALTER. Certain fish live so deep in the ocean that they have no eyes. They've lived generation after generation in a lightless society until they've produced a species that has no eyes. Dolphins can hear noises a hundred miles away under water. And there's a certain type of roach that only lives in the backs of television sets.

EDNA. What's that got to do with my face?

WALTER. Don't you see? You've put so much cold cream on it, now it's started to produce its own.

EDNA. You woke me up to tell me that?

WALTER (shouting). I didn't wake you up!

EDNA. Right. Maybe it was a burglar that sounded like you.

WALTER. You mean to tell me you didn't hear that pampered pussy cat yowling its brains out?

EDNA. I didn't hear anything until you started talking to someone in here. Who were you talking to?

WALTER. I was talking to myself, okay?

EDNA. Isn't it a little strange to talk to yourself when you're all alone?

WALTER. Wouldn't it be stranger to talk to yourself when you're with somebody?

EDNA. It's Cleopatra again, isn't it?

WALTER. Of *course* it's Cleopatra again. It's *always* Cleopatra.

EDNA. Don't yell.

WALTER (yelling). I'm not yelling! I'm not yelling! Oh, no, I'm yelling! (He falls onto the couch, sobbing into a pillow.)

EDNA (after a brief pause). Something's wrong, dear, I can tell. (WALTER stops crying and looks at her.) When you've been married as long as we have you start to notice these little things. (WALTER sits up on the couch and talks to EDNA as if she were a child.)

WALTER. Can't slip anything by you, can I?

EDNA. What's wrong, dear?

WALTER. What's wrong?

EDNA. Yes.

WALTER. You're asking me what's wrong?

EDNA. Yes.

WALTER. You want to know what's wrong, Edna?

EDNA. Hurry, I'm starting to lose interest.

WALTER (standing and pacing). I think I'm going crazy, that's what's wrong.

EDNA. What do you mean, crazy?

WALTER. Crazy. Noun. Slang. Whack-o. Crackers. Major league bonkers. Lights out in the think tank. Bees in my brains. Industrial strength yahoo up here.

EDNA (crossing to him). Did you take an aspirin?

WALTER. Aspirin? What do you think, I got indigestion in my head?

EDNA. Four out of five doctors say whenever anxiety or tension occur, aspirin can act as a settling agent, but should be taken only in the correct dose form. Consult a physician should this condition persist.

WALTER. Listen to me, Edna. Don't take your eyes off me because I want your undivided attention. Aspirin isn't going to help what's bothering me, unless I get the whole bottle and give it to that stinking cat, cotton and all.

EDNA (starting for the bedroom). There you go again. Blame everything on Cleopatra. She's such a nice little kitty.

WALTER (sitting on the couch). Nice little kitty? Two years ago it was a nice little kitty. Now it weighs fifty-seven pounds and can beat up any three dogs in the neighborhood. (EDNA reluctantly turns and tries to console him.)

EDNA. You're getting excited again.

WALTER. Nice little kitty. A blind man wouldn't call that furlined crocodile a nice little kitty. (He sneezes.)

EDNA. There, see? You've been wandering around out here in the cold and now you're starting to sneeze.

WALTER (jumping up). I'm starting to sneeze because of that cat. She's been here on the couch.

EDNA. That's all in your head, dear. You know you're not allergic to animal hair. You just have a cold in your nose.

WALTER (pacing). No, no, this isn't any cold. I got that cat up my nose. I got that cat everywhere. It gets fur all over everything! I got three suits that started out cotton blend and now, suddenly, they're mohair.

EDNA. It's all in your imagination.

WALTER. It's *not* all in my imagination. Today a guy asked me if I rode a camel to work. I hate that cat.

EDNA. But Cleopatra likes you.

WALTER. No, she doesn't. Don't you see? She makes you think she does. Around you, she likes me. When you're not

around she spits on my shoes. That's a devious cat, Edna.
EDNA. You're saying what you're saying because you're upset.

WALTER. I'm upset because of what I'm saying. Listen, Edna, I've had it. That cat has to go. I'm serious now. I can't take it any more.

EDNA. But she's so helpless and little.

WALTER. If she were a horse, she'd be little.

EDNA. But she helps around the house.

WALTER. What do you mean, she helps around the house?

EDNA. She catches mice, doesn't she?

WALTER. They're not *our* mice! She goes next door and catches their mice and brings them over here. Before we got that cat we didn't have any mice. Now we do and the people next door don't. We ought to get a subsidy from them. Send this cat to camp.

EDNA. Well, I don't care whose mice they are, at least she kills them.

WALTER. Oh, no, she doesn't. They take one look at that sardine sucking gargantuan and keel over. I have never seen so many mice who died looking like they had just seen *The Exorcist*. (EDNA walks over and starts massaging Walter's neck.)

EDNA. Just relax, Walter. I'm sure you're blowing this thing all out of proportion. You're probably just tense from work.

WALTER. Tense from work. Edna, I'm a librarian. The most tension I ever have is if somebody drops *War and Peace* on the floor. Oh, that feels good.

EDNA. Of course it does. You just need to relax, that's all.

WALTER (softening). I tell you, I'm going crazy. I don't know what's happening any more.

EDNA. Don't think about it, dear.

WALTER. I know. It's just . . . well, you remember when we got married?

EDNA. Yes. You were on my left.

WALTER. I don't mean that. You remember what kind of guy

I used to be?

EDNA. Let's see, you were about this tall . . .

WALTER. You're not helping, Edna. The massage is relaxing my neck but your conversation is giving me white knuckles.

EDNA. I'm listening. Go ahead.

WALTER. I used to be so easy-going. Easy to be with. Fun at parties. I used to tell jokes.

EDNA. You were the funniest librarian I'd ever known.

WALTER. Yeah. I used to really crack them up at the conventions. Those were the days, huh?

EDNA. Yes, they were.

WALTER. Mmmm. Oh, that feels so good. Ooooooh, that's wonderful. I tell you this is the most relaxed I've been in months. (Offstage we hear Cleopatra give out one loud, growling meow. WALTER tenses up again.) She did it again! You hear that? She did that on purpose. That alley cat heard me say "relaxed" and that's all she needed to hear. I'm going to kill that cat!

EDNA. No, Walter. You can't. That would be cruel.

WALTER. What do you call what that cat is doing to me — social work? (Confidentially to EDNA.) I'm telling you, Edna, that's not a real cat. It's the devil in a fur coat. And it's out to get me!

EDNA. I won't let any harm come to Cleopatra.

WALTER. She won't feel a thing, I promise. I'll be very gentle and sneak up behind her very quietly with a hammer.

EDNA. I won't let you do it, Walter. After all, she was a gift from . . . (Stops.)

WALTER. *Ah-ha!* You're afraid to say it, aren't you? Come on, Edna. Say it. Who was she a gift from? Come on.

EDNA. She was a gift from my mother.

WALTER. Right. Your mother. And what did your mother say about me the day we got married?

EDNA. She said you were about as exciting as a tongue depressor.