

The White Cat

A Play for Children

By

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THE WHITE CAT
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Characters:

King Algernon	Princess Leonie's father
Queen Odette	Princess Leonie's mother
Princess Leonie	later, the White Cat
Lord Claude	courtier to Queen Odette
Lord Aubrey	courtier to Queen Odette
Old Fairy	
Evil Dwarf #1	Old Fairy's assistant
Evil Dwarf #2	Old Fairy's other assistant
Dulcimer D. Dragon, Esquire	Old Fairy's lawyer, transportation and assistant
Talking Parrot	Princess Leonie's companion
Prince Mortimer	Princess Leonie's first friend
King Bertrand	Father of Lambert, Vachel and Jeffrey
Prince Lambert	King Bertrand's eldest son
Prince Vachel	King Bertrand's middle son
Prince Jeffrey	King Bertrand's youngest son; played by the same actor as Prince Mortimer
Woman	woman who sells her dog
Castle	Old Fairy's Castle, the White Cat's home
Little Girl	
Doctor	

This play is written to be performed in Story Theatre style. The actors that are not speaking characters in any given scene play dogs, trees, etc.

If the courtiers are cast as girls, change the character names to Lady Albertine and Lady Celeste. If the Evil Dwarves are cast as girls, change the names to Eloise and Faustine. The roles can be doubled to one woman and four men (Actress #1 plays Queen Odette, Princess Leonie and the White Cat; Actor #1 plays King Algernon, Prince Lambert, Helping Hands and Talking Parrot; Actor #2 plays Lord Aubrey, Prince Mortimer, Prince Jeffrey; Actor #3 plays Lord Claude, Evil Dwarf #2, Dulcimer, Prince Vachel, Doctor; Actor #4 plays Old Fairy, Evil Dwarf #1, King Bertrand, Woman Selling her Dog, Helping Hands)

This play is based on *La Chatte Blanche*, an 18th century French fairy tale by Madame Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy. It was commissioned by The Perishable Theatre; the original, non-Equity production was directed by David Eliet. A later version of the play won the Beverly Hills Theatre Guild's Marilyn Hall Award in 2000, and was given one, non-Equity performance in June 2002. The current version of the play was rewritten for the Metropolitan Youth Theatre in August 2002.

For Jeff Bieganek

Scene One

{The actors set up the stage for the first scene. When they've finished, King Algernon approaches the audience. Fanfare.}

KING ALGERNON: *{Out.}* Once upon a time, there was a king named Algernon. He ruled over six kingdoms. King Algernon was generous, and smart, and kind-

QUEEN ODETTE: *{Crosses to KING ALGERNON, carrying a baby doll.}*
Algie?

KING ALGERNON: Sorry, my dear. I got carried away. *{Out.}* He had a beautiful queen-

QUEEN ODETTE: *{Out.}* Named Odette, and they had a perfect baby daughter, Princess Leonie. *{Holds up the baby doll to be admired.}* Leonie means "lioness."

KING ALGERNON: *{Out.}* We named her that so she would grow up brave and strong. Like her mother.

QUEEN ODETTE: *{Out.}* They lived in a beautiful palace, with lots of pets.

KING ALGERNON: *{Out.}* Dancing bears lived in the ballroom-

QUEEN ODETTE: *{Out.}* Baby elephants tossed water balloons in the backyard-

KING ALGERNON: *{Out.}* And seals swam in the palace moat.

QUEEN ODETTE: *{Out.}* Queen Odette loved to see new things, go exploring. Walking, hiking, biking, trains, planes, donkeys, horses- anyway is fine with me. *[To King Algernon.}* I can't wait to see the Fairy's Garden. I've heard about it my whole life. I was so excited I couldn't sleep last night. Are you sure you don't want to come with me?

KING ALGERNON: No, I'd rather stay home. But you go.

QUEEN ODETTE: *{Hands him the baby doll.}* Don't forget to sing Princess Leonie that lullaby she likes. *{Kisses King Algernon and the baby doll good-bye. Queen Odette and two actors playing Lord Aubrey and Lord Claude, her courtiers, start off on their trek. King Algernon exits. Queen Odette, Lord Aubrey, and Lord Claude climb a mountain, ford a river, and stagger through a swamp. The remaining actors transform themselves into the wall surrounding the Old Fairy's Garden. Queen Odette, Lord Aubrey and Lord Claude reach the wall. She is ecstatic.}* We're here! Isn't it exciting?

LORD CLAUDE: Yes, Your Majesty.

LORD AUBREY: Yes, Your Majesty.

QUEEN ODETTE: Help me up. *{The Old Fairy appears- Queen Odette, Lord Claude, and Lord Aubrey don't see her.}*

LORD CLAUDE: Oh, Your Majesty, let one of us go first. What if there's a witch back there?

LORD AUBREY: Or an evil troll?

QUEEN ODETTE: Don't be such scardy cats. Give me a leg up. *{Lord Claude links his hands together and Queen Odette steps on them to try to see over the wall. Old Fairy waves her wand and the wall moves higher.}* Hey, it wasn't so high a minute ago. Pick me up, Lord Claude. *{Lord Claude picks up Queen Odette. Old Fairy waves her wand, and the wall moves higher again.}*

LORD AUBREY: It must be enchanted, Your Majesty. The higher you go, the higher the wall gets.

QUEEN ODETTE: Mean old fairy. *{Old Fairy gets mad.}* I wanted to see the garden more than anything in the world! *{Old Fairy waves her wand toward Queen Odette, Lord Claude and Lord Aubrey. They all start yawning.}*

LORD CLAUDE: It's late, Your Majesty. Let's camp here for the night.

LORD AUBREY: I can't keep my eyes open one more minute. *{He, Queen Odette and Lord Aubrey each curl up on the stage and fall asleep.}*

OLD FAIRY: *{Waving her wand at Lord Claude and Lord Aubrey.}* Abracadabra, bobbity-boo, still as stone I make you! *{Lord Aubrey and Lord Claude stay asleep. She turns to Queen Odette, waves her wand. Queen Odette wakes up.}* Why do you want to see my garden?

QUEEN ODETTE: What did you do to my courtiers?

OLD FAIRY: *{Shrugs.}* They're fine. I didn't want them spying on us. Answer my question.

QUEEN ODETTE: Because I've heard about it my whole life. We traveled so far. I even left my husband at home with the baby-

OLD FAIRY: *{Suddenly curious.}* What's its name?

QUEEN ODETTE: Leonie.

OLD FAIRY: A girl baby? Girls rock! And you want to see my garden more than anything in the world?

QUEEN ODETTE: I really, really want to.

OLD FAIRY: Enough to give me the baby?

QUEEN ODETTE: No.

OLD FAIRY: I wouldn't hurt her. I'd just keep her until she's grown up. Kind of like a pet.

QUEEN ODETTE: Not Leonie. I could give you one of my six kingdoms, or a lot of chocolate, or money. I'd even give you my secret recipe for peanut butter pickle cake.

OLD FAIRY: Not good enough.

QUEEN ODETTE: I am a queen-

OLD FAIRY: You're not at home, Odette. I rule here. *{Waves her wand over Queen Odette.}* You're very, very hungry.

QUEEN ODETTE: *{Collapses to her knees.}* I know I had lunch. Why am I so hungry? *{Coughs.}* And so thirsty. Could I have something?

OLD FAIRY: Anything you like, my dear. Every fruit in the world is behind these walls.

THE WALL: *{As it lowers itself.}* Grapes and grapefruit, oranges and peaches, plums and pomegranates, kiwi and quinces, apples and melons, plantains and apricots, cherries and gooseberries, strawberries and lemons, key limes and cranberries, blueberries and bananas, blackberries and kumquats.

OLD FAIRY: You must eat something. If you don't, you'll die.

QUEEN ODETTE: I'd love a plum.

OLD FAIRY: *{The wall hands her a plum. She sticks it under Queen Odette's nose so she can smell it.}* Perfect, isn't it? What will you give me for it?

QUEEN ODETTE: *{Desperate.}* Anything.

OLD FAIRY: Done! *{Hands her the plum and Queen Odette bites into it. Old Fairy and the Wall exit.}*

LORD AUBREY: *{Wakes up.}* Your Majesty-

LORD CLAUDE: *{Wakes up.}* What happened? What's wrong? Where's the wall?

QUEEN ODETTE: *{Staring at the plum.}* I want to go home. *{They exit. King Algernon enters, carrying the baby doll. Queen Odette rushes to him.}*

KING ALGERNON: You're home early.

EVIL DWARF #1: *{Evil Dwarves enter.}* The Old Fairy sent us.

EVIL DWARF #2: We're here for the baby.

QUEEN ODETTE: Algie, she tricked me.

KING ALGERNON: Who?

QUEEN ODETTE: That mean Old Fairy. She put a spell on me and tricked me into giving her Leonie. I'm so ashamed.

KING ALGERNON: Odette, it's not your fault, she put a spell on you. We'll think of something.

EVIL DWARF #1: Excuse me? We're not pieces of furniture, y'know.

KING ALGERNON: You can't have Leonie!

EVIL DWARF #2: *{To Queen Odette.}* You promised to give the Old Fairy your baby for the plum.

QUEEN ODETTE: It's not a real promise if she had me under a spell. *{As the Evil Dwarves bicker, the other actors transform themselves into a Tower. King Algernon locks Queen Odette and the baby up in the tower.}*

EVIL DWARF #2: The Queen's right, Charlie. It's not very fair.

EVIL DWARF #1: Eustace, do we work for Queen Odette? No. We work for the Old Fairy, and she gets the baby, whether it's fair or not. *{Notices the tower.}* Hey! That's not fair! We can't reach her now.

EVIL DWARF #2: You're taking advantage of us 'cause we're short.

KING ALGERNON: Well, Old Fairy took advantage of the queen because she was human. Now you know how it feels.

EVIL DWARF #1: You'll be sorry. *{Evil Dwarves exit.}*

QUEEN ODETTE: *{Relieved.}* You were right, Algie. It will all be fine-

DRAGON: *{Enters, carrying a long roll of paper, calls up to her.}* You are Queen Odette?

QUEEN ODETTE: Yes.

DRAGON: I am Dulcimer D. Dragon, Esquire. I have been retained by Mrs. Old Fairy to secure her property, to wit, your baby, named Leonie. *{Unrolls the paper roll like it's a giant contract. He reads.}* "Party of the first part" - that's you, Your Majesty. Blah, blah, blah, "Party of the second part"- that's the Old Fairy.

QUEEN ODETTE: Old, mean fairy.

DRAGON: Well, yeah, but don't let her hear you say that. *{Goes back to reading.}* Okay. Everything seems in order. *{As he rolls up the paper.}* Hand over the baby.

KING ALGERNON: Or you'll do what?

DRAGON: I am an educated reptile, Your Majesty, but I am still a dragon- I do what we're famous for- breathing fire, destroying villages, that kind of thing. It's my job.

KING ALGERNON: But we have six kingdoms.

DRAGON: It could take awhile, but eventually I'd eat all of the young maidens, and the rest of your subjects would be toasted like marshmallows. It's your decision. With the queen's help, of course.

QUEEN ODETTE: Algie, what else can we do?

KING ALGERNON: When will we see Leonie again?

DRAGON: When she's married. No harm will come to her- don't worry.

QUEEN ODETTE: Such a long time! *{Queen Odette comes down from the tower, and kisses the doll good-bye. King Algernon kisses the doll good-bye. The dragon takes the doll and exits. Queen Odette and King Algernon exit, weeping, as the other actors disassemble the tower. They set up a different tower, on the opposite side of the stage.}*

PRINCESS LEONIE: *{Enters, with Talking Parrot. Out.}* No harm came to Leonie. The Old Fairy told Leonie that she was really her mother, and treated her very well. But she had no other companion except-

TALKING PARROT: *{Out.}* A talking parrot.

PRINCESS LEONIE: *{Out.}* They lived in a high tower. Like "Rapunzel, Rapunzel let down your golden hair."

TALKING PARROT: *{To Princess Leonie.}* But your name's not Rapunzel, it's Leonie. And we're French. Rapunzel's not French.

PRINCESS LEONIE: A young girl with long hair who lives in a tower. Isn't it close enough?

TALKING PARROT: *{Out.}* I teach Leonie her lessons, play games with her. I'm her brothers and cousins and school friends all rolled into one. *{To Princess Leonie.}* Do you want to play jacks?

PRINCESS LEONIE: Not really.

TALKING PARROT: We could play “Yahtzee”? Or pick-up sticks, or dominoes, or checkers. You could have your dancing class!

PRINCESS LEONIE: What’ll we do?

TALKING PARROT: The polka. *{Princess Leonie laughs.}* What’s so funny?

PRINCESS LEONIE: It sounds so silly.

TALKING PARROT: Not at all. Let’s start. *{Talking Parrot takes her right hand in its left wing. The other actors play a polka on kazoos.}* OK, now follow me. *{Princess Leonie and Talking Parrot polka around the stage, faster and faster, until they both fall over, out of breath.}*

PRINCESS LEONIE: *{Panting.}* That was fun! Let’s do it again.

TALKING PARROT: *{Gasping for air.}* I ... need ... a ... break. Your lungs are bigger than mine. It’s time for spinning.

PRINCESS LEONIE: I don’t like spinning. I want to go for a walk.

TALKING PARROT: Leonie, you know that’s not allowed. You have to stay here with me.

OLD FAIRY: *{Enters, riding the dragon. She calls up to the tower.}* How’s my beautiful girl?

PRINCESS LEONIE: Mom, I want to go for a walk and Talking Parrot won’t let me.

OLD FAIRY: He’s quite right. You’re not allowed to go for walks, you know that.

PRINCESS LEONIE: But I want to go exploring, see new things!

OLD FAIRY: You can see all sorts of things out of your window.

PRINCESS LEONIE: But they’re all so far away. I want to see everything up close.

OLD FAIRY: Some day, when you’re older.

PRINCESS LEONIE: But I’m plenty old now.

DRAGON: There are dragons out there, Leonie. Not all of them are as polite as me.

OLD FAIRY: Practice your spinning, Leonie. Have you got enough flax?

PRINCESS LEONIE: *{Sulky.}* Yes, Mom.

OLD FAIRY: I’ll see you tomorrow. *{Old Fairy rides away on the dragon.}*

PRINCESS LEONIE: Spinning is dumb.

TALKING PARROT: Now, Leonie-

PRINCESS LEONIE: It is dumb. I spin all the flax and Mom brings more. Spin more flax, Mom brings more. It never changes, every day. It's so boring. *{Sticks her head out the window as Prince Mortimer enters, riding a hobby horse.}* Who're you?

PRINCE MORTIMER: *{To his horse.}* Whoa, there! *{Stops and dismounts.}* I'm Prince Mortimer. I've been hunting in the woods nearby. Who're you?

PRINCESS LEONIE: I'm Princess Leonie.

PRINCE MORTIMER: What're you doing up there?

PRINCESS LEONIE: I live here. I look out my window a lot, but I've never seen you before.

PRINCE MORTIMER: I've never been here before. You're very pretty.

PRINCESS LEONIE: Thanks.

PRINCE MORTIMER: And so Prince Mortimer came to visit Princess Leonie every day. They'd talk for hours, until the sun went down and it was too dark to talk anymore. Many months passed.

PRINCESS LEONIE: I'm sick of being cooped up in this tower.

PRINCE MORTIMER: Won't your mother ever let you out?

PRINCESS LEONIE: Not until I'm grown up.

PRINCE MORTIMER: You seem grown up to me.

PRINCESS LEONIE: Will you wait for me until I can get out of the tower?

PRINCE MORTIMER: Of course, Leonie. I brought something for you. *{Reaches in his pocket and pulls out a snapshot.}* It's a picture of me. So you don't forget me when I'm not around. *{Tries to toss it up to her three times. She gets closer and closer, but keeps missing.}*

PRINCESS LEONIE: Oh, Talking Parrot.

TALKING PARROT: I'm not sure your mother would approve. I don't want her turning me into a toad, or feeding me to Dulcimer. I don't know which is worse.

PRINCESS LEONIE: Please, please, please, Talking Parrot? Pretty, pretty please with sugar on top? I'll scratch your throat every night after dinner for a week. Cross my heart and hope to die.

TALKING PARROT: Well, all right. *{Flies down to Prince Mortimer, grabs the photo in his beak, and flies back to Princess Leonie.}*

PRINCESS LEONIE: Thank you, Talking Parrot. *{Looks at the photo.}* And thank you, Prince Mortimer. I will keep it forever. I wish I could get out of here. All I ever do is spin and spin. Hey! I wonder if I could spin a way out. *{The other actors transform themselves into a spinning wheel, making spinning sound effects as Princess Leonie pushes the treadle. A completed rope ladder emerges from the spinning wheel.}*

PRINCE MORTIMER: So she spun and spun and spun, until one day, the ladder was finished. *{Princess Leonie throws down the rope ladder, and he catches it, steadying the bottom as she climbs down it.}*

PRINCESS LEONIE: *{As she touches the ground.}* What's this green stuff?

PRINCE MORTIMER: It's grass, silly.

PRINCESS LEONIE: *{Pokes at it with her finger.}* I always thought it was carpet. *{Old Fairy enters, riding the dragon. She's furious.}*

OLD FAIRY: Leonie- you left your tower. Very, very naughty!

PRINCESS LEONIE: But Mom-

OLD FAIRY: Don't "but, Mom" me, young lady. Who's he?

PRINCESS LEONIE: This is my friend, Prince Mortimer. He thinks I'm pretty.

OLD FAIRY: What are you up to, whippersnapper?

PRINCE MORTIMER: I want to marry her, Mrs. Old Fairy.

OLD FAIRY: *{Shrinks back in horror.}* You will not! Dulcimer, eat him. *{Dragon eats Prince Mortimer.}*

PRINCESS LEONIE: How could you! My only friend, and you feed him to Dulcimer.

DRAGON: *{Big burp.}* He was tasty. *{Pulls out a toothpick and cleans between his teeth.}*

OLD FAIRY: You know you're engaged to marry the King of the Trolls.

PRINCESS LEONIE: I don't like him. He's funny-looking-

OLD FAIRY: Shame on you, Leonie. He can't help how he looks.

PRINCESS LEONIE: Well, he can help that he's so stinky. He never takes a bath.

OLD FAIRY: You're going to marry him, and that's final. He has a lot of good land that is right next to my fairy kingdom.

PRINCESS LEONIE: I won't marry him. I'll hold my breath until I turn blue. I'll never spin again. I'll, I'll-

OLD FAIRY: You'll do as you're told, or you'll be in big trouble.

PRINCESS LEONIE: No!

OLD FAIRY: Be that way! *{Casting a spell with her wand.}* Leonie, what shall we make of you? I think a pretty white kitty will do! *{Smoke, sound, something happens, and Leonie is transformed into the White Cat.}*

PRINCESS LEONIE: My little feet are paws. And I'm all covered with fur! Mom, how could you?

OLD FAIRY: I'm not your mother. You're really a princess.

PRINCESS LEONIE: I always knew I was a princess!

OLD FAIRY: Your mother was Queen Odette- just like you. So curious, always wanting to see new things, go new places. She tried to get into my garden and I put a spell on her.

PRINCESS LEONIE: What did you do to my mother?

OLD FAIRY: I made her give you to me. For a plum.

PRINCESS LEONIE: Will I be a cat forever?

OLD FAIRY: When you can find a man who looks like Prince Mortimer and who loves you that much, that will break the spell. But it'll take a long time, Leonie.

PRINCESS LEONIE: Do I have to go back in the tower?

OLD FAIRY: I'm sending you to my fairy castle. Where your mother promised you to me. *{Reaches in her pocket and pulls out a huge ruby.}* This was going to be your present from me on the day you married the King of the Trolls. *{Hands the ruby to the White Cat.}* Take it. I've no use for it now.

PRINCESS LEONIE: Can Talking Parrot come with me?

OLD FAIRY: No.

PRINCESS LEONIE: Good-bye, Talking Parrot. Thanks for everything.

OLD FAIRY: Take her away, Dulcimer.

PRINCESS LEONIE: Finally, an adventure! *{Gets on the dragon's back and rides away, as Talking Parrot waves both his wings good-bye.}*

End of Scene One

To read the rest, please purchase the script.