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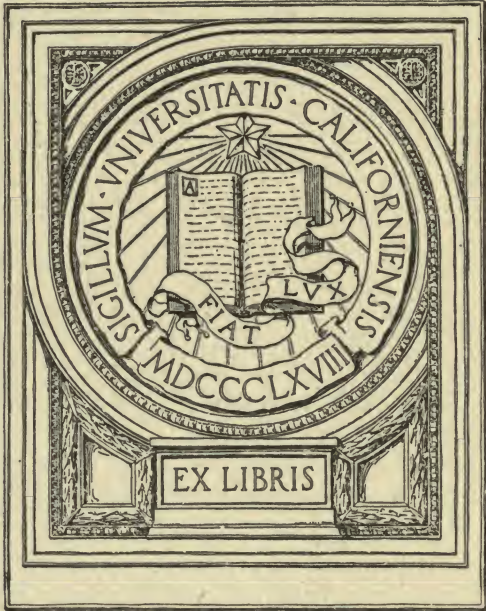


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“Swat the Fly!”
By Eleanor Gates

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"SWAT THE FLY!"

A ONE-ACT FANTASY

By

ELEANOR GATES

AUTHOR OF "THE POOR LITTLE RICH GIRL," "WE ARE SEVEN," "THE BIOGRAPHY OF A PRAIRIE GIRL," "THE PLOW-WOMAN," ETC.

COLORED JACKET BY EVERETT SHINN



THE ARROW PUBLISHING COMPANY
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ELEANOR GATES.

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MAY 1915

**TO
THE TROOPER**

313135

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

THE DOCTOR

THE WOMAN INSPECTOR

THE BOY

THE DOG

THE CAT

THE HORSE

THE MONKEY

THE RABBIT

THE FLY

“SWAT THE FLY!”

A garden in the rear of a laboratory for animal experimentation. A high red-brick wall encloses the garden, into which, at the upper right-hand corner, juts the granite laboratory building. The interior of the laboratory is brilliantly white. From it a door opens upon the garden. Beside the door, hanging from a wrought-iron bracket, is a globe in which are electric bulbs. The lights are turned on by pressing a button in the framework of the door.

In the garden wall, at left, is a wide door leading to a city street. In the rear wall is a square, window-like opening through which can be seen the Horse's standing-stall. The Monkey's house is in the lower right-hand corner of the garden. Directly across from it is the kennel of the Dog. The Rabbit's hutch is placed against the rear wall, close to the square opening. The front of the hutch is screened with wire netting.

The garden is covered by a lawn. Flowers grow against its walls, as well as in the corners made by the meeting of wall and building. Vines climb the bricks on either side of the street door. Above the walls, on every side, bend the branches of trees. At the center of the garden is a low stone bench.

It is late evening. The garden is only star-lit. Out of the gloom come the sleepy bark of the Dog, the crunching and stamping of the Horse, as he feeds, and the cross chatter of the Monkey. The tiny bell, which the Cat wears on her collar, tinkles faintly.

Suddenly the street door opens, and the flash of a pocket search-light is turned upon the garden. The Woman Inspector appears

in the doorway. She wears a coat-suit, a neckpiece formed of the skin of a fox, and a hat trimmed with pheasant feathers. She throws her light upon the Monkey's house: upon the door of the laboratory: upon the opening in the rear wall. The back of the Horse appears above the sill of the opening. The light travels to the Rabbit's hutch, disclosing a mound of snow-white fur.

The Inspector enters quickly and goes to the Dog, who is lying down, his back curved against the entrance to the kennel. The Inspector turns her light upon him. He moves.

INSPECTOR

(Leans to peer into the kennel.)

Here! Let me look at you. A bandage! Oh, poor fellow! That Doctor's been torturing you! (The Dog growls.) There! There! (Pats the Dog, and goes to the hutch.) A rabbit! (Makes a brief examination; goes to the opening in the wall and looks through at the Horse, flashing her light over him. Comes down quickly to the Monkey. He is lying just within the door of his house. She drops on one knee.) Well, monkey! What's that Doctor been doing to YOU? (Reaches in.) Been putting a steel gag on you? Oh, the poor foot! (Soothingly, as the Monkey moves and chatters.) There, now! Lie still!

DOCTOR

(Calls from the laboratory.)

Here, Kitty! Kitty! Kitty!

(The Inspector puts out her pocket-flash, springs up, and hides behind the Monkey's house. The Doctor enters, and presses the electric button beside the laboratory door. The globe floods the garden with light. The Doctor wears a sack suit, but no hat.)

DOCTOR

Here, Kitty ! Kitty ! Kitty ! (*Looks about the garden.*) Well, how's everybody ? (*Goes to the opening in the wall, and reaches to pat the Horse.*) Hello ! How's the nice old boy ? (*Turns toward the hutch.*) And how's little Bunny ! Eh ?

(*The Boy enters from the street. He is wearing pajamas. In his right hand, wrapped in paper, he carries a bone. In the circle of his left arm he has a banana, which he holds against him; in his left hand are an apple and a carrot. He sees the Doctor and halts timidly. The Doctor turns from the hutch and sees the boy.*)

DOCTOR

Good evening, young man ! Where did YOU come from ?

BOY

I came from my bed. (*Backs a step and puts the bone behind him.*)

DOCTOR

And what are you doing out of your bed ?

BOY

I'm feeding your animals. (*Holds out his right hand to show the bone.*)

DOCTOR

Feeding my animals ! Why — — !

BOY

My mother says you starve 'em. So, — here's a bone for the dog, an' a carrot for the rabbit, an' a' apple for the horse, an' a banana for the monkey.

DOCTOR

(Laughs and accepts the bone.)

All right. *(Goes to the kennel, the Boy following, and looks in.)*
 Hey, dog! Just gnaw on this fine big bone. *(To the boy.)* And
 how did you find your way here, at this time of night?

BOY

I followed my mother.

DOCTOR

Why, your mother isn't here!

BOY

Oh, yes, she is. Somewhere. *(Looks behind the kennel.)* I
 saw her come in. Oh, Mother! *(Looks behind the Monkey's
 house.)* Hello, mother! *(To the Doctor.)* Here she is!
(The Inspector stands up.)

DOCTOR

Madam, what are you doing in this garden?

INSPECTOR

Examining these animals.

DOCTOR

Why should you sneak and hide?
(The Boy goes to his mother.)

INSPECTOR

Let me introduce myself. *(Opens her coat, displaying a metal
 badge pinned on her breast.)*

DOCTOR

So you're a spy!

INSPECTOR

I'm an inspector!

DOCTOR

I've seen you before.

INSPECTOR

I've been keeping an eye on you.

DOCTOR

Well, go ahead! What is it you want to know?

INSPECTOR

I want to know what you do to these poor, dumb creatures.

DOCTOR

I use them to fight the diseases carried by flies.

INSPECTOR

(Sneeringly.)

Oh, you vivisectionists have a FINE excuse for your cruelty!
Flies!

DOCTOR

Yes, flies! When all the flies are dead, we doctors will be out
of a job. For now we know that—

INSPECTOR

Please come back to the animals.

DOCTOR

(Shrugs, crosses to the Monkey.)

Well, this monkey here is — *(The Monkey chatters angrily. The Doctor falls back, motioning the Inspector and the Boy to retreat.)* Look out! He's bad-tempered!

INSPECTOR

Ah! You needn't tell me how you treat HIM! *(The Doctor turns away.)* And what about that helpless rabbit?

DOCTOR

(Goes to the hutch.)

The rabbit furnishes me with typhoid serum. And the neck of my horse is full of the serum that cures diphtheria. See! *(Takes a small case from a pocket.)* I'll take some serum—just to show you. *(Leans through the opening.)* Here, back! Back up! Whoa, now!

INSPECTOR

Oh, don't! I can't bear it! Don't! *(The Horse stamps. She covers her eyes.)* Don't, I say! Oh, I'll have you arrested for this!

DOCTOR

There! *(Turns.)* You see what THAT amounts to.

INSPECTOR

(Faces him.)

Oh, don't try to fool me! You hurt him!

DOCTOR

Not more than the flick of a whip. *(Puts the case away.)*

INSPECTOR

(Triumphantly.)

There you are! The flick of a whip! What do you doctors care about the agony of your poor victims!

DOCTOR

I don't cause pain unless it's necessary.

INSPECTOR

Necessary! You shouldn't be allowed to cause an animal ANY pain!

DOCTOR

Oh! Then, of course, you're a vegetarian.

INSPECTOR

I am not !

DOCTOR

Well, I AM ! You talk about pain ! Do you know how lambs are killed ? And cattle ? Do you know anything about slaughtering hogs ? THERE'S pain for you !

INSPECTOR

We must have meat !

BOY

(Proudly.)

And my father's going to bring us some venison.

DOCTOR

Your father ?

BOY

He's gone to the mountains—to hunt and fish. *(Leans against his mother.)*

INSPECTOR

(To the Boy.)

Hush !

DOCTOR

(Triumphantly.)

Ha ! Hunt and fish !

INSPECTOR

Yes, hunt and fish. Why not ?

DOCTOR

(Sarcastically.)

My dear lady, I see that you really ARE interested in animals.

INSPECTOR

(Angrily.)

Oh, I know what you mean! But let me tell you something: When my husband hunts, he gives an animal a chance for its life. And if he kills, he kills quick. But you — you mutilate in the name of science. You tie down your victims — and torture!

DOCTOR

I use ether and chloroform. But your husband—when he pulls a trout from the stream, it dies of suffocation.

INSPECTOR

(To the Boy, irritably.)

Don't lean against me like that!

DOCTOR

And when your husband goes shooting, he doesn't find every bird that he wounds.

INSPECTOR

He finds as many as he can.

DOCTOR

Ha! As many as he can! But the ones he DOESN'T find! Are they chloroformed? And what about the animals that die in traps? And the birds that are snared? *(He points at the Inspector.)* How about that fox? That pheasant?

INSPECTOR

You're insulting!

DOCTOR

Madam, you're a fine Inspector! Here you stand, admitting that your husband kills for pleasure! And you're tricked out in the skin and the feathers of dumb creatures. Look at that poor head! Those little paws! And yet you spy on a man who causes suffering only to save human life!

(The Boy coughs, and leans heavily against his mother.)

INSPECTOR

Save human life! With your nasty serums, you mean? Oh, what nonsense!

DOCTOR

Madam, go home. And take care of your boy!

INSPECTOR

You needn't worry about my boy. *(She draws the Boy to her.)*

DOCTOR

But, see! His cheeks! He's got fever.

INSPECTOR

(To the Boy.)

Do you feel sick, dear?

DOCTOR

Let ME have a look at him. *(Starts forward.)*

INSPECTOR

(Puts out hand to check the doctor.)

No! Your hands are stained with the blood of the innocent! Don't you dare to touch him! *(She takes the Boy up in her arms.)* I wouldn't let you treat a dog of mine! *(Crosses to the street door and hails to look back.)* You fiend! *(Goes out.)*

DOCTOR

Oh, all right! (*Follows the Inspector to the door, slams it, turns toward the laboratory.*) But the poor little chap ought to be home in bed. (*Strikes at the Fly.*) Oh, you pest! (*Looks up at the top of the wall, to where the Fly has gone, turns, touches the electric button, putting the garden again in darkness, and closes the laboratory door after him.*)

DOG

(*Howls mournfully.*)

Woo—oo—oo—oo! (*Pause.*) Woo—oo—oo!

(*The Cat meows as if frightened. The Monkey chatters angrily. The Horse snorts. The globe again lights the garden, and the Monkey is standing with one fore-paw on the electric button. The other paw is bandaged. The Dog is outside his kennel. He, too, wears a bandage—about his head. It gives him a rakish expression. The Rabbit is sitting in front of her hutch. She moves her ears nervously.*)

DOG

(*Howls.*)

Woo—oo—oo—oo!

(*The Cat appears from behind the Monkey's house. She wears a gay collar to which is attached a small bell.*)

CAT

(*Anxiously.*)

Dog! Are you sick?

(*The Monkey comes down to observe the Dog.*)

DOG

No. Cat, no! (*Howls.*) Woo—oo—oo!

MONKEY

(Crossly.)

Well, if you're not sick, what're you howling about?

DOG

Oh, somebody's going to die. Woo — oo — oo — oo !

(The animals are greatly excited. The Rabbit and the Cat join the Monkey, while the Horse snorts and stamps.)

RABBIT

Oh, Dog, is it I?

HORSE

(Puts his head in at the square opening.)

Or I?

CAT

Oh, I'm scared ! *(Puts her paws to her eyes.)*

DOG

Don't worry, Cat. It's not one of us !

MONKEY

Not? Then cut out that howling ! Y' know, I'VE got NERVES.

HORSE

Is it the Doctor?

(The Dog shakes his head.)

MONKEY

No such luck !

HORSE

Is it the Inspector?

RABBIT

And she defended us ! Oh ! Oh !

MONKEY

(To the Rabbit.)

Blame that Doctor ! It's HIS fault !

DOG

Rabbit, it's not the Inspector.

CAT

Then it's the Boy !

ALL

Is it? Tell us ! Oh, Dog !

DOG

I'm afraid it's the Boy. Woo — oo — oo — oo !

CAT

The Boy? Meow ! Meow !

MONKEY

(To the Cat.)

Oh, shut up ! Here I am, that Boy's own cousin, as you might say, and I'M not crying !

RABBIT

What's the matter with the Boy?

CAT and HORSE

(Together.)

Yes ! Yes ! What?

MONKEY

Wasn't the Boy just here? I tell you, it's that DOCTOR !

DOG

Oh, poor little Boy! Oh, his throat. Woo — oo — oo!

HORSE

Throat! Oh! Dear! Dear!

MONKEY

Ah-ha! (*To the Horse.*) Didn't that Doctor give YOU something, in YOUR throat?

ALL

That's so! Yes! He did!

MONKEY

That's your proof! (*Sits on the stone bench.*)

CAT

Then it's true?

MONKEY

As true as there's milk in cocoanuts.

RABBIT

Oh! Oh!

HORSE

Well, I'm only a horse!

DOG

But the Boy is almost a man.

MONKEY

Ya-a-ah! Look at how that Doctor treats ME! And I'M almost a man.

ALL

Yes. A man. Almost. You are.

MONKEY

(Rises proudly.)

Indeed, I am! I even THINK like a man. *(The animals agree by nods.)* And I ought to live in the house with the family. But does that Doctor want me? Oh, I hate him! *(Chatters angrily.)*

RABBIT

And I hate him! *(Moves her ears.)*

MONKEY

My friends, this Doctor is the cause of ALL our troubles. I wish HE were going to die. *(Animals are shocked.)* Yes! And for half a banana I'd kill him!

ALL

Kill him! Oh!

MONKEY

Yes, kill him, and set you all free. *(Takes proud attitude.)*

ALL

Free? Free? Could you? *(The Horse whinnies, the Cat plays, the Dog barks, the Rabbit moves her ears.)*

MONKEY

Could I? Rather! *(Struts to and fro.)*

RABBIT

But HOW could you kill him?

MONKEY

How? Easy enough! *(To the others.)* Now, HOW shall — er — WE kill him?

HORSE

I suppose I could kick him.

DOG

And I could bite him. Like that!

CAT

I could scratch his eyes out. Pst! Pst!

MONKEY

(Proudly.)

I could fight him man to man! Come, friends! *(He motions the Rabbit, the Cat and the Dog to him.)* We'll bite him, we'll kick him, we'll scratch him, we'll kill him together.

ALL

Yes! Yes! We'll kill him!

FLY

(Appears on the wall above the Horse.)

Buzz-z-z-z-z-z!

(Animals look up. The eyes of the Fly glow red.)

Buzz-z-z-z-z-z!

ALL

The Fly! The Fly! The Fly! *(They go toward him.)*

FLY

Hey, all of you! Wait a minute! If you're going to kill that Doctor, I want to help!

ALL

Come down! Yes! Help!

(The Fly descends the wall, buzzing loudly. The others conduct him forward.)

FLY

Ladies and gentlemen, I was fast asleep up there, out of the way of the spiders, when all of a sudden I was awakened by the music of your voices. And I heard your delicious scheme. Oh, I yearn to be a part of it! For I hate that Doctor, too!

ALL

(Surprised.)

You? Why? Why?

FLY

Why? Saucers of poisoned sugar-water, THAT'S why! Reams of sticky tangle-foot, that's why! And did you hear what he said to your friend, the Inspector? And did you see him SWAT at me as he went out?

ALL

(Sympathetically.)

Yes! Yes! Meow! Bow-wow! Ee-ee-ee!

FLY

Yes! This same Doctor who tortures you! Look at poor Horse — full of diphtheria!

HORSE

Well, of course, it doesn't hurt!

FLY

If it hurt, he'd do it just the same. *(To the Monkey.)* And think how he treats you—you ought to be a member of his household.

MONKEY

People are NEVER kind to their poor relations.

FLY

(*To the Dog.*)

And, oh, what he hasn't done to YOU! (*The Dog growls. To the Rabbit.*) And you're full of typhoid. (*The Rabbit gives a little scream. To the Cat.*) And you'll be the NEXT!

CAT

Meow!!

FLY

And so he must die! (*To the Horse.*) But if you kick him, his friends will shoot you. (*To the Dog.*) If you bite him, they'll think you're mad! (*To the Cat.*) If you scratch him, they'll wring your neck. So you'd better let ME kill him!

ALL

YOU?

FLY

And nobody will ever know! Buzz-z-z! Buzz-z-z-z-z! (*His eyes glow red.*)

MONKEY

(*Contemptuously.*)

How can a mere fly kill a man?

ALL

Oh, he can't! Impossible! No.

MONKEY

A common fly, too. A common house fly.

FLY

So you doubt it, do you? (*Proudly.*) My friends, it is I who am killing that Boy!

ALL

You? Oh! The Boy!

FLY

Yes, I!

DOG

(Howls.)

Woo — oo — oo — oo!

FLY

The other day, when he was having his breakfast, I lit on the edge of his glass of milk. *(Darkly.)* And I wiped my foot! *(Making a wiping motion with his right front foot.)*

ALL

Your FOOT?

FLY

But what's one boy! Huh! With the help of my thousand children, I could wipe out this whole town! *(Animals turn away incredulously. The Horse brays like a donkey in derision. The Cat puts a paw over her mouth to hide a smile.)* I could, I tell you. *(To the Cat.)* Haven't I the entrée to the best homes?

CAT

(Nods.)

Oh, meow!

HORSE

And to the best stables! *(Stamps.)*

MONKEY

(Crossly.)

While I have to stay out in a garden!

FLY

Well, then ! At this moment I have six million, six hundred thousand germs on my feet. (*Raises his right front foot.*) Here's my diphtheria !

HORSE

Oh, horrible ! (*Stamps.*)
 (*The Dog starts, and stares at the Fly.*)

FLY

(*Holds up first left foot.*)

And here's typhoid !

RABBIT

Er — ah !

DOG

Typhoid, too !

FLY

I'm the best little carrier of typhoid the world has ever seen.

DOG

(*Grimly.*)

Go on ! Go on !

FLY

(*Holds up second right foot.*)

Here I keep scarlet fever. (*Holds up second left foot.*) And here's small-pox ! (*Holds up third right foot.*) And here's the white plague.

MONKEY

(*Falls back, frightened.*)

Ee — ee — ee !

FLY

Now, ladies and gentlemen, here I am, germed to the feet !
 How shall that Doctor die ?

DOG

(Significantly.)

So, Mr. Fly, you carry ALL the diseases?

FLY

(Proudly.)

I carry them all! All! Even infantile paralysis! *(Laughs.)*
And let me tell you a little joke! They'll never get rid of
disease as long as I'M alive. Buzz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z! Buzz-z-z-z-z-z-z!
Buzz-z-z-z!

DOG

Friends, we've been blaming the wrong person!

ALL

What? You mean — ? Tell us!

DOG

It's not the Doctor. This Fly is our REAL enemy!

ALL

Enemy! The Fly! *(They fall away from the Fly.)*

FLY

(To the Dog.)

How can you turn on me like that? I've tickled your nose.
I've kept you awake. But —

DOG

Silence! *(To the others.)* If this Fly didn't carry disease,
there wouldn't be sickness. If there wasn't sickness, the
Doctor wouldn't have to experiment on us.

*(The Horse snorts, the Monkey chatters, the Cat
spits, the Rabbit moves her ears.)*

FLY

Oh, you ungrateful beasts !

DOG

You bug ! You ungrateful bug ! If there's a warm corner in the house, you have it; if there's a sweet cake in the cupboard, you eat it. And for all the hospitality that's shown you, what do you do? You carry filth ! You carry death ! You even murder little babies !

FLY

And what do YOU do? You sit in the laps of women !

DOG

I may sit in the laps of women, but I don't put my feet in their food !

CAT

Good for you, Dog ! (*The other animals show approval.*)

FLY

(*To the Cat.*)

You little sneak. What have I ever done to you?

CAT

Your relatives fall into my milk !

MONKEY

(*To the Fly.*)

So YOU carry the white plague? Ee-ee-ee ! (*Points a long finger at the Fly.*)

HORSE

And every time you give somebody diphtheria, the Doctor runs a needle into me. (*Stamps his feet.*)

FLY

(Holds up his third left foot.)

Look out! On this foot I carry a disease that's death to animals!

RABBIT

Oh! Oh! *(Hops aside and covers her eyes with her forepaws. Her ears tremble.)*

MONKEY

(Retreats in the opposite direction and covers in fear.)

Oh! Oh!

DOG

Come on, Kitten!

CAT

Swat him! Swat him!

HORSE

Swat him! *(Rears excitedly.)*

FLY

Buzz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z! Buzz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z! Buzz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!
(There is a struggle. The Dog growls; the Cat spits. Suddenly the Dog and the Cat separate. The Fly is lying on his back, dead. The Cat and the Dog come down to the kennel. The Rabbit uncovers her eyes. The Monkey regains his brave air.)

HORSE

Well, good-bye to one little germ carrier!

DOG

And a thousand little flies are fatherless.

CAT

(Smooths her fur.)

Why, that Doctor brought me home when I was starving in the street! Purr-r-r! Purr-r-r!

RABBIT

And he took ME away from a bad little boy! *(Hops to the hutch.)*

MONKEY

And after all, he's a relative of mine. And—blood is thicker than water! *(He strolls toward the laboratory door.)*

DOG

My friend, suppose, after this, that instead of fighting the Doctor, we fight the flies!

ALL

Good! Yes! Hoorah! We'll swat the flies!

DOG

(Goes to kennel.)

Now, where's that fine big bone? *(Growls gently; settles down.)*

MONKEY

(Yawns.)

Everybody ready for bed?

(Chorus of sleepy growls, meows, whinnies, and squeaks. The Monkey puts a paw on the push button, and the lights go out.)

(As the garden goes dark there is the sound of someone running.)

INSPECTOR

(Calling from the street.)

Doctor! Help! Oh, Doctor! *(She rushes through the door.)*

Doctor, oh, Doctor, where are you? Oh, Doctor, help!

(The Doctor throws open the door of the laboratory, enters, and presses the electric button. The Inspector is standing beside the bench, the Boy in her arms. She wears no hat or coat. Beside her, on the lawn, is a cat, wearing a gay collar, to which is fastened a tiny bell. A dog comes from the kennel, a horse looks through the square opening, and a monkey appears out of the monkey-house.)

(The Doctor is in his shirt-sleeves. He comes down.)

INSPECTOR

My boy! My boy's dying! He can't breathe!

DOCTOR

Here! *(Takes the Boy in his arms, lays him upon the bench, and leans down to him.)*

INSPECTOR

Oh, save him! Save him! Oh, I can't lose my boy! What can you do?

DOCTOR

Diphtheria! Wait! *(Takes the case out of his pocket.)*

INSPECTOR

Oh, not that, Doctor! No! No!

DOCTOR

(Brushes the Inspector aside.)

Let me alone! It's the only thing!

(The Doctor administers the serum to the Boy.)

INSPECTOR

(Covers her face; drops to her knees in front of the Doctor, her back toward him.)

Oh, I don't care WHAT you do—if you'll only save him!

DOCTOR

Here! Look! *(The Inspector turns.)* Oh, it's wonderful!
See! Already!

INSPECTOR

Oh, my son! My little son!

DOCTOR

Relieved! *(Straightens up.)* But it was a close shave!

INSPECTOR

Doctor, will you forgive me?

DOCTOR

Come! Get him into his bed. *(Lifts the Boy in his arms and gives him to the Inspector.)*

INSPECTOR

Oh, I was wrong! I was wrong!

DOCTOR

No, you're right. Vivisection IS cruel. But disease is cruel—
and, oh, how cruel is death!

INSPECTOR

Oh, I'm ashamed! Here I was, spying on you, fighting —

DOCTOR

I'm willing to be watched. But if you trust us doctors with the lives of your children, can't you trust us with the lives of cats and dogs?

INSPECTOR

Oh, yes! Yes! (*Starts to go; turns.*) Oh, how can I ever thank you! You've saved my boy!

DOCTOR

Don't thank me. Thank your brother, the horse!

(*The Inspector goes out, murmuring to the Boy.*)

Well, old fellow! (*The Doctor pats the horse, and gives him sugar.*)

You saved him. And I WISH you could know it! (*Stoops to stroke the cat.*) Ah! Here's a dead fly! (*Picks up a fly from the floor.*)



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