

*Friday, July 8th*

I am so ashamed. I have been sent to my bedroom without supper. The whole summer is ruined and it's all my fault.

I knew that Alfie barely fit into the dumb waiter last fall, and I knew he was growing, but somehow I failed to connect those two things as any sensible big sister ought. The dumb waiter isn't intended to be hauling little boys. I only put Alfie in the dumb waiter when Mama and Nettie were both out of the house, which seldom happens. No one ever forbade us to put Alfie in there, but I knew, if anyone ever thought about it, they would, and it was so much fun. We never did it over the winter, of course. Alfie was too sick.

Oh! Mouser just rushed into my room and rushed out again. I almost spilled the ink. The wind is so high today, the cat is galey. Whenever high winds make her rush around, Nettie says she has a gale of wind up her tail. Mouser is a very pretty cat with fluffy black fur and white socks and a bib. I wish she was a pet but she's a working cat who lives in the basement to protect the kitchen, so she's hardly tame and sometimes scratches. In the uproar I caused today, she got out of the kitchen. I should tell someone, but Mama is so angry, I'm afraid to leave my room.

To return to my Shameful Story, Mama was invited out for tea and Nettie was on her weekly trip to the

grocer. Ruby had taken a chair into the back garden to darn socks in the shade, so I didn't even have to worry about her telling on us (and I don't think she would). I checked on Sarah and found her in her room, sewing velvet pansies onto her summer hat, so Alfie and I felt safe. We were pretending that Peter Easton, one of our most famous pirates, had come to kidnap Alfie, and the dumb waiter was the perfect hiding place. He fit in with only a little pushing and was fine on the trip up to the dining room, though I did notice, as I pulled the cable, that he was heavier than he had been last fall. Then, when I tried to get him out, we found he was wedged in tight.

As always, Alfie was brave. After a bit, he said I should leave him alone get himself free, and I tried, but it was too hard to stay away and he'd made no progress. I tried to pull him out by the leg, but he said that hurt. He was starting to pant so I tried pulling his arm, but I couldn't budge him. By then Alfie was turning red and wheezing, so I pulled harder.

I thought about how sick Alfie had been last winter, and I was that frightened, I started to scream. Ruby came first, then Sarah, who told Ruby to run to the kitchen for a glass of water for me. I wanted them to help Alfie, not me, but somehow, this only made me scream more. When Ruby returned with the water, Sarah very calmly dumped it on my head. The shock of it made me stop screaming.

Now we all turned to Alfie. I thought at first he was having some kind of fit, but, in fact, he was laughing because Sarah had drenched me. I could still hear the wheeze in his laugh though. Ruby looked things over and said, "I'll be right back." She returned with the drippings tin, where Nettie keeps the grease from cooking. "We can rub this all over Master Alfie's clothing," she said.

Sarah started to protest that this would ruin his clothes.

"Never mind that," I cried. "Just get him out before —"

I was going to say "before Mama gets back," but that was exactly what happened. Mama walked in the door

Oh dear, there's the fire bell. Well, it's not surprising with all this hot, dry weather, but the firemen are very clever and we have a lovely steam engine. I'm sure they'll have the fire under control in no time.

Mama smeared cooking grease on Alfie where she could, and he popped out of the dumb waiter like a greased pig. (They let a greased pig run free at the Regatta every year and whoever catches it can take it home.) I would say he came out as neat as can be, but "neat" would not describe him at that moment. His sailor suit is ruined and he needed a good scrub.

Alfie was still wheezing, so Mama sent Ruby to

fetch Dr. Roberts and then she turned the full force of her attention to me. She said I have been running wild for far too long and that playing with Alfie has not had an Improving Influence on me.

She said, this summer, I will learn to be a lady. I burst into tears and told Mama I would rather work in the kitchen with Nettie and Ruby all summer. That's when she sent me to my bedroom without supper. So the holidays are ruined and it's all my fault. Those dreary visits and long days with Proper Playmates now stretch before me. Nothing can save me from this fate.

There's the oddest commotion in the street. It seems to be moving day for everyone. Carts full of furniture go by, all moving east. Some men are carrying hand barrows piled with household goods. *Now* someone is banging on the front door. I must have a look.

