

*A
Home
for
Snowflake*

Nikki Harmon

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

P.O. Box 1400

TALLEHAST, FL 34270

*For Ronald Psimer,
who helped care for Snowflake
on a cold and rainy night
and
Linda and Tom Dalton
who found her a home.*

A Home for Snowflake (originally entitled "Snowflake's Story") was first produced by The Chameleon Theatre Circle January 14-29, 2005, at Kenwood Trail Jr. High School, Lakeville, MN: Bradley Donaldson, executive director; G.J. Clayburn, artistic director; Daniel K. McDermott, director and set designer; Ann Frances Gregg, choreographer; and Andi Bllig, technical director.

TURKIN/ROWDY: Brian Riebe

SNOWFLAKE: Ann Francis Gregg

NEWBELL/ISADORA/MARIGOLD: Joy Donaldson

RUMBLES: Bradley Donaldson

MATTY: Daniel K. McDermott

PET SHOP ANIMALS AND BIRDS: Alix Engels, Aeola Lu,
Diana Lu, Lily A. Kieven, Garrett McDermott

The play was presented with the same cast April 13, 2006, at the MACT Fest at Albert Lea Community Theatre and subsequently presented by Chameleon Theatre Circle in a co-production with Sweet Charities Theatre Company together with The Arts and Diversity Committee of St. Paul Travelers April 15th at the Maplewood Community Center, Maplewood, MN and April 21-22 at the WISE Charter School, Minneapolis, MN with the following cast changes:

MATTY: Elizabeth Hartman

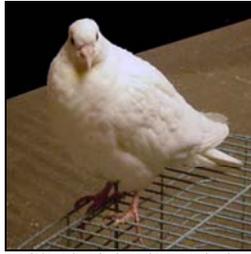
PET SHOP ANIMALS AND BIRDS: Alex Biehn, Aydja Boyle,
Tyree Cox, Anna Frisbie, Andrew Henrichsen, Epphram
Henrichsen, Lucy-Anna Henrichsen, Soren Henrichsen, Reality
Jackson, Lily Kivens, Garrett McDermott, Taalib Muhammad,
Cyrus Powell, Kenny Scott, Jake Spiekers, Annika Williamson,
Bryanna Williamson, and Jose Williamson.

A Home for Snowflake

Co-Winner, The Chameleon Theatre Circle New Play Festival 2004
Winner, Outstanding Achievement in Playwriting, MN Association of
Community Theatre's Festival, 2005

YOUNG AUDIENCES. One day, a young dove named Snowflake encounters a pigeon who tells her of a marvelous land called "New Jersey," where there's green grass, trees, birdbaths, birdhouses, and clean air. Snowflake wonders if such a place could really exist, but eager to escape New York and the ill-tempered street magician who keeps her locked in a box, Snowflake sets out on a dangerous journey through the streets of New York to find this fabled land. Along the way, she meets a street-smart dog, a wiley rat, some pet store parakeets, and a homeless cat, who join Snowflake on her quest to find a new home. This heart-warming play will enchant people of all ages.

Performance Time: Approximately 45-60 minutes.



(Photo by Linda and Tom Dalton)

About the Story

"A Home for Snowflake" is based on the true story of a young dove who was thrown off a roof in New York City and landed on the author's fire escape. Ms. Harmon rescued Snowflake and cared for her until she could locate a bird sanctuary. Snowflake eventually learned how to fly and now lives with a family in New Jersey.

Characters

(4 M, 4 F, 1 flexible, extras)

(With doubling: 2 M, 3 F)

SNOWFLAKE: Young dove who works for a magician; female.

NEWBELL: Young dove who works with Snowflake; female.

RUMBLES: Big rough dog who thinks he owns 9th Avenue; male.

MATTY: New York rat who likes to play Kick the Can; a pro at escaping rat traps; has a notched tail; flexible.

ROWDY: Rottweiler who guards a pet store; male.

THEO: Pet store rat; male.

MARIGOLD: Homeless orange cat who lives on the street; female.

ISADORA: Pet store parakeet; female.

TURKIN: Street magician; voice only; male.

BETTY: Mouse; non-speaking; female. Can be played by a child.

BOB: Mouse; non-speaking; male. Can be played by a child.

EXTRAS: As Parakeets, Dogs, Mice, and a Cat. **Note:** Use as many children as possible to play the animals and birds in the pet shop. Tight spots with multicolored gels can be used instead of extras to represent the parakeets, cat, dogs, and mice.

With doubling:

THEO/ROWDY/TURKIN (Male)

MARIGOLD/NEWBELL/ISADORA (Female)

Setting

New York City.

Set

Only a minimal set is required. The set should portray events from the animals' perspective. The overall look of the stage could be similar in nature to "Cats," with oversized street garbage strewn about.

Props

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Red, white, and blue box | Pile of papers |
| Boom box | Street sign with chase lights |
| Travel pack (Red scarf on a stick) | that blink "42 nd Street" (or a light change to denote the bright lights of Times Square) |
| Tin cans | |
| Fish head | |
| Handmade map | |

Sound Effects

| | |
|--|--|
| "Black Swan Pas de Deux" from Tchaikovsky's <i>Swan Lake</i> | Dog nails clacking across a floor |
| Light smattering of applause | Mice squeaking |
| Police siren | Wings fluttering |
| Ambulance racing through the street | Tiny feet scurrying across the floor |
| Dog barking | Car horns |
| Cat screeching | Snickering |
| Car breaks squealing | Purring |
| Crash | Bus idling |
| Tin cans rolling and then banging to a stop | "The Firebird's Variation" from Stravinsky's <i>The Firebird Suite</i> |
| Splash | Lifting of manhole cover |
| Flipping up a manhole cover | Groaning |
| Crash into a garbage can | "Dance of the Little Swans" from <i>Swan Lake</i> |
| Squawking | Manhole cover opening and crashing to the pavement |
| Tweeting | Bus departing |
| Cage doors opening | |

*“A pigeon told me about
this faraway land
called New Jersey.
There’s green grass and trees everywhere
and lots of clean air,
and birds live in nests
and some even have their own houses.
And there are dishes on stands
with water just to take a bath.
Can you imagine that?
Water just to sit in.”*

—Snowflake

A Home For Snowflake

(AT RISE: *New York, Lincoln Center, by the fountain on a chilly autumn day. A red, white, and blue box sits on stage. It's a box from which scarves and other wondrous things are pulled from. A boom box is nearby. Snowflake and Newbell are hunkered down by the box. Their arms/wings are folded up as if they are in the box. The magic act is just about to begin and we hear Turkin the Magician going through his act.*)

TURKIN: (*Voiceover.*) Ladies and gentlemen, I am about to perform a once-in-a-lifetime feat of magic, and, in a moment, it will be gone, evaporated into thin air like the mist on a dove's beak.

SNOWFLAKE: (*Stage whisper. To Newbell.*) That doesn't make any sense.

NEWBELL: Shhhhhh, I'm listening for my cue.

SNOWFLAKE: I don't have any mist on my beak. Do you have any mist on your beak? Whoever heard of doves having mist on their beaks. It doesn't make sense.

NEWBELL: Nothing he says ever makes sense. Now, be quiet or we won't hear our cue and he'll "forget" to give us our dinner again like he did last week, and we'll be eating stale pretzels and soggy hotdogs off the street again.

SNOWFLAKE: It's just that it's so frustrating listening to him go on about stuff that doesn't make any sense.

NEWBELL: Shhhhhh!

TURKIN: (*Voiceover.*) Shazam!

(*From the boom box we hear "Black Swan Pas de Deux" from Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake ballet.*)

NEWBELL: (*Pushing Snowflake up and out.*) Fly!

(Newbell and Snowflake “fly” up to a standing position, spread their wings, twirl, do a pas de deux, dive, and duck back “inside” the box as the music fades out.)

TURKIN: *(Voiceover.)* And now for my next trick...

NEWBELL: You went left instead of right.

SNOWFLAKE: What?

NEWBELL: Left. You went left again.

SNOWFLAKE: I did?

NEWBELL: Don't look at me like that. You know very well what you did. You do it all the time. You have to turn right at the end when I point my wing like this. *(She demonstrates.)* Not left. Okay? Right. Right when I do this. *(She demonstrates again.)* Got it?

SNOWFLAKE: I got it.

NEWBELL: You're sure?

SNOWFLAKE: I'm sure.

NEWBELL: Right.

SNOWFLAKE: Yeah, I turn right, not left, when you do that thing with your wing.

NEWBELL: It's not a “thing” that I do with my wing—it's a graceful upward movement that signals the beginning of my final pirouette.

SNOWFLAKE: And that's when I turn left.

NEWBELL: *(Shouts.)* Right! Right! You turn right!

SNOWFLAKE: Shhhhhh, he'll hear you.

NEWBELL: Augh!

(Snowflake and Newbell sit in silence. Snowflake has a slight smile, and Newbell looks disgusted.)

TURKIN: *(Voiceover.)* Ladies and Gentlemen, this is now the end of the World-Famous Turkin's Magically Magic Show.

(Light smattering of applause is heard.)

SNOWFLAKE: I'm leaving. I'm getting out of here.

TURKIN: (*Voiceover.*) Any and all donations will be appreciated by myself and my two lovely doves.

NEWBELL: (*To Snowflake.*) Yeah, sure. We'll never see a penny of that in seed — (*Realizing what Snowflake said.*) What? What do you mean "leaving"?! You can't leave. How can you leave?

SNOWFLAKE: I'm tired of doing this every day. I'm tired of working all the time and not being able to play like the other birds. I want to do fun stuff. You know, I haven't sat on a window ledge and pecked at a wind chime in so long that I can't remember if I ever did peck at a wind chime, or if it was just something I dreamed of doing. I'm tired of Turkin and his scarves, and his cards, and the stupid things he says all the time, and I'm really, really tired of jumping in and out of this stupid box!

NEWBELL: Where would you go? It's not like you can really fly or anything. We're too young to do that. You have to be older...to grow up to know how to fly. We're still learning. You'll have to wait — maybe in a month, or a year, maybe then, but not now. Now is too soon.

SNOWFLAKE: I can't wait! I can't wait any longer. I'm tired. Tired. Tired! Tired!

NEWBELL: Besides, even if you could fly, where would you go?

SNOWFLAKE: A pigeon told me about this faraway land called New Jersey. There's green grass and trees everywhere and lots of clean air, and birds live in nests and some even have their own houses. And there are dishes on stands with water just to take a bath. Can you imagine that? Water just to sit in.

NEWBELL: You know you can't trust pigeons. They'll steal your food faster than you can turn around, and they talk nothing but nonsense.

SNOWFLAKE: Do you really think so?

NEWBELL: Why do you think they call them "pigeon-brained"? Because they're dumb. Dumb. Dumb. Pigeon dumb.

SNOWFLAKE: But he talked like he knew, like he'd been there himself. He said you can fly for miles before you even see

concrete, and when you do, it's all in one place with lots of buildings and cars around it.

NEWBELL: The pigeon was lying. Telling tales. There's no such place. If there was, all the birds would know about it and go to this Newel Gurnsey.

SNOWFLAKE: New Jersey.

NEWBELL: Whatever.

SNOWFLAKE: He gave me a map.

NEWBELL: And what did you give him?

SNOWFLAKE: Last night's seed.

NEWBELL: You're dumber than he is.

SNOWFLAKE: Well, I have to believe in something. If I don't, I don't know what I'd do.

TURKIN: *(Voiceover.)* Thank you. Thank you for your appreciation, and remember to tell everyone you know to watch the sidewalks of New York for Turkin and his feathered friends.

NEWBELL: *(To Snowflake.)* Friends, ha! That'll be the day.

SNOWFLAKE: Newbell, look! He's walking away. He's taking the box with the money and leaving.

NEWBELL: Yeah, what's up with that?

SNOWFLAKE: He's abandoning us.

NEWBELL: We should be so lucky. He'll be back.

TURKIN: *(Voiceover.)* You two grubby birds better stay put, if you know what's good for you, or else it'll be bird soup for dinner tonight. *(He laughs.)*

SNOWFLAKE: Here's our chance. *(Snowflake gathers up her "kit" – a red scarf on a stick.)*

NEWBELL: Where'd you get that?

SNOWFLAKE: Remember when he threw all those scarves too far and they landed behind the garbage can? Well, I snatched one and hid it in a corner of our box, under the paper, and filled it with seed that I stashed away a little bit at a time.

NEWBELL: How long have you been planning this?

SNOWFLAKE: From the first day he found me and shoved me in the box. Come on. Come with me. We'll escape together.

NEWBELL: On some fool adventure? No way. We could get hit by a hotdog cart, or trampled by a human, or run over by a policeman's horse, or—

SNOWFLAKE: Or find New Jersey.

NEWBELL: You're dreaming. There's no such place.

SNOWFLAKE: Come with me and find out.

NEWBELL: Where would we get food? Water? A place to sleep?

SNOWFLAKE: We'd be where there's no box, no stale bread that's been nowhere we know, and no Turkin shouting and throwing things at us all the time. (*Softly.*) Come with me.

NEWBELL: I want to...

SNOWFLAKE: Then do it. Quick, before he comes back.

NEWBELL: I'm afraid.

SNOWFLAKE: We'll protect each other. We'll find the magic land together.

NEWBELL: I'll go with you tomorrow. Tomorrow will be better.

A better time to go. We can go in the morning. How about that? How about tomorrow morning?

SNOWFLAKE: No, it has to be today or never.

NEWBELL: Why? Why can't it be tomorrow?

SNOWFLAKE: Because tomorrow will be the next day, and the next day, and the day after that. (*Softly.*) Come with me, now, to New Jersey.

NEWBELL: I can't. I want to, but I can't.

SNOWFLAKE: I have to go.

NEWBELL: I know.

SNOWFLAKE: When I find the magic land, I'll come back and get you.

NEWBELL: You'll forget. You'll lose your way. You won't be able to find me.

SNOWFLAKE: I won't forget. I won't lose my way, and I'll find you wherever you are. I promise. (*Gently.*) We're friends.

NEWBELL: I'll miss you.

SNOWFLAKE: Me, too.

NEWBELL: Quick, he's turning back. Don't let him see you.

When he realizes you're gone, he'll come after you.

SNOWFLAKE: I'll be careful. *(Jumps up.)* I'll miss you, Newbell.

NEWBELL: I'll miss you, Snowflake.

(Snowflake walks USR as Newbell exits DSL sadly carrying the box under one "wing" and the boom box under the other. Snowflake, realizing that she's alone for the first time in her life, shivers, then with resolution, she's off in search of New Jersey as the lights fade to indicate nighttime. A police siren followed by the sound of an ambulance racing through the streets is heard.)

SNOWFLAKE: *(To herself.)* There's nothing in the dark that isn't there in the light. The only difference is you can't see it. *(There is the sound of a dog barking, a cat screech, car breaks squealing, and then a loud crash. Startled, Snowflake jumps but regains her composure.)* And it sounds a whole lot bigger when you can't see it.

(Rumbles, a dog, enters. He's big and rough and thinks he owns 9th Avenue.)

RUMBLES: Hey! Whatcha doin' out here? This ain't no place for no baby bird. Go on back to your mama. This is my turf. I own it. I run it. I rule it. Ya got it? Now get.

SNOWFLAKE: I'm sorry Mister Dog, I didn't mean to trespass.

You see, I'm on my way to New Jersey.

RUMBLES: New Jersey, huh?

SNOWFLAKE: Uh-huh. But I'm not all that sure where it is.

You see I have a map, but I don't know how to read yet. Do you know where New Jersey is?

RUMBLES: No. No one does. It doesn't exist. It was made up by some cockamamie pooch that spent too much time playing in traffic.

SNOWFLAKE: But it does exist. I'm sure of it.

RUMBLES: Well, if it does, kid, then you go find it... (*Starts to exit.*) ...'cause I'm too old to believe in stuff like that anymore.

SNOWFLAKE: Wait! What if I can prove it exists? Will you help me find it?

RUMBLES: How can you prove something's real when it ain't?

SNOWFLAKE: I have a map.

RUMBLES: Where did you get the map? Did it just float down from some fire escape and land on the sidewalk in front of you? Or did it blow out of a trashcan and stick to your beak?

SNOWFLAKE: A pigeon sold it to me for some seed.

RUMBLES: A pigeon, huh?

SNOWFLAKE: Yes. He said he'd been there...that he'd drawn the map himself.

RUMBLES: You can't trust pigeons. He probably had a dozen of those maps made up and was selling 'em to every sucker on the block.

SNOWFLAKE: But he knew all about New Jersey, and he seemed so honest...

RUMBLES: There's no such place as New Jersey.

SNOWFLAKE: But what if there was? I've even heard that dogs have their own houses there.

RUMBLES: Their own houses?

SNOWFLAKE: With bowls of food every day and as much clean water as you can drink.

RUMBLES: Clean, huh?

SNOWFLAKE: We could go together. I could ride on your back, and because I'm high up, I could see things and look out for things. And I'm very lightweight. You'd hardly know I was up there at all.

RUMBLES: Why don't you just fly to New Jersey yourself?

SNOWFLAKE: I can't.

RUMBLES: What's the matter with your wings...they broke or somethin'?

SNOWFLAKE: No, they're okay. I'm still learning how to use them, that's all. But in a couple of months –

RUMBLES: Yeah, well, maybe you should wait a couple months and then go look for this place that don't exist.

SNOWFLAKE: I can't wait that long. I have to go now.

RUMBLES: Why the rush? Ya on the run? Someone chasin' ya?

SNOWFLAKE: Sort of. The magician I worked for, when he finds out I'm gone, he's going to come looking for me. And when he finds me, I don't know what he'll do.

RUMBLES: I'll take care of him.

SNOWFLAKE: Thank you, but he's very big and very mean.

RUMBLES: There's no human I can't handle. The guy comes on my turf...the guy's toast.

SNOWFLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Dog.

RUMBLES: And ya can skip the "Mr. Dog" part. Just call me Rumbles. But don't go tellin' anybody I let you do that, 'cause I don't wanna lose no respect, ya understand?

SNOWFLAKE: Okay...Rumbles.

RUMBLES: I bet you're called Snowflake.

SNOWFLAKE: (*Amazed.*) Yes! How did you know?

RUMBLES: It's a human thing. They see a white bird, they call it Snowflake. I don't know why that is. So, Snowflake, ya worked that magician gig alone or did ya partner-up?

SNOWFLAKE: I had a partner, but she didn't come with me.

RUMBLES: Smart bird.

SNOWFLAKE: She was afraid to, but I'm going back to get her when I find New Jersey. Will you help me?

RUMBLES: What's in it for me? I'm not wastin' my time doin' somethin' that don't pay off.

SNOWFLAKE: I could teach you a trick.

RUMBLES: I know tricks. Sit up. Lie down. Roll over. That stuff's for pups.

SNOWFLAKE: I can teach you magic tricks.

RUMBLES: Magic, huh?

SNOWFLAKE: Like making things disappear.

RUMBLES: Hummm? Say another dog's chewin' on somethin' I want, can I make him disappear? Nothin' left of him. No fur, nothin.' You can show me how to do that?

SNOWFLAKE: Yes.

RUMBLES: That'd be useful. Yeah, that'd be okay. You show me how to do that, I'll help you find this New Jersey place.

SNOWFLAKE: Thank you.

RUMBLES: Now.

SNOWFLAKE: What?

RUMBLES: Now. You show me the trick now, and then I help you find this place you want to go. Otherwise, no deal.

SNOWFLAKE: I don't have my magic things with me.

RUMBLES: What's in that bag of yours?

SNOWFLAKE: Seed.

RUMBLES: Nothin' else?

SNOWFLAKE: No, only seed.

RUMBLES: Hummm. Well, then, how about you go back and get it? I'll wait here for you, and then you can show me the magic. How about that?

SNOWFLAKE: Oh, no, I can't. It's too dangerous. I don't know if I'd be able to escape again.

RUMBLES: Then it's no deal.

SNOWFLAKE: But I can teach you the words to say.

RUMBLES: What good's that without the magic stuff?

SNOWFLAKE: Sometimes the magic is so strong that the words work all by themselves. But you have to really believe.

RUMBLES: Hummmm? *(Thinks.)* Yeah, okay. I think I can do that. Yeah, sure, I can believe enough to get some mutt to disappear. Okay. It's a deal. What are the words?

SNOWFLAKE: First you have to close your eyes and concentrate hard on the subject. Can you do that?

RUMBLES: Yeah, yeah, I can do that. What next?

SNOWFLAKE: You say, "Shazam, shazeem, tibble-tim bean. Away, away, and not be seen." And really, really believe.

RUMBLES: Okay, yeah. I got it. Believe, and say the words, and the mutt's history. *(With gusto.)* "Shazam, shazeem, tibble-tim bean. Away, away, and not be seen!"

SNOWFLAKE: That's good!

RUMBLES: I've always had a flare for the dramatic. I coulda been an actor, ya know, like that [Wishbone] dude. *[Or inset the name of another famous dog.]*

SNOWFLAKE: I can see that.

RUMBLES: *(Introspectively.)* Yeah.

SNOWFLAKE: Ahhh...can we go look for New Jersey?

RUMBLES: I want to try it out first.

SNOWFLAKE: It's pretty strong magic. You wouldn't want to use it on just anyone.

RUMBLES: Okay, sure. I'll be careful who I turn to toast. *(Looks around.)* Hummmm. No one's around.

SNOWFLAKE: I'm sure there'll be some dogs around later.

RUMBLES: And cats. I'd really loooovvvveee to send a cat off to nowhere land. *(Licking his lips.)* A big scraggy cat. Are there different words for cats?

SNOWFLAKE: No, the same words work for dogs and cats.

RUMBLES: Good, 'cause I wouldn't want to do it wrong and end up with a 10-foot-high cat.

SNOWFLAKE: I'm sure you'll do it right. You seem really smart to me.

RUMBLES: Yeah, I am. That's how come I got my own turf.

SNOWFLAKE: So we can go find New Jersey now?

RUMBLES: Okay, kid, but if we see a cat along the way, I'm gonna try out the magic stuff.

SNOWFLAKE: Okay.

RUMBLES: Good. So, you climb on up and...

(The sound of five or six tin cans rolling and then banging to a stop is heard.)

SNOWFLAKE: What's that?!

RUMBLES: Just rats. They like to play Kick the Can.

SNOWFLAKE: Rats. Uggggghh. *(Shivers.)* They scare me.

RUMBLES: Nawh. Nothin' to be afraid of. Ya just gotta respect them and they'll respect you...and don't step on their tails. They really hate it when you do that.

SNOWFLAKE: Do you know any rats personally?

RUMBLES: One or two.

SNOWFLAKE: And you're not scared of them?

RUMBLES: Rumbles scared? Not of nothin.' See that tin can over there?

(Snowflake looks DSL.)

SNOWFLAKE: Uh-huh.

RUMBLES: Well, keep an eye on it...

SNOWFLAKE: Okay.

(A moment later, a tin can rolls on stage, and Matty, the rat, enters playing Kick the Can.)

MATTY: *(Sees Snowflake.)* Mmmmmmm. Dinner.

(Matty stalks Snowflake, and Snowflake backs away.)

RUMBLES: Lay off the kid.

MATTY: Since when are you hangin' with chicks in feather coats?

RUMBLES: She's cool.

MATTY: When did food become cool?

RUMBLES: The bird's okay.

MATTY: *(To Snowflake.)* He owns the block. What he says goes.
(Offering a handshake.) Welcome to the 'hood.

(Snowflake hesitantly shakes Matty's hand.)

SNOWFLAKE: Pleased to meet you, Ms. Rat.

MATTY: The handle's Matty.

SNOWFLAKE: I'm Snowflake.

RUMBLES: Matty's the most famous rat in Midtown.

MATTY: *(Proud.)* The whole West Side, actually.

SNOWFLAKE: What are you famous for?

MATTY: (*Indicates tail.*) See these notches on my tail?

SNOWFLAKE: Uh-huh.

MATTY: Each one's a rat-trap escape.

SNOWFLAKE: Wow!

RUMBLES: (*To Matty.*) I haven't seen ya around lately.

MATTY: Been up in the park for the last week...a dumpster overturned, the one by that restaurant with the bushes that look like squirrels. Humans are so strange. Why would you cut a bush to look like a squirrel when there are real squirrels running around? And that's another thing...what is this thing they have for squirrels? Squirrels are no different than us 'cept they have fat tails and humans coo at them and throw them food and take their pictures. But let one rat walk up to them, and what do that do? They scream and yell and throw things at us and run the other way. A rat's just a squirrel with a skinny tail. (*Shaking her head.*) Humans. Go figure.

RUMBLES: (*Stage whisper. To Snowflake.*) She's a little touchy on the squirrel issue.

SNOWFLAKE: I can see that.

MATTY: Then, the week before, I was up on 72nd Street. A truck with a load of frozen chickens broke down. You should have seen it. Humans running around heaving ice at the chickens. Defrosting chicken parts everywhere. What a mess. And once word got out, rats you hadn't seen in months showed up. It was a real mob scene. And that chicken, after being in the sun for two days, let me tell ya, mmmmmmm, mmmmmmm. Tasteeeey! (*Snowflake winces. Looks up and down the street.*) Suppose to be a garbage truck by here, soon. You seen it yet? Can't count on them anymore. Not like the old days. Now you're lucky if they even show up. Lunch breaks, dinner breaks, cappuccino breaks. In the old days, the guys used to come and just sit, so you knew where the trucks were. And they'd flip the cans so half of it went flying into the gutters. Now, they swing those cans right into the trucks and nothing falls out. How's a gal supposed to eat? Tell me that. It's the Mayor and his "Clean Up the Streets" campaign. I'm

not getting three squares a day because he wants to get re-elected! Now, if rats could vote—

TURKIN: (*Voiceover. Booming.*) I see you, you pile of moldy feathers!

MATTY: What's that?!

TURKIN: (*Voiceover.*) When I get my hands on you...

SNOWFLAKE: He's found me!

TURKIN: (*Voiceover.*) ...you'll be plucked cleaner than a Thanksgiving turkey!

RUMBLES: I'll take care of him.

SNOWFLAKE: But he's soooo big.

MATTY: Hey! Up there. Tall dog. Who's found her? What's all this about? What's goin' on?

RUMBLES: That's the guy the bird's on the run from.

SNOWFLAKE: I was working for Turkin, and I escaped, and now he's found me.

MATTY: Don't worry. I've got this covered. (*To Rumbles.*) See that open manhole over there?

RUMBLES: Yeah.

MATTY: Okay, watch this. (*Matty exits, running.*)

SNOWFLAKE: He sees me! He's coming! He's—

MATTY: (*Offstage.*) Hey! Hey, human! I'm chasin' ya!

TURKIN: (*Offstage. Shouts.*) Get away from me, you filthy rat!

RUMBLES: (*Calls out.*) Aim him a little more to the right, Matty.

MATTY: (*Offstage.*) I'm gonna get ya, human!

TURKIN: (*Offstage.*) I hate those thinggggggsssss. (*As he falls down the manhole. Screams.*) Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! (*His voice echoes as he falls down the hole. Finally, a loud splash is heard as he hits the sewer water. Shouts.*) Yuck!

(*Matty enters, dusting off her hands.*)

MATTY: Well, that's taken care of. Rumbles, you wanna flip that lid to keep him in there for awhile?

RUMBLES: Yeah, I got it. (*Rumbles exits, running.*)

MATTY: Anyone else chasing you?

SNOWFLAKE: Not that I know of.

MATTY: Well, if there is, me and Rumbles can take 'em.

(We hear Rumbles flip up the manhole cover and drop it.)

RUMBLES: *(Offstage.)* It's gonna take him awhile to get outta there.

SNOWFLAKE: You sure got rid of Turkin fast.

MATTY: And, of course, there're some of my pals down there to keep him company. *(Giggles.)* He-he-he. *(Finds a fish head in the "gutter." He picks it up.)* Mummmmm, a snack. So, where are you two headed?

(Rumbles enters, dusting of his paws.)

SNOWFLAKE: We're looking for the land of New Jersey.

MATTY: I've heard of that. Supposed to have a garbage dump a mile wide and 20 feet high. Boy, I'd like to see that. Maybe I can come along with you. What with this clean-streets campaign going on now, there's nothing to keep me here. So, what do ya say? Can I come?

RUMBLES: Yeah, sure.

SNOWFLAKE: Yes, that'd be great. *(Sheepishly.)* You're my first rat friend.

MATTY: And you're the first bird I ever talked to without eating.

SNOWFLAKE: Huh?

MATTY: Only kidding, kid.

SNOWFLAKE: *(Unconvinced.)* Ahh, okay.

MATTY: What direction do we go?

SNOWFLAKE: I've got a map.

RUMBLES: Some pigeon sold it to her.

MATTY: Gray-black with a white diamond on his head and walks with a limp?

SNOWFLAKE: Yes! That's him. Do you know him?

MATTY: Yeah, he hangs out sometimes on the corner of 57th and 7th. Last month he was selling maps to a place where there's no snow and oranges grow on trees.

RUMBLES: Now that's even sillier than all that stuff about New Jersey.

MATTY: I know someone who bought one.

RUMBLES: You're kidding?

MATTY: Hey, ya never know. Besides, it only cost him half of a bagel.

SNOWFLAKE: So maybe my map is good!

RUMBLES: It's a pigeon map!

MATTY: Have you got a better idea?

RUMBLES: Well, no, but...

MATTY: So?

RUMBLES: Okay. Okay, we'll try the map. What's the worse that can happen? We end up right back where we started.

'Sides, I got nothin' else on for tonight. Let's do it.

SNOWFLAKE: (*Hugging Rumbles.*) Thank you!

MATTY: Awhhhh.

RUMBLES: Don't go and get all mushy on me. (*Snowflake steps back and smiles. Looking at the map.*) Now, it says to go south from here, down 9th Avenue...hummmm...that's Solly's turf.

SNOWFLAKE: Will it be okay if we go there?

RUMBLES: Sure. Solly's cool... (*Snowflake walks behind Rumbles with her "wing" touching his shoulder, as if she were riding on his back, and Matty follows as they head downtown. To himself.*) ...as long as he don't remember 'bout the three bones I owe him...

TURKIN: (*Offstage. As Turkin shouts, his voice fades out under a succession of gurgles as he sinks under the water.*) Get away from me, you filthy-whiskered, furried, snaggle-toothed, moldy, haggled rat-faced rodent...!

(*Matty looks back and giggles. Snowflake is preoccupied with the sights.*)

SNOWFLAKE: There're so many hotdog carts! And look at all those donuts in the window, and the human with the funny hat, and, wow, look at *that!* (*Points.*)

RUMBLES: Cat?!

MATTY: Garbage?!

SNOWFLAKE: No. Birds. In cages. Lots of them.

RUMBLES/MATTY: (*Disappointed.*) Oh.

SNOWFLAKE: Why are they in cages?

RUMBLES: It's a pet store, kid. They sell birds and dogs and cats – which ain't such a bad thing, sellin' cats – and fish and mice...

MATTY: The poor little guys.

RUMBLES: ...and sometimes rats.

MATTY: I didn't know that.

RUMBLES: Yeah, big white ones.

MATTY: Now that's a crime. You think that store there sells rats?

RUMBLES: Maybe.

MATTY: If it does, then we have to break in and set them all free.

RUMBLES: I don't know about that...

SNOWFLAKE: You mean those birds in there are going to be sold to someone like Turkin, and they'll have to work on the streets, like Newbell and I did, and live in a cold, drafty box and eat soggy pretzels and dirty hotdogs, and never get to play or do things other birds do?

RUMBLES: Maybe they could end up living in a penthouse with lots of birdseed and toys to plays with.

SNOWFLAKE: Or they could end up like me.

RUMBLES: Or that, too.

MATTY: (*Looking in the "window."*) I think I see a rat back there in a cage. Yeah, yeah. I do see a rat. We gotta get him out.

RUMBLES: Not a good idea.

SNOWFLAKE: We have to do something! We have to rescue those birds!

RUMBLES: Are you both nuts? There are alarms in that place.
You break in there, and they'll throw us all in the pound.

Well, maybe not Matty. Matty they'll just shoot.

SNOWFLAKE: Shoot Matty?!

MATTY: Awh. I'm not afraid of anything. (*Looks through the "window."*) Besides, I don't see anyone in there...except over there in the corner. (*Looks harder.*) Looks like a guard dog. Like a Dobbie, or maybe one of those bigger ones. What are they called?

RUMBLES: Rottweilers?

MATTY: Yeah, one of those.

SNOWFLAKE: (*Looks in the window.*) He's pretty scary-looking. But you can talk to him, right, 'cause you're a dog, and he's a dog, and he'll listen to you? I mean 'cause you're the one who owns the block, and all the dogs know it. Right?

(*With sarcasm, Matty watches with interest.*)

RUMBLES: Ahh, yeah, sure. They all know that. No one messes with Rumbles. (*To Matty.*) What are you lookin' at?

MATTY: Nothing.

RUMBLES: I can get him to listen to me. No pro-blem-o. (*Under his breath.*) I hope.

SNOWFLAKE: That's good because he really looks mean.

MATTY: And mad. I think we woke him.

(*Rumbles gulps.*)

RUMBLES: You sure you want to do this?

SNOWFLAKE: Oh, yes! We have to get those birds out.

MATTY: And like the saying goes, "We shall leave no rat behind."

RUMBLES: I don't remember it like that.

MATTY: It was a famous rat general who first said it in the battle for East 98th Street back when my great-great-great-grandfather was alive. I remember hearing how he went up

against the city's best animal-control teams, armed only with his wits and his sharp teeth... *(Dramatic.)* It was a dark and stormy night. The garbage was frozen to the curb, and sirens slashed through the unrelenting rain—

RUMBLES: Can we hear the story another time? That Rottweiler is looking at us now.

(Rowdy, a Rottweiler, enters and looks out from inside the store.)

ROWDY: All of you, step away from the window.

(In unison, Matty and Snowflake look to Rumbles to respond.)

RUMBLES: We're here to free the birds.

MATTY: And the rat. Don't forget about the rat.

RUMBLES: *(To Rowdy.)* And the rat. We want the rat, too.

(Rowdy laughs.)

SNOWFLAKE: *(To Rumbles.)* Do you think he's going to let us in?

RUMBLES: I just have to let him know who's boss, that's all.

MATTY: When will that be exactly? He's still laughing.

RUMBLES: I'm giving him my steely eyed stare. *(To Rowdy, with a steely eye.)* And if you have any dogs in there, we want them out, too. You can keep the cats.

ROWDY: Listen up. I don't know what loony bin you all crawled out of, but my job's to keep everyone out... *(Points.)* ...and all of them in. And I'm realllly good at my job.

RUMBLES: Wanna prove it?

ROWDY: What? Tangle with a street mutt? I'm a third-degree black belt.

RUMBLES: You couldn't whip a poodle.

ROWDY: I can turn you and ten of your friends into hamburger.

RUMBLES: You and what 20 of your friends?

ROWDY: You don't wanna mess with me, bro.

RUMBLES: Awh, your father's a cocker spaniel.

ROWDY: My father's in the N.Y.P.D. K-9 Corp!

RUMBLES: In his dreams.

ROWDY: You're getting me mad...

RUMBLES: Ohhhh...my fur's all a flutter. What's the big bad doggie gonna do?

MATTY: Maybe getting him mad is not such a good idea. He's starting to foam.

RUMBLES: That's nothin' but milk suds. I bet he's not even weaned off his mother.

ROWDY: *(Shouts.)* That's it! *(Opens the "door.")*

RUMBLES: *(To Matty and Snowflake.)* The minute he comes out of the door, run in, and open the cages. I'll keep Mr. Black Belt busy out here.

SNOWFLAKE: Are you sure you'll be okay?

RUMBLES: Hey, I'm the dog who owns the block, right?

SNOWFLAKE: Right.

RUMBLES: Don't worry about me, kid. You and the rat just get 'em all out. I'll take care of the rest.

SNOWFLAKE: Okay.

MATTY: Ready.

RUMBLES: Okay.

(Rowdy opens the "door" and rushes at Rumbles. Matty and Snowflake run into the "store" without Rowdy seeing them.)

ROWDY: *(Shouts.)* Start saying your goodbyes, mutt. You're Alpo!

(The lights cross fade to the inside of the "store." We hear Rumbles crash into a garbage can.)

SNOWFLAKE: You think he's going to be all right?

MATTY: Rumbles can take care of himself. *(Another crash into a garbage can is heard.)* I hope that was the other guy.

SNOWFLAKE: Hurry up! We have to get everyone out fast.
(*Squawking and tweeting is heard. Matty rushes around opening the "cages" as Isadora enters.*) Hi, my name's Snowflake, and you can all come out now. We're here to set you free.

ISADORA: Does the big black dog know you're here? 'Cause he's very particular who he lets in.

SNOWFLAKE: Our friend's outside discussing it with him now.
So you can all come out.

ISADORA: But where would we go? They feed us here, and out there, who would do that?

SNOWFLAKE: You could come with us to New Jersey. There's lots of food there.

ISADORA: New Jersey? That's just a made-up place.

SNOWFLAKE: No, it's real.

ISADORA: Really?

SNOWFLAKE: Yes, really.

ISADORA: Wow! Can all of us come?

SNOWFLAKE: Can you fly?

ISADORA: Not too far. Would that be a problem? How far is New Jersey?

SNOWFLAKE: Pretty far, I think, but you can all ride with me on Rumbles' back. And if anyone doesn't fit, they can ride on Matty.

MATTY: Huh?

ISADORA: Excuse me. She's a rat.

SNOWFLAKE: Yes.

ISADORA: Rats eat parakeets. Everyone knows that.

SNOWFLAKE: You've never done that, have you, Matty?

MATTY: (*Looks guilty.*) Ah, well, uh, no. Not really. No. No.

SNOWFLAKE: See, she won't eat you.

MATTY: (*Mumbles to herself.*) This is so embarrassing. (*Matty crosses and begins to work on opening the rat's "cage."*)

SNOWFLAKE: So, you'll all come with us to New Jersey? (*Birds adlib, "I don't know," "What do you think?" "Should we go?" etc.*)
What did they say?

ISADORA: They want to know how long the trip will be, and if they should bring seed.

SNOWFLAKE: It wouldn't be a bad idea.

ISADORA: Okay, everybody, pack your food and follow the big bird. We're outta here!

SNOWFLAKE: Matty, how are you doing with the cage back there?

MATTY: Pretty good so far. I only have one more lock to pick. It turns out this guy knows a friend of mine...okay, I got it.

(Theo, a pet store rat, enters and races to the "front door.")

THEO: Thanks, man. I'll remember ya done me the favor. *(Theo exits, running.)*

SNOWFLAKE: *(To Matty.)* Does he want to come with us to New Jersey?

MATTY: No. He's on his way back to Queens. Hasn't seen his family in a while. *(Looks around.)* Now, are there any other cages that need opening?

SNOWFLAKE: Just the dog cages in the back.

MATTY: I'll get those. You round up the birds. Hey, dogs, we're breaking ya outta of here. Get your bones and move it!

(The sounds of barking, cage doors swinging open, and dog nails clacking across the floor are heard. Note: If possible, Extras can play the dogs.)

SNOWFLAKE: Wow, there's sure a lot of dogs.

(Cat regally enters and crosses.)

MATTY: And one cat, but don't tell Rumbles.

(Cat exits.)

SNOWFLAKE: I won't. (*Looks behind Matty. Two mice, Betty and Bob, enter. If possible, two small children can play the mice.*) Who are the mice?

MATTY: This is Betty and Bob. They weren't in a cage or anything. They were just passing through on their way to the diner next door and asked if they could come along.

SNOWFLAKE: Sure. Great.

MATTY: Okay, all you birds...let's move out! Betty and Bob, you fall in line behind the last parakeet.

(The sounds of mice squeaking, wings fluttering, and tiny feet scurrying across the floor are heard.)

SNOWFLAKE: Do you think Rumbles is okay?

MATTY: I don't hear any more crashing.

(Matty and Snowflake come out of the "store" to find Rowdy and Rumbles, their arms around each other's shoulders, singing to the tune of "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling.")

RUMBLES/ROWDY: (*Sing.*) "When Setter's eyes are smiling, sure 'tis like a breath of spring. In the lilt of Setter laughter, you can hear the bloodhounds sing."

MATTY: Rumbles?

RUMBLES: Hi, there! Me and Rowdy, here, were just reminiscin'. Seems we have a cousin in common—an Irish setter, who lives up near the park, is a third cousin twice removed on our mother's side.

MATTY: Who da thought?

SNOWFLAKE: You have beautiful voices.

MATTY: Yeah, not too bad, for dogs.

ROWDY: Thank you.

RUMBLES: Thanks.

ROWDY: Rumbles, here, told me you were letting everyone go while we were out here singing.

SNOWFLAKE/MATTY: (*A little nervous.*) Yes...

SNOWFLAKE: Are you mad, Mr. Rottweiler?

MATTY: 'Cause if you are, we can put them all back. Well, maybe not the rat. He's half way to Queens by now.

ROWDY: Nawh. I'd kind of always wanted to do the same thing myself. I'll just tell 'em we got burgled. It happens all the time. But you better get going before someone comes along.

SNOWFLAKE: Thank you, sir.

MATTY: Thanks...Rowdy.

ROWDY: Awh, it's nothing.

SNOWFLAKE: If you ever get to New Jersey, maybe you'll look us up?

ROWDY: Yeah, okay.

MATTY: Ahhh...see ya.

ROWDY: Yeah.

MATTY: *(To herself.)* I can't believe I'm chatting it up with a Rottweiler.

RUMBLES: *(Slapping Rowdy on the back.)* Later, man.

ROWDY: Yeah. Later. *(Exits singing to the tune of "Danny Boy.")*
"Oh, Beagle Boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling, from Brooklyn Heights and down the Hudson Bay..."

(Rowdy exits and Matty, Rumbles, and Snowflake continue down 9th Avenue.)

MATTY: This is turning into a very unusual night.

(Everyone stops while Rumbles consults the pigeon's map.)

RUMBLES: The map says to cross 9th Avenue at 43rd Street, walk south one block to 42nd, cross the big street, turn left at the donut and sandwich shop and go east. *(Looks both ways.)*
Okay, everyone, it's clear. Here we go.

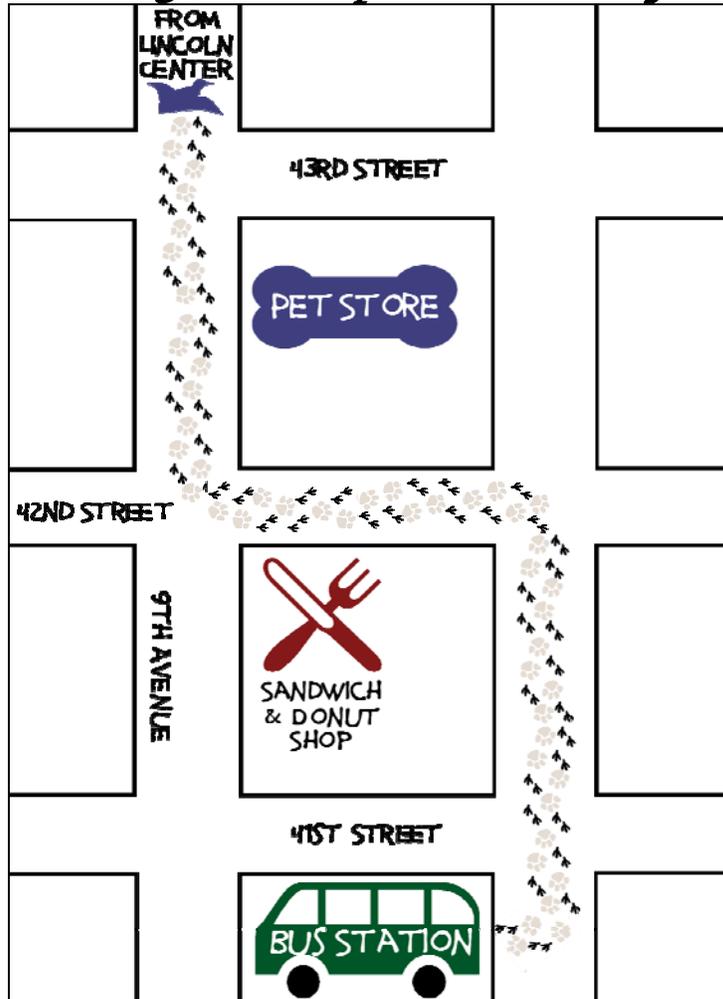
(They all cross 9th Avenue and continue south as the sound of sirens and horns honking are heard from a distance.)

TURKIN: *(Voiceover. From a distance, still inside the sewer. Shouts.)* There's gotta be a way out of here! *(As if to rats.)* Back! Back! Stay back! All of you!

(The sound of Rats snickering is heard.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]

A Pigeon's Map To New Jersey



NOTE: Feel free to include this map in your theatre programs so that audience members can follow along on Snowflake's journey.