

A Reader's Theatre Script for

The Peddler's Bed

By Lauri Fortino

Roles: Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Narrator 3, Narrator 4, Narrator 5, Peddler, Little Man, Mouse*

*Mouse has just one line

Narrator 1: One afternoon, a little man was working in his tiny garden next to his small house when he heard

Narrator 2: squeak, squeak, squeak.

Narrator 3: He saw a peddler driving his cart along the narrow road.

Narrator 4: The little man's dog, Happy, barked a friendly greeting.

Narrator 5: The peddler stopped his cart and climbed down from his seat.

Peddler: It's a fine day,

Little Man: Truly,

Narrator 1: answered the little man,

Little Man: and that's a fine bed you have there in your cart.

Peddler: I crafted the bed from the hardy oak trees that grow on the other side of the hills, and I filled the mattress with the softest goose-down feathers.

Little Man: How wonderful,

Peddler: The bed is so sturdy that I guarantee it will never squeak.

Little Man: Never squeak,

Narrator 2: echoed the little man.

Little Man: All beds squeak a bit.

Peddler: Not this one. Let me show you.

Narrator 3: The peddler slid his oak bed down onto the road.

Narrator 4: Then he stepped on top of it and jumped up and down several times.

Narrator 5: The fine, strong bed did not squeak, not once.

Little Man: That is a remarkable bed,

Narrator 1: said the little man.

Peddler: It's for sale, at a very fair price.

Little Man: No doubt, but I haven't even one penny to give you for it.

Narrator 2: The peddler paused for a moment, and then he said,

Peddler: I'll make you a deal, sir. If you can think of a way to make my oak bed squeak by sunset, it will be yours.

Narrator 3: The little man's face lit up.

Little Man: I have never owned such a fine bed in all my life. Come, have a seat in the shade of my porch.

Peddler: Yes, thank you.

Narrator 4: The little man went into his house to fetch a cup.

Narrator 5: Squeak, squeak, squeak,

Narrator 1: sounded the door of the small, shabby house.

Narrator 2: He went to his water pump.

Narrator 3: Squeak, squeak, squeak,

Narrator 4: twanged the pump.

Narrator 5: He filled the cup with cool water and gave it to the peddler.

Narrator 1: Then he filled a dimpled bucket for the peddler's pony and a bowl for Happy.

Little Man: Now, how shall I make the fine bed squeak?

Narrator 2: Then Happy chased a field mouse out of the garden.

Mouse: Squeak, squeak, squeak,

Narrator 3: chirped the mouse.

Little Man: Hmm,

Narrator 4: uttered the little man.

Narrator 5: He scooped the tiny mouse up and placed it upon the bed.

Narrator 1: The bed was so snug that the wee creature curled up and fell asleep.

Little Man: Oh well,

Narrator 2: said the little man as he patted Happy's head.

Little Man: It's getting near suppertime,

Narrator 3: he said to the peddler.

Little Man: Do come in and have a bite to eat.

Peddler: I'd be delighted.

Little Man: Have a seat at my table.

Narrator 4: Squeak, squeak, squeak,

Narrator 5: creaked the chair as the peddler sat down.

Little Man: I'll fix us some soup.

Narrator 1: He went to his garden and dug up some potatoes, carrots, and onions.

Narrator 2: He gave some of the carrots to the peddler's pony.

Narrator 3: He returned to his house.

Narrator 4: The little man made a fire.

Narrator 5: He hung a pail of water above it.

Narrator 1: He cut up the vegetables and dropped them into the pail.

Narrator 2: Squeak, squeak, squeak,

Narrator 3: chimed the pail as it swung above the fire.

Narrator 4: He unwrapped a few scraps of meat.

Narrator 5: He cut a piece for Happy and put the rest into the pail.

Narrator 1: Before long, the soup was ready.

Narrator 2: Then the little man pressed his hands together and gave thanks for all that he had and for his good company.

Little Man: The day is nearly over and I can't think of any way to make your remarkable bed squeak.

Peddler: Ah, it's no use. My fine, sturdy bed will never squeak.

Little Man: Nonetheless, Happy and I are glad to have your company.

Peddler: And I'm grateful for your warm welcome,

Narrator 3: The peddler looked around the humble, one-room house.

Narrator 4: The little man's bed was nothing more than a pile of frayed, moth-eaten blankets in a corner near the fireplace.

Peddler: It will be dark soon, and I must get back on the road. Would you like to sit on my fine bed before I go?

Little Man: I would very much.

Narrator 5: Squeak, squeak, squeak,

Narrator 1: sounded the door of the small, shabby house as the peddler and the little man headed outside.

Little Man: It's a fine evening,

Peddler: Yes, indeed,

Narrator 2: The little man sat upon the edge of the fine, oak bed.

Little Man: I would like to lie down for just a moment.

Narrator 3: Soon the little man was asleep.

Narrator 4: Squeak, Squeak, squeak,

Narrator 5: sang his nose as he breathed.

Narrator 1: The peddler smiled as he carefully pushed the bed, with the little man upon it, onto the porch of the small, shabby house.

Narrator 2: But the little man did not stir, for he was in a deep sleep.

Narrator 3: The peddler patted Happy on the head and then climbed into his cart.

Narrator 4: He clucked to his pony and started off down the narrow road.

Narrator 5: Squeak, squeak, squeak,

Narrator 1: sang the little man's nose as he slept.

Narrator 2: Squeak, squeak, squeak,

Narrator 3: echoed the wheels on the peddler's cart as it disappeared around the bend.