



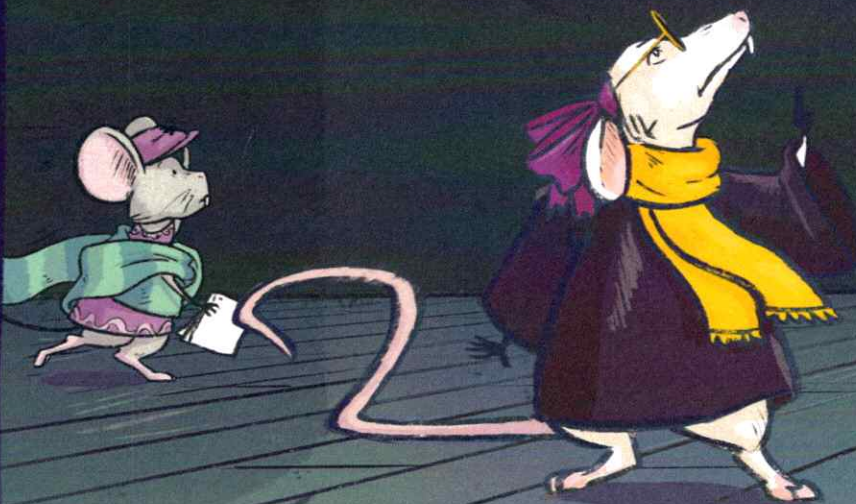
“But you didn’t add *f*’s in the last chapter,”
said What?. “Why are you adding *f*’s now?”

“Meffff?” asked the echo. “That wasn’t meffff.
That was the dull echo you met up above.
I like *f*’s in my echoesffff.”

“But those aren’t echoes!” cried What?.
“That isn’t how it works!
There are rules about echoes.”

“Rulesffff?!” cried the echo.
“Are you seriousffff? RULES??? Ffffff!!!”

“Oh, brother,” said What?,
but before he could continue,
Maybe stormed out from the curtain stage left.
Bizzie hurried after, her hand on her hat.



“CUT!” cried Maybe. “This can’t go on!
This scene is the no-play in a play
in a book in a poem, I say,
and you cannot argue with echoes.
Author, are you responsible for this mess?”

“Well,” came the author’s voice from somewhere,
“I wrote their words, but—”

“Nope,” said Maybe. “It won’t work.
We have to follow the friends.
We can’t shirk. They left the Van Gogh,
and they’re off to a different world
with its own quirks,
so please write that chapter.”

“Well, all right,” said the author,
but before he could continue,
Maybe glared at the silent stage,
cried, “ACTION!” and stormed away.
Bizzie ran after her.





The stage was silent once more.

What? looked around.
The starry night hung, a lifeless canvas,
in shadow at the back of the stage.
What? tried to imagine what it had looked like
when that sky was real.

He crept to the right margin,
peeked over, *grrffed*, and jumped.

His blue whiz marks watched him jump
and leaped after him.
They have to. You know that.

