races. Thank you one and all for your presence at this historic awards ceremony. (The CROWD cheers and begins to exit.) Excuse me. Coming through. I've got to go call the first race. (He exits.)

FERN. Look at Wilbur and his new medal. (WILBUR beams.)

HOMER. We're mighty pleased with you, boy. (He pats WILBUR.) Well, now that the excitement's died down, I guess it's time to be loading up.

ARABLE. Homer, let's all celebrate the occasion by taking one last look around the midway.

HOMER. Sounds good to me.

FERN. Mother, may I have forty cents? It's my turn to take Henry on the Ferris wheel. (MRS. ARABLE gives her the money.) Thanks. (She exits.)

MRS. ARABLE (smiling). Henry Fussy. Imagine that.

ARABLE. Well, let's go.

EDITH. We'll be back in a jiffy, Wilbur.

LURVY. Wear that medal with pride, boy! (ALL, except WILBUR, exit.)

(A moment later, FERN returns.)

FERN. I'm sorry, Wilbur, I was in such a hurry to meet Henry, I forgot to tell you how proud I am of you. I knew from the very first day that you were some pig. (After a beat, she hugs WILBUR, then looks offstage.) Henry! Wait for me. Let's go for a ride on the Ferris wheel. (She exits hurriedly.) START

WILBUR. Charlotte. Charlotte? (A beat.) Are you all right?

CHARLOTTE (coming out of hiding). Yes. A little tired, perhaps. But I feel peaceful now that I know you will live, Wilbur, secure and safe.

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WILBUR. Oh, Charlotte. Why did you do all this for me? I've never done anything for you.

CHARLOTTE. You have been my friend. That in itself is a tremendous thing. After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little, we die. By helping you, perhaps I was lifting up my life a trifle. Heaven knows, anyone's life can stand a little of that.

WILBUR. You have saved me, Charlotte, and I would gladly give my life for you . . . I really would.

CHARLOTTE. I'm sure you would.

WILBUR. Charlotte, we're all going home today. Won't it be wonderful to be back in the barn again?

CHARLOTTE. I will not be going back to the barn.

WILBUR (alarmed). Not going back? What are you talking about?

CHARLOTTE. I'm done for. In a day or two, I'll be dead.

WILBUR. Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE. I'm so tired, I can't even crawl up to my egg sac.

WILBUR. Charlotte! My true friend.

CHARLOTTE. Come now, Wilbur, let's not make a scene.

WILBUR. I won't leave you alone to die. I shall stay, too.

CHARLOTTE. You can't. They won't let you. Besides, even if you did stay, there would be no one to feed you. The Fair Grounds will soon be empty and deserted. (WILBUR goes to the side of the pen and looks offstage.)

WILBUR. I have an idea. (He rushes to TEMPLETON and awakens him.) Templeton, Templeton! Wake up! Pay attention!

TEMPLETON. Can't a rat catch a wink of sleep?

WILBUR. Listen to me! Charlotte is very ill. She won't be

coming home with us. I must take her egg sac with me. I can't reach it, and I can't climb. Please, *please*, Templeton, climb up and get the egg sac.

TEMPLETON. What do you think I am, anyway, a rat-of-all-work?

WILBUR (glancing offstage). Hurry! They'll be back soon. Templeton, I will make you a promise. Get Charlotte's egg sac for me, and from now on I will let you eat first when Lurvy slops me. You get first choice of everything in the trough.

TEMPLETON. You mean that?

WILBUR. I promise. I cross my heart.

TEMPLETON (after a beat). All right, it's a deal. (He climbs up to get the egg sac.)

WILBUR. Use extreme care. I don't want a single one of those eggs harmed. (TEMPLETON brings the egg sac to WILBUR.) Charlotte, I will protect it with all my might. Thank you, Templeton. Now you'd better run to the truck and hide under the straw if you want a ride back home.

TEMPLETON. You bet I'm going back home, now that I get first choice of everything in the trough. (He exits.)

HOMER (offstage). We'll take care of Wilbur, Edith. You drop the tailgate of the pickup and get his crate ready.

WILBUR. Oh, Charlotte! (He crosses quickly to CHARLOTTE and embraces her.)

ENW

(HOMER enters, followed by ARABLE and LURVY. CHARLOTTE hides in the shadows.)

ARABLE (calling offstage). Martha, you and Fern and Avery get in the truck. We'll be there in a minute. (HOMER ties a

rope around WILBUR.)

LURVY. We'd better straighten things up a little. We don't want those governors of the Fair to think the prize-winning pig left a mess behind. (ALL laugh and begin to rearrange the setting to resemble Homer's barn.)

HOMER. Well, sir, it turned out to be a mighty fine Fair.

ARABLE. Mighty fine.

LURVY. Best one I've ever been to. The very best one. (He and ARABLE pick up the sign and any other belongings and exit.)

HOMER. Let's go, Wilbur. This will be a day you can tell your grandchildren about. (WILBUR looks back and sees CHARLOTTE, who has come out of hiding again.)

WILBUR (sotto voce). Goodbye, Charlotte. Goodbye. (He waves to CHARLOTTE, then he and HOMER exit.)

CHARLOTTE. Goodbye, Wilbur. Thank you for saving my egg sac. (She speaks faintly.) Thank you . . . and goodbye . . . my friend. (The lights fade, leaving a special on CHARLOTTE, who slowly waves.)

(The CHORUS enters.)

FIRST MEMBER. Charlotte summoned all her strength and waved to Wilbur.

SECOND MEMBER. She went back to her web.

THIRD MEMBER. And never moved again. (As the FIRST MEMBER speaks, the SECOND and THIRD MEMBERS slowly detach the web and roll CHARLOTTE up in it. They carrry her offstage and the special fades. *If only one or two MEMBERS are used, or if the CHORUS is on tape, CHARLOTTE will detach the web, wrap it around herself, and slowly exit as the final CHORUS speech begins.*)