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*Dramatic Publishing*

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# River Rat and Cat

Comedy by Y YORK



# RIVER RAT and CAT

**Comedy. By Y York. Cast: 3 actors.** No one has ever understood the mysterious friendship of River Rat and Cat. From the day fastidious River Rat hauled a drowning sodden Cat from a sinking basket (thinking Cat was some unique collectible), all of the river creatures have been dismayed by the camaraderie of this unlikely duo. Cat proved to be imaginative, grand, fussy and thoroughly needy, while Rat is material, practical and thoroughly self-reliant. Lately, Rat has become frazzled by Cat's demands and has undertaken a program to make Cat more self-sufficient. However, Cat is determined to remain a pampered feline. Unbeknownst to River Rat and Cat, their downstream neighbor, Dale Beaver, has cast an eye on the one remaining tree, a tree currently owned by River Rat and inhabited by Cat. Beaver needs this tree if the Dale Beaver Dam is to remain the tallest on the river. Beaver must break up this friendship so that Rat will evict Cat. It's a Keystone Kops kind of komedy for kids and their kin. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Code: R85.*

Cover photo: Childsplay, Tempe, Ariz., featuring (l-r)  
Ricardo D. Araiza, Juliet Drake and Justin Krueger.  
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By  
Y YORK



**Dramatic Publishing**

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*River Rat and Cat* premiered at Childsplay at Tempe Performing Arts Center, Tempe, Arizona, May 2007. The production was directed by Mark Lutwak and included the following artistic team:

### CAST

River Rat . . . . . Juliet Drake  
Cat . . . . . Justin Krueger  
Dale Beaver . . . . . Ricardo D. Araiza

### PRODUCTION STAFF

Set Design . . . . . Kimb Williamson  
Lighting Design . . . . . Anthony Runfola  
Sound Design . . . . . Mark Lutwak  
Costumes . . . . . Kish Finnegan  
Stage Manager . . . . . Gretchen Schaefer

## PERFORMANCE NOTE

The characters in this play are determined—not desperate, but extremely focused, very in-the-moment, and a bit fixated. To them, the seemingly small issues of the next Cheese Sandwich or a missing Worry Stone loom as life and death. To them, every scheme is heroic, clever and historic, even if the rest of us see them as transparent and goofy. Please resist the inclination to “play” the humor. It will come as these roles are approached with honesty, utmost fervor and determination. Play the actions and let the language guide you. The characters have moments when they get tangled up in their schemes, when their actions trip, stumble and run headlong into brick walls, and their language reflects and reveals such moments.

The performance style is unique and particular; it is heightened and precise. It’s closer to playing the comedies of Beckett or Coward than, say, Neil Simon. Many items and concepts appear as capitalized words in the text. Such words are not necessarily stressed or punched, but they do carry extra weight. These items and concepts are precious to these characters. They are important, and perhaps, recently learned.

These characters function according to the principles of lower-elementary-school students. Their world is only just beginning to expand beyond the immediate family. They are exploring and understanding friendship for the first time. They only know a few things, so those things are important. And when they learn and embrace something new,



such as “a Promise,” it holds deep resonant meaning for them.

Although adults and older children will find great enjoyment in this play, it is those between the ages of 4 and 7 years of age who will really follow, track and understand the drama of what ensues among River Rat, Cat and Dale Beaver. This must be respected and honored.

# RIVER RAT AND CAT

## CHARACTERS

RIVER RAT . . . . . A River Rat. A collector of Items.

CAT . . An escapee house cat. Grand, pampered, cowardly.

DALE BEAVER . . . A beaver. A general in his own mind.

# RIVER RAT AND CAT

*(A riverbank on which is a cave entrance; farther from the river, a tree and some holes in the ground. Enter DALE BEAVER, marching and chanting in cadence. DALE BEAVER drags three enormous tires roped together.)*

DALE BEAVER.

Left

Left

I left my Dam with a mighty good Plan

Because I thought it was right

Right

Right by the laws of jiminy jim

I left my Dam with a mighty good Plan

Because I thought it was Right

Right

*(He marches and chants and carefully stashes the tires so that they are partially visible.)*

Fight

Fight

When Cat sees this junk and Rat takes it in

They'll fight

Fight

They'll fight through the night and I'll get this Tree

And no one will get it but me

But me

Tree

Tree

*(He takes out a measuring tape and measures a branch of the tree.)*

I'll toss this Tree on top of the Dam

The Dam so high to reach the sky

Raise it up to higher than high

Sky

Sky

The highest Dam that's in the land

If I can't do it no one can

I'll get this Tree and that's my Plan

Plan

Plan

CAT *(from off)*. Roar!

DALE BEAVER. Present arms!

CAT *(from off)*. Roar!

DALE BEAVER. I, Dale Beaver *(salutes tree)*, shall return for this Tree. 'Bout face. *(Quickly marches off.)* Hut hut hut hut hut hut—

CAT *(from off)*. Roar!

*(Enter RIVER RAT.)*

RIVER RAT. “Oh dear, oh no, oh dear oh no. Will I never be safe from the Mighty Ferocious Beast? Must I always fear for my life from the Cat-who-shows-no-mercy? Oh when, when will it ever end?”

CAT *(enters)*. “Roar!”

RIVER RAT. “Shake shake, tremble tremble. I should have known, that I, I, pitiful cowardly River Rat could never outrun—out-hide—out-smart—outside—the amazing, the terrible, Cat-in-Arms.”

CAT. “Roar roar!”

RIVER RAT. “Oh, spare me, amazing Cat, spare me.”

CAT. “Roar.”

RIVER RAT. ...“Spare me, for you are the Cat-above-all, the Cat-the-wise, the Cat-the-superlative cattiest Cat.”

CAT. “Roar.”

RIVER RAT (*getting fed up*). “Spare me and I will rub your Tired Cat feet.”

CAT. “Roar.”

RIVER RAT. ...“Spare me and I will be your servant forever.”

CAT. “Roar.”

RIVER RAT. Caaaaat—

CAT. “Roar?”

RIVER RAT. That’s enough now. Would you please agree to spare me so that we can move on?

CAT (*reminding whisper*). ...Tasty Morsel.

RIVER RAT. “Spare me, and I will bring you a Tasty Morsel.” Okay?!

CAT. Where is it?

RIVER RAT. Let me see. (*Looks in pockets.*) Strings, combs, wrappers—Cheese Sandwich, will that do?

CAT. “I spare your life, miserable creature! I will devour this Dead Enemy.”

RIVER RAT. Dead Cheese Sandwich. Come on now, Cat, time for your Lesson.

CAT. “Into my Tree Hollow, I drag my blood-dripping kill—”

RIVER RAT. *Mayonnaise-dripping.*

CAT. “Slobber, devour—”

RIVER RAT. Time for the Garden—

CAT. “In my Tree Hollow I gnaw into splinters the Bones of this Slain Beast.”

RIVER RAT. Yes, well, I hope you don’t get any *cheese* splinters stuck in your tongue. Come on, we will start with seeds and fertilizer.

*(DALE BEAVER enters unseen.)*

CAT. “Slobber gnaw.”

RIVER RAT. All right, if you must slobber, slobber on the seeds.

*(DALE BEAVER tosses a stone behind RIVER RAT and exits. Startled, RIVER RAT approaches it.)*

RIVER RAT. Oh my. I say, Catty, look at this.

CAT. “What care I for a Garden? I am Cat, the Hunter Growler.”

RIVER RAT. No, look, Cat. This is not about the Garden. This is something completely different than a Garden. I have found something. A fabulous found-something, already polished and shined.

CAT. “Growl roar slobber.”

RIVER RAT. Look, look. It was right there, right on the ground. Don’t you think it will make a splendid Worry Stone?

CAT *(chokes)*. Worry Stone?

RIVER RAT. For my Collection.

CAT. Rivy! Is it not agreed upon that if you have a worry that I chase it away with my ferocious “Roar roar, snarl.”

RIVER RAT. Well... Yes, it is agreed.

CAT. And do you not have many many useless Worry Stones already?

RIVER RAT. I suppose I do.

CAT. You do not need another Worry Stone.

RIVER RAT. Not just *any* another. A *splendid* another.

CAT. Oh, Rivy Rivy Rivy. (*CAT runs into RIVER RAT's cave.*)

RIVER RAT. What—what are you doing in my Cave? Don't touch anything. Come out of there at once.

(*CAT emerges with RIVER RAT's enormous jar of worry stones.*)

CAT. Another Worry Stone? To put in your already overflowing Jar of Worry Stones?

RIVER RAT. There's always room for one more.

(*RIVER RAT drops it in, but it falls out of the jar. CAT snatches it.*)

CAT. Remember your Promise?

RIVER RAT. No, I don't remember a Promise.

CAT. Nothing, *nothing* goes into your Cave without something going out. You promised. Your Cave is stuffed to overflowing, just like this Jar. If you are going to have a new Worry Stone, you must toss away an old one.

RIVER RAT (*gasp*).

CAT. Never mind, I'll do it. Right into the River. (*Begins to throw.*)

RIVER RAT. No, no. Stop. Uh. Perhaps this new one doesn't have to go in the Jar.

CAT. Perhaps it can stay right there on the ground where you found it.

RIVER RAT. No, I was thinking...perhaps it would be possible for you to carry it for me.

CAT (*chokes*).

RIVER RAT. Yes, Cat, *carry*. That way it won't further overflow my Jar, and it will always be nearby in case of an unplanned or emergency Worry.

CAT. ...Carry? Did you say carry?

RIVER RAT. Yes, in one of your many many Pockets.

CAT. Carry it in one of your own Pockets.

RIVER RAT. You know very well my own Pockets are full. Come on, Cat. Carry my lovely little tiny shiny Stone inside your Pocket.

CAT. I have no Pocket.

RIVER RAT. Why, yes. I'd say you have one two three four five six seven Pockets. You can keep this Stone in one of your seven Pockets.

CAT. Actually... (*new idea*) you wouldn't want me to drown, would you Rivy?

RIVER RAT. You never go in the River.

CAT. Be pulled down to the bottom of the River by a Pocket full of Stones.

RIVER RAT. *One* Stone that is practically weightless—

CAT. Unable to swim—

RIVER RAT. I gave you a lesson— (*Demonstrates swimming.*) Head above water, paddle paddle—



CAT. Never to be seen or heard from again. The cries of sadness can be heard from near and far: “Ooooooh. Dear Cat drowned, in the detested River Water while trying to carry a Stone for beloved friend, River Rat, poor Cat taken so prematurely by the raging River and the heavy heavy Stone.”

RIVER RAT. This Stone couldn’t drown a flea.

CAT. The Town Criers cry, the Mourners Mourn, the Weepers and Wailers Weep and Wail, for poor drowned Cat.

RIVER RAT. This is too ridiculous. Put this in a Pocket at once. (*Puts the stone into a CAT pocket. It immediately falls to the ground, kerplunk.*) Oh, not that one. (*Tries again, and again, the same.*)

CAT (*kerplunk*). Or that one.

RIVER RAT (*kerplunk*). Or this one.

CAT (*kerplunk*). Or this one.

RIVER RAT (*kerplink*). Not this one.

CAT. That one won’t work either!

RIVER RAT. You have seven useless Pockets.

CAT. They are not useless. They are not even Pockets. They are Decorative Patches to give style and grace to my Jacket.

RIVER RAT. How do you carry your Lunch and your Ball-Peen Hammer and your Curling Iron?

CAT. If, on the very impossible chance, I should ever need a Ball-Peen Hammer, I will get it from you.

RIVER RAT. Oh. I see. *I* carry everything you need, so your Pockets get to be Decorative Patches.

CAT. I hate the bulgy bulge that happens with full Pockets. I like the lean sleek look of Pocketless Patches.

RIVER RAT (*growing internal turmoil*). Pocketless Patches, Patches that do not serve as Pockets—seven of them? Seven useless Patches? You get to have seven useless Patches and I can't have one little measly additional Worry Stone?

CAT. All right, Rivy. I'll keep your Worry Stone. Right here. (*Drops the stone into one of the garden holes.*)

RIVER RAT. Take that out of there at once.

CAT. A magnificent place to stash an excess Worry Stone—

RIVER RAT. But but but—

CAT. No but. You asked me to keep it and here is where I shall keep it.

RIVER RAT. Carry, carry, not keep.

CAT. Keep, carry. (*Rhetorical.*) What's the difference?

RIVER RAT (*to self, breathing hard*). Keeping. Cat is keeping my Worry Stone in a Garden hole.

CAT. Yes, I am. I am keeping it safe in a Garden hole. That way you will always know where it is, Rivy.

RIVER RAT. I will?

CAT. You will. It will always be right here. Always.

RIVER RAT (*realizing*). I will know where it is, and you, too will know where it is! Every day as you come to the Garden to reap and tend and hoe you can check on my Worry Stone.

CAT. I don't reap and tend and hoe.

RIVER RAT. Yes, you shall reap and tend and hoe, check the Worry Stone, and then you can *can*.

CAT. Can can? What means this Can can?

RIVER RAT. You can *can*. Canning. "Pick vegetable, stuff vegetable in Jar, put on lid, have Tasty Morsels throughout the winter."

CAT. I get all the Tasty Morsels I need from you.

RIVER RAT. No, you need to be able to take care of yourself—

CAT. You take care of me.

RIVER RAT. So that I can have a day off!

CAT. But Rivy—

RIVER RAT. No but, you promised. Like it or not, I'm going to teach you Gardening. (*Goes into cave.*)

CAT. I am not interested in Gardening. I am interested in roaring and sleeping and playing and...

*(RIVER RAT emerges with a pile of fish heads.)*

CAT (*continues. Sees fish heads*). Oh!... Eating, yum.

RIVER RAT. Look here, Friend Cat.

CAT. What are those delicious-looking eat-ables you have so carefully piled?

RIVER RAT. These are not eat-able anythings. They are the Heads of Dead Fish.

CAT. What are you doing with the delicious-looking Heads of Dead Fish?

RIVER RAT. One Fish Head goes into each hole along with one seed. The Dead Fish Head is for fertilizer. It is a famous Gardening Technique.

CAT. I never knew Gardening was so delicious.

RIVER RAT. Delicious and nutritious.

CAT. I love the Garden.

RIVER RAT. Do you mean it, Cat?

CAT. Yes, yes, I love the Garden. I particularly love the fertilizer part of the Garden. Can we fertilize now?

RIVER RAT. Certainly. I so hoped you'd like it.

CAT. Not like, love, I love the Garden...I will go along behind you and fill each hole with dirt.

*(As RIVER RAT drops each seed and fish head, CAT comes along behind and eats the fish head.)*

RIVER RAT. Seed, fish head. We shall ensure a perfect crop. Seed, fish head. Be careful not to pack the dirt too tightly.

CAT *(mouth full)*. Mumble mumble.

RIVER RAT *(plants seed, fish head)*. Otherwise the plants can't stretch out, sink their roots down and their shoots up. *(Plants seed, fish head.)* The dirt must be very very loose.

CAT. Mumble wurmble.

RIVER RAT. Oh, don't worry about the worms. Worms are good. Worms help keep the soil very very loose.

CAT. Mumble yum.

RIVER RAT. Yes, these seeds will give us yummy cobs of baby corn fresh from the Garden. A lightly-steamed-with-butter-and-salt meal fit for a king. Come August, you will harvest stalks of yummy corn for yourself and your good neighbor, River Rat. *(Turns to address CAT.)* What do you say?

CAT. Mumble...

RIVER RAT *(notices)*. ...Cat?

CAT. Mumble?

RIVER RAT. What is that sticking out of your mouth?

CAT *(shakes head "no")*.

RIVER RAT. Yes, there is something sticking out of your mouth. And your belly is quite puffy from fullness.