

River Rat and Cat by Y York, November 2006

## **RIVER RAT AND CAT**

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Characters

River Rat. A river rat.

Cat. An escapee house cat.

Dale Beaver. A Beaver.

(A riverbank on which is a Cave entrance; further from the River, a Tree and some holes in the ground. Enter Dale Beaver, marching and reciting 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

(Dale Beaver marches and recites and carefully stashes the items 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

(Dale Beaver takes out a measuring tape and measures a branch of the Tree.)

DALE BEAVER

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 double time.)  
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?”

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

(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

Would you please agree to spare me so that we can move on?

CAT

(reminding) Tasty Morsel.

RIVER RAT

“Spare me, and I will bring you a Tasty Morsel.”

CAT

Where is it?

RIVER RAT

(Checks 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, you promised—.

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, unseen, enters, tosses a stone behind RIVER RAT, exits. Startled, RIVER RAT approaches it.)

CAT

“Slobber gnaw.”

RIVER RAT

I say, Cat, look at this.

CAT

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

RIVER RAT

This is not about the Garden. This is something completely different from a Garden. I have found something. A fabulous found-something, already polished and shined.

CAT

“Growl roar slobber.”

RIVER RAT

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 that if you have a worry that I chase it away with my ferocious “Roar. Roar, snarl.”

Well... Yes, it is agreed.

RIVER RAT

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

CAT

Not useless.

RIVER RAT

You do not need another Worry Stone.

CAT

Not just any another. A splendid another.

RIVER RAT

(going into River Rat's cave) Oh, Rivy Rivy Rivy.

CAT

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

RIVER RAT

(Cat emerges with River Rat's enormous jar of Worry Stones.)

Another Worry Stone? To put in your already overflowing jar of Worry Stones?

CAT

There's always room for one more.

RIVER RAT

(River Rat puts it in, but it falls out of the jar. Cat snatches it.)

No room. Remember your promise?

CAT

No, I don't remember a promise.

RIVER RAT

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.

CAT

(Gasping.) Toss?

RIVER RAT

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

CAT

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

RIVER RAT

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

CAT

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

RIVER RAT

(Chokes) Carry? CAT

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 eensy weensy 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 carry 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 weightless stone.

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 is too ridiculous.

(RIVER RAT puts the stone into a CAT Pocket. It immediately falls to the ground, kerplunk.)

RIVER RAT (continued)  
Oh, not that one. (Tries again, and again, the same.)

CAT  
(kerplunk) Or that one.

(kerplunk) Or this one.

RIVER RAT

(kerplunk) Or this one.

CAT

(kerplink) Not this one.

RIVER RAT

That one won't work either!

CAT

You have seven useless Pockets.

RIVER RAT

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

CAT

How do you carry your lunch and your ball-peen hammer and your curling iron?

RIVER RAT

If, on the very impossible chance, I should ever need a ball-peen hammer, I will get it from you.

CAT

Oh. I see. I carry everything you need, so your Pockets get to be decorative patches.

RIVER RAT

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

CAT

(growing anger) 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 measly additional Worry Stone?

RIVER RAT

Alright, Rivy. I'll keep your Worry Stone. Right here.

CAT

(Cat drops the stone into one of the Garden holes.)

Take that out of there at once.

RIVER RAT

A magnificent place to stash an excess Worry Stone—.

CAT

But but but—.

RIVER RAT

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

CAT

Carry, carry, not keep.

RIVER RAT

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  
That way you will always know where it is.

RIVER RAT  
...I will?

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

RIVER RAT  
Alright, Cat. You may keep the Worry Stone in the Garden. Where you shall check on it every day as you reap and tend and hoe.

CAT  
I don't reap and tend and hoe.

RIVER RAT  
Yes, you shall reap and tend and hoe, and then you can can.

CAT  
Can can?

RIVER RAT  
"Pick vegetable. Stuff in jar. Put on lid. Eat 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.

(Pause.)

CAT  
(horrified) But Rivy—.

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

CAT  
I am not interested in Gardening. I am interested in roaring and sleeping and playing and...  
(River Rat enters with a pile of fish heads.)

CAT (continues)

(Sniffs) 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 right 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 seed and Fish Head, CAT comes along behind and eats the Fish Head.)

RIVER RAT

Seed, Fish Head. Ensure a perfect crop. Seed, Fish Head. Careful not to pack the dirt too tightly.

CAT

(mouth full) Mumble mumble.

RIVER RAT

Seed, Fish Head. Happy plants. Seed, Fish Head. Otherwise the plants can't stretch out. 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, happy seeds make yummy cobs of baby corn fresh from the Garden. A lightly-steamed-with-butter-and-salt meal fit for a Cat. And the Cat's good neighbor, River Rat. (Turns to address Cat.) What do you say, Cat?

CAT

Mumble..

RIVER RAT

(notices) ...Cat?

CAT

Mumble?

RIVER RAT

What is that sticking out of your mouth?

CAT

(shaking head) Unh-unh.

RIVER RAT

Yes, there is something sticking out of your mouth. And your belly is quite puffy from fullness. That looks like a Partially Eaten Fish Head. Where did you get a Partially Eaten Fish Head?

CAT

Gulp, swallow. River. Fishing.

RIVER RAT

Very interesting, considering you never go in the River...It looks very like a fertilizer Fish Head.

CAT

No, uhn uhn.

RIVER RAT

(pointedly) Well, good, Cat, because without those Fish Heads those cornstalks are doomed. Doomed. To a doomed death of doomèdness.

CAT

Doomèdness?

RIVER RAT

(pointedly) Quite. No Fish Head, no corn. Now, I think, now, would be a good time, yes, now, I'm going to go away for a moment. For a moment I am simply going to go be out of sight. For a brief moment I'll be out of sight, during which time I won't be able to see anything you do, Cat. I won't be able to see anything you put back. Bye bye.

CAT

Drat. Drat drat drat.

(RIVER RAT turns back. CAT throws up a Fish Head into a hole. DALE BEAVER appears unseen.)

RIVER RAT

I can't see a thing, Cat, I can't see a thing you are putting back. And you better put back every single one of the things I can't see.

(CAT throws up a Fish Head into a hole. DALE BEAVER tosses a stone near RIVER RAT.)

RIVER RAT

What's this?

(RIVER RAT picks it up and clutches it greedily and secretly.)

RIVER RAT

(whisper) Oh, happy day, happy happy day. (To Cat) Keep doing what you're doing, Cat. Don't pay any attention to what I'm doing just do what you're doing and keep doing it.

(DALE BEAVER tosses another stone. RIVER RAT grabs it greedily.)

RIVER RAT

(whisper) Oh glee oh glee oh glee.

(DALE BEAVER tosses a stone quite near the cavalcade of tires. RIVER RAT sees them)

RIVER RAT

(extreme joy) Oh glee! Oh gee! Look at those tires. What a Windfall.

(DALE BEAVER makes a gesture of success as RIVER RAT disappears into the tires. DALE BEAVER exits.)

CAT

Alright, Rivy. Your holes are all filled with Fish Head fertilizer, all ready for growing vast tall corns as high as an elephant's eye...where are you? Are you in your Cave? Well, if you don't care, I might as well re-eat those throw-up Fish Heads—.