

A Scene from **Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat**

Adapted from the novel *Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat* (Chapter 1, pages 3-8) by Lynne Jonell, published by Henry Holt and Company, 2007. (For grades 3-6.)

Reader's Theater adaptation by Judy Freeman; reprinted with permission of the publisher, Henry Holt and Company.

ROLES: Emmy, the Rat

NOTE:

In the first chapter, we meet Emmy, a girl whom no one ever seems to notice. The children in her class, her teachers, and even her parents don't ever seem to know she's even there. She tries being extra good, but it's almost like she's invisible. That's why she likes to sit next to the Rat in school. He isn't good at all. He sneers at the children, snaps at their fingers when they reach into his cage to feed him, and makes cutting remarks when the teacher is out of earshot. Emmy is the only one who seems to be able to hear him, and she wonders if she's just imagining things. In this scene, she and the Rat speak for the first time.

This script can be handed out to pairs of students to act out together. After they read it the first time, they can switch roles so each child has the chance to be both Emmy and the Rat. Be sure to explain how stage directions are written in parenthesis and in italics, to be followed by the actors but not to be read aloud. When you photocopy this script, be sure to run it single-sided. Double-sided scripts are confusing for children to follow.

EMMY: I need to stay indoors for recess today. I have to study my spelling. *(sighs)*

RAT: *(snorts in disgust and scowls)*

EMMY: *(looks down at Rat)* Why are you always so mean?

RAT: *(curls his upper lip)* Why are *you* always so good?

EMMY: *(looks at Rat, startled)*

RAT: (*shrugs one shoulder*) It doesn't get you anywhere. Just look at you—missing recess to study words you could spell in your sleep—and the only thing that happens is, you get ignored.

EMMY: (*looks away from Rat, speaks to audience*) It's true. My parents never answer the letters I send, even though I copy them over for neatness and give them to my nanny, Miss Barmy, to mail. My teacher keeps forgetting my name, even though I made a placard for my desk that says EMMY in big red letters edged with silver glitter. And I don't really mind missing recess at all. I feel so alone at recess. (*looks back at Rat*)

RAT: The bad ones get all the attention. Try being bad for once. You might like it.

EMMY: (*looks away from Rat, speaks to audience*) If I were bad, I could stick my tongue out at Miss Barmy. I could call my parents long distance whenever I wanted. I could climb on my desk in school and scream until the other kids *had* to notice me. (*looks back at Rat*) No one will like me if I'm bad.

RAT: No one likes you anyway.

EMMY: Well, they don't *dislike* me.

RAT: That's right. Nobody likes you, nobody dislikes you, nobody cares about you either way. You're a big nothing if you ask me.

EMMY: I didn't!

RAT: That's the first time I've heard you sound like anything but a piece of wet bread. Why don't you stand up for yourself more often?

EMMY: Listen, it's not like I don't *try*.

RAT: Yesterday, when that girl with the ponytail butted in line, you let her. And when that kid who sits across from you, the soccer star, the freckled one with hair that looks like a haystack—

EMMY: Joe Benson.

RAT: Yeah, him. Well, when Haystack Hair was walking backward and stepped on your foot, *you* said “Sorry.”

EMMY: I was just being nice!

RAT: You’re *too* nice. A little meanness is good for the soul. I highly recommend it.

EMMY: (*lifts her chin*) Being mean doesn’t get *you* anywhere. Nobody pets *you*. Nobody plays with *you*.

RAT: (*shows his long, yellow teeth*) I get what I want. I get respect, which is more than I can say for you.

EMMY: You get respect? You live in a *cage*.

RAT: (*looks stunned*)

EMMY: Well, it’s true. Don’t tell me you haven’t noticed. You know, the bars, the lock on the door . . .

RAT: (*whiskers trembling*) You’re not being very nice.

EMMY: Nice? I thought a little meanness was good for the—

RAT: Most people don’t mention it. Most people know better than to taunt a rodent about his . . . unfortunate situation.

EMMY: Look, you were the one who said—

RAT: *(voice quavering pathetically)* It's not *my* fault I'm locked up! I committed no crime. Have I survived kidnapping from the nest, unjust imprisonment, and absolutely appalling food *(gives his dish of pellets a contemptuous kick)*, only to be mocked by a little child?

EMMY: *(hotly)* I'm bigger than *you*. And you were the one who said I shouldn't be so nice—

RAT: But not to **me**! It's different when you're mean to *me*!

EMMY: Oh, right. *(looks away from Rat, speaks to audience)* Why are things so different here? At my old school, I had lots of friends. Maybe it's me. Maybe I've turned into some horrible person and I don't even know it.

RAT: *(buries head in forepaws, shoulders heaving, lets out a small sob, and wipes a tear from his eye)*

EMMY: *(speaks to audience)* Poor Rat. For all his tough talk, he's awfully sensitive. I shouldn't have mentioned his cage. *(whispers to Rat, apologetically)* Sorry.