

THE DESERT CRITTERS' DINNER

Formatted for Readers Theater by Lois Walker

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NORTH AMERICAN DESERT ANIMALS FEATURED IN THIS

STORY: Packrat, Black-Tailed Jackrabbit, Desert Ground Squirrel, and Chuckwalla

PERFORMANCE APPROACH:

DURING THE READING OF THIS SCRIPT, CHILD ACTORS MIME THE ACTION WHILE A TEACHER NARRATOR (OR OLDER READER) NARRATES AND 13 CHILD READERS READ EASY-READER LINES. THE ENTIRE CLASS OR AUDIENCE MAY ALSO TAKE PART BY JOINING IN ON THE LINES MARKED **ALL**.

THE PERFORMANCE AREA:

PLACE **ACTORS** WHO WILL BE **MIMING** THE STORY IN AN "ACTING SPACE" LOCATED IN FRONT OFF AND TO THE SIDE OF YOUR READERS, OR ON AN ELEVATED PLATFORM BEHIND YOUR READERS.

(**NOTE:** THIS PIECE MAY BE PERFORMED WITHOUT THE MIMING, IF DESIRED. SIMPLY DISREGARD ACTOR BLOCKING AND READ ALOUD AS INDICATED BELOW).

CHILD READERS SIT ON STOOLS OR CHAIRS IN A LINE FACING AUDIENCE, HOLDING SCRIPTS ON LAPS. 6 READERS SIT ON ONE SIDE OF NARRATOR AND READER 4, AND 6 ON THE OTHER. **NARRATOR** AND **READER 4** STAND IN THE MIDDLE, MUSIC STANDS IN FRONT OF THEM, SCRIPTS ON STANDS).

THE READING BEGINS:

(CHILD MIMING GIRL SITS ON CHAIR IN CENTER OF "ACTING SPACE". SHE LIFTS HAND TO BEHIND EAR AND MIMES LISTENING, AS BELOW LINE IS READ):

NARRATOR: Early one morning a little girl heard a soft tapping at the front door of her house.

(CHILD 1 STANDS).

CHILD 1: Tap, tap, tap!

(CHILD MIMING GIRL WALKS STAGE RIGHT AND PRETENDS TO OPEN AN IMAGINARY DOOR. SHE IS SURPRISED AND SHOWS THIS WITH HER HANDS AND FACE).

NARRATOR: She opened the door and to her surprise, found herself standing toe to nose...

(CHILD 2 STANDS).

CHILD 2: with a Desert Packrat!

(CHILD 3 STANDS).

CHILD 3: The packrat spoke first.

(CHILD MIMING THE PACKRAT WAITS JUST OUTSIDE THE IMAGINARY DOOR. SHE MIMES SPEAKING, AS NARRATOR READS THE FOLLOWING LINES. NOTE: IF CHILDREN ARE OLD ENOUGH, THE CHILD PLAYING THE PACKRAT MAY ACTUALLY READ THE LINES INSTEAD OF NARRATOR).

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Teacher Version/Lower Primary/P-32**

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NARRATOR: "Hi!
I'm a desert packrat.
Been working on my home.
It's made of bits of cactus
Shiny treasures, sticks, and bone.
I'm hungry now from building
My nest all round and curved
So, I came here
To ask you dear
When breakfast will be served."

ALL: WHEN BREAKFAST WILL BE SERVED!"

(CHILD 1,2,3 SIT).

NARRATOR: The little girl was delighted at the thought of having a desert packrat to breakfast, and so she answered:

(CHILD PLAYING GIRL MIMES SPEAKING AS CHILD 4 READS).

CHILD 4: "We're serving bacon
In a minute.
Come on in
And we'll begin it."

(CHILD PLAYING PACKRAT LOOKS TOWARD AUDIENCE AND SHOWS AN UNHAPPY FACE).

NARRATOR: The packrat did not look pleased and said,

(CHILD PLAYING PACKRAT MIMES SPEAKING).

"Bacon? No!

That won't do.
I must say "no thanks" to you.
Please don't think me awfully rude,
But bacon's not my kind of food."

(GIRL SHRUGS HER SHOULDERS AND LOOKS
PUZZLED).

CHILD 4: "What is your kind of food?"

NARRATOR: asked the little girl. But the packrat did not
answer. Instead, he curled up near a Jumping
Cholla in the front yard and fell sound asleep.

(PACKRAT CURLS UP ON FLOOR AND
PRETENDS TO SLEEP).

The little girl and her family had to eat the
bacon

(GIRL MOVES BACK TO CHAIR IN CENTER OF
ACTING SPACE AND SITS).

ALL: ALL BY THEMSELVES!

(ALL READERS AND MIMING GIRL SHAKE
HEADS IN NEGATIVE FASHION AS ABOVE LINE
IS READ).

(GIRL PUTS HAND BEHIND EAR AND LISTENS
AGAIN).

NARRATOR: Around noon, the little girl heard a heavy
thumping at the garage door of her house.

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(CHILD 5 STANDS).

CHILD 5: Thump, thump, thump!

(GIRL GETS UP AND MOVES DOWNSTAGE
RIGHT. SHE MIMES OPENING THE IMAGINARY
DOOR AND LOOKS SURPRISED).

NARRATOR: She opened the door and to her surprise,
found herself standing ankle to nose...

(CHILD 6 STANDS).

CHILD 6: with a Black Tailed Jackrabbit!

(CHILD 7 STANDS).

CHILD 7: The jackrabbit spoke first.

(CHILD PLAYING JACKRABBIT WAITS TO THE
SIDE OF THE IMAGINARY DOOR. HE MIMES
OR SPEAKS THE FOLLOWING):

NARRATOR: "Hi!
Here I am, jackrabbit
I'm really just a hare.
Ran all the way to find you,
Ears upright in the air.
I heard there was a luncheon
And so I took the bait.
I'm here to munch
On your fine lunch
And I can hardly wait."

ALL: AND I CAN HARDLY WAIT!"

(CHILD 5,6,7 SIT).

NARRATOR: The little girl was delighted at the thought of having a jackrabbit to lunch and so she answered:

(GIRL MIMES SPEAKING AS CHILD 4 READS).

CHILD 4: "We're serving hot dogs
In a minute.
Come on in
And we'll begin it."

(THE JACKRABBIT LOOKS UNHAPPILY
TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE)

NARRATOR: The jackrabbit did not look pleased. He said,

(JACKRABBIT MIMES THE FOLLOWING):

"Hot dogs? No!
That won't do.
I must say "no thanks" to you.
Please don't think me awfully rude,
But hot dogs aren't my kind of food."

(GIRL SHRUGS SHOULDERS AND LOOKS
PUZZLED).

CHILD 4: "What is your kind of food?"

NARRATOR: asked the little girl. But the jackrabbit did not answer. Instead, he settled in a hole beside the driveway and fell sound asleep.