

RAT RACE

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EXT. SEWER CITY - NIGHT

We see an underground collection of trash and sludge made to look like a cityscape. Crisp, autumn leaves soar down from sewer grates, past the makeshift buildings.

RANDALL, a lanky, anthropomorphic rat, walks forward, head down. Worn-out posters dangle on the sides of buildings. Randall looks up at one.

ANGLE ON: Randall the Brown Rat, This City's Future!

Hastily, WORKER RATS cover it up with a new poster. It features LEO, a small, anthropomorphic pack rat with goggles.

ANGLE ON: Leo the Pack Rat, The Future Perfected!

Randall huffs and rolls his eyes. Continues down the street.

INT. RANDALL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The interior is organized, but still messy. Hidden in the mess, Randall sits at a tool bench. A piece of charcoal in one hand and blank sheets of paper in the other.

He sits and sketches out schematics to a machine, but groans and tosses the paper away. The balled paper hits a trophy on a shelf, next to a slew of other dusty awards. They all read: "Best Food Returner" or "M.V.R., Most Valued Rat".

At the tool bench, Randall draws more blueprints, but all of his attempts only add to his pile of crumpled papers. He leans back in his chair and pinches his nose.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Hi. In case you couldn't tell by my absolutely chipper demeanor around any mention of the name Leo, I'm Randall. The old news. The has-been...

He groans but quickly sits back up.

RANDALL (V.O.)

In Sewer City, your worth is determined by how much food you can bring back from The Surface. I used to be the best, until he showed up. But I don't care if some filthy pack rat tries to replace me, I've worked for too hard and for too long for my contributions to go unnoticed!

One of his dusty awards clatters against the floor.

RANDALL (V.O.)  
I'll show that second-rate wannabe  
and I know just how to do it.

He holds up a new, finalized blueprint as a smirk creeps across his face.

EXT. SEWER CITY - MORNING

Randall pushes a cart with something under a large tarp to the center of a city square. Many BYSTANDER RATS are intrigued by this and gather around.

RANDALL  
Come one, come all, to see a new  
revolutionary technology created by  
yours truly!

Quiet conversations begin amongst the rats. They come to an abrupt halt as a THE RAT KING, a regal rat dressed in a fancy robe and adorned with a crown, approaches.

THE RAT KING  
Howdy there, Randall. What  
invention pulled you out of hiding?

RANDALL  
Rat King?! Ahem, it's a pleasure to  
see you. I can assure you that this  
machine is going to be worth your  
while.

Randall slowly looks around at his audience. His facial expression drops slightly. Big gulp.

RANDALL (CONT'D)  
Fellow rats, feast your eyes and  
prepare your stomachs!

He grabs the tarp. Reveals a tacky machine made of an assortment of metal sheets and glassware, with a claw and a pair of goggles attached to it.

RANDALL (CONT'D)  
I present to you... the *Food  
Fetcher 2000*!

The claw spins around, but a bolt flies out and hits a rat on the head. Randall awaits an applause, but is met with coughs and scattered whispers. The Rat King clears his throat.

## THE RAT KING

Randall, if I may, this new invention seems a little... unfinished. I'm happy to see you inventing again, but I worry for its usefulness and the safety of the members of our city.

Randall's ears droop. His composure shrinks under the weight of The Rat King's words.

## LEO

Wait a moment!

The crowd turns to see Leo. Without as much as a gesture, a path to the center of the square is formed by all the bystander rats. Randall rolls his eyes.

## LEO (CONT'D)

Your Majesty, I understand your concerns, but Randall has been nothing but an asset to our mischief. I feel it's important that we-

Leo's words slowly drown out as Randall's brows furrow.

## RANDALL (V.O.)

Who does this *rodent* think he is? I don't need his permission to do what I want. Not giving him a chance to steal my thunder.

He walks towards the machine. Activates it and sits in its cockpit in front of a control panel.

## LEO

(to the Rat King)

-Thus, I believe that we should give Randall this chance to further prove himself. Right, Randall?

## RANDALL

(dismissively)

Yeah.

The machine stalls before it sparks to life. Randall puts the goggles on and waves the claw over the, now, captive audience. Leo's eyes sparkle in wonder. The claw shoots upwards and crashes past a sewer lid.

EXT. THE SURFACE - CONTINUOUS

The claw opens. Two tiny spectacles are inside the base of the it that lead down to Randall's goggles. Cars zoom around the claw as its arm extends further out of Sewer City. A PIGEON observes from a bench.

EXT. SEWER CITY - CONTINUOUS

Randall uses a collective of buttons and levers in his cockpit. He turns his attention to the audience.

RANDALL

I think The Surface can be quite the dangerous place. With cars and humans, the terrors are endless, so wouldn't it be nice to not have to physically travel up there at all?

Randall uses the claw to look around. He spots a jackpot: a half-eaten slice of jalapeno pizza. Randall presses a button and the claw shoots out. It clings to the pizza slice.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Would anyone like to see what I've secured for the city?

Randall invites a volunteer to sit in the machine. No hands raise... except Leo's.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Anyone else? Anyone at all?

No other hands. He sighs.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Get up here, Leo.

Leo excitedly steps up to the machine and looks through the goggles. His excited bounces halt.

LEO

A feathery beast...?

RANDALL

A huh?

Randall shoves Leo to the side and looks through the eyepiece. The pigeon stares back at him with the other end of the pizza slice in its mouth. It pulls backwards, tilting the machine forward.

Leo stumbles and presses a button on the control panel. It causes the machine to yank the pizza slice back towards the sewer hole. The pigeon follows closely behind it.

Randall falls out the cockpit seat. The claw and half-eaten slice of pizza land in front of him. His face drops as he quickly looks up to check for the pigeon. Spots nothing and sighs in relief. A pair of wings open behind him.

The pigeon runs around Sewer City. It destroys buildings and aims straight for the food reserves. Randall chases after it.

RANDALL (CONT'D)  
Hey! Shoo! You good for nothing  
pecker!

The pigeon pauses and turns towards Randall. He freezes. Randall sees himself in the reflection of the pigeon's eye as it prepares to pierce right through him. Just before the pigeon strikes, the Food Fetcher's claw clamps onto the bird neck.

Randall looks up and sees none other than Leo in the machine's cockpit. Leo retracts the claw with the pigeon and shoots them back up through the sewer hole. He closes the hole with the claw on its way back down.

Randall rushes over to Leo and pushes him out the way. The Food Fetcher sputters. It falls apart. Randall holds its remains in his hands. Leo coughs on the ground.

RANDALL (CONT'D)  
This is *your* fault, Leo! I should  
have never let you near my machine.

THE RAT KING  
No, I shouldn't have let you run  
that thing.

Randall looks at The Rat King. His garments are torn and he's covered in soot.

THE RAT KING (CONT'D)  
Look at what remains of Sewer City!  
Half of our food reserves, gone! As  
far as I'm concerned this is no  
fault of Leo.

RANDALL  
B-but I-

THE RAT KING  
I've heard quite enough of your  
incessant chatter.  
(MORE)

THE RAT KING (CONT'D)  
I could have you executed for all the damage and turmoil you have caused, but Leo plead your case well. Therefore, until you can replace the food you've lost, you are hereby exiled from Sewer City!

RANDALL  
What about all the things Leo said about me being an asset? You can't just banish me!

EXT. THE SURFACE - THE ENTRANCE OF SEWER CITY - LATER

Randall is flung outside into pouring rain with a small box of his possessions. The entrance shuts.

He slowly picks up his belongings off the ground and sees a old, yellow newspaper.

ANGLE ON: The King Endorses Leo the Pack Rat as Randall's Successor

Randall tears the newspaper apart and stomps the shreds into the asphalt.

RANDALL  
That good-for-nothing, repulsive pack rat! I swear if I ever get my hands on him...

A nearby bush rustles. Out pops Leo.

LEO  
Hi Rand-

Randall jumps at Leo and pins him to the ground. Thunder booms in the distance.

RANDALL  
Give me one reason I shouldn't tear you to shreds right now.

LEO  
Ok, I'm sensing you may be a bit... miffed with me-

Randall squeezes his arm.

LEO (CONT'D)  
Ow! But I'm here to help you, honest!

RANDALL

Oh really? Just how do you plan on doing that, huh?

LEO

I want to show you how I bring back so much food to Sewer City!

Randall's grip loosens.

RANDALL

(skeptical)

Why?

LEO

I feel bad, okay? Earlier, you were right. It was my fault the pigeon came and it's my fault you're kicked out now. The least I could do is try and help you repay your food debt.

Randall lets Leo go. Leo holds his arm and winces.

RANDALL

I don't want or need your help repaying my debt. I'll figure things out just fine. Always have, always will.

LEO

Please, let me do this one thing for you. We can tell the King it was all your idea, I swear!

Randall looks Leo up and down. Water splashes around them from cars zipping by, but Randall's gaze does not falter.

RANDALL

Fine. Try not to give me a reason to change my mind.

Leo smiles and leads the way. Randall does not reciprocate, but follows. The two run along the side of the road.

EXT. THE PLACE WHERE THE CAT RESIDES - MIDNIGHT

Leo and Randall scale up the side of a building. They cross a plethora pipes and balconies, all the way up to the window of a small studio apartment.

Leo continues forward to a small hole in between the window frame and brick wall of the building.



Randall follows close behind but notices a long strand of black fur on the outside of the window frame.

INT. THE PLACE WHERE THE CAT RESIDES - CONTINUOUS

Leo lands from the hole in the wall with a light patter. Randall thuds on the hardwood floor. He recovers and looks up to find a pair of yellow, glowing eyes looking at him from down the hallway. He blinks and the eyes disappear.

Leo climbs up to the rafters. Randall follows behind. Once in the rafters, Leo sits down. Randall sits across from him.

RANDALL  
(whispering)  
Ok, I've followed you here. What's  
this hidden secret of yours?

LEO  
You're sitting in it. This  
apartment is my revolutionary  
tactic for where I get all my food.  
Now, you can use it too! Plus, you  
could maybe stay here since y'know  
you're exiled and all.

Randall doesn't respond. He squints at Leo and turns away. Leo shrugs and gets comfy. The two fall asleep.

INT. THE PLACE WHERE THE CAT RESIDES - MORNING

Leo shakes Randall awake. Randall almost yells at him but Leo covers his mouth and points down.

A HUMAN (20s, dressed in business attire) walks out of the bedroom to the front door. The creak of the door echoes throughout the apartment followed by a slam.

LEO  
I hope you're ready because I'm  
gonna teach you how to steal from a  
human's stash.

Randall rolls his eyes.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

-- Leo leads Randall into the kitchen and hops down to the cabinets. They're full of snacks, treats and cat food, but are protected with mouse traps.

-- Leo teaches how to avoid getting snagged by mouse traps.

-- Leo and Randall stuff their arms with food. Randall attempts to take some of the cat food, but Leo slaps his hand.

-- The two leave and bring the food through an air vent on the floor and leave all of it in a pile.

-- Leo uses a piece of gum to mark their goal of how much food to steal. Randall looks worried but Leo pats his back.

-- The two continue to steal food and their pile gets bigger and bigger.

-- Their food pile is one score away from reaching the wad of gum.

-- In order to reach it, Randall sneaks a handful of cat food and puts it in the pile.

END MONTAGE

INT. THE PLACE WHERE THE CAT RESIDES - NIGHT

The two climb up from the air vent and screw it shut. They head back to the rafters.

LEO  
You are really getting good at  
this, Randall.

RANDALL  
I have always been a fast learner.

LEO  
I can see that!

Their liveliness dies down as they get ready to sleep. Randall fiddles with his paw.

RANDALL  
Hey, Leo, I have a question. Why  
did you feel the need to help me in  
the first place?

LEO  
Hmm... that's a good question. Can  
you keep a secret?

RANDALL  
Literally who would I tell?

LEO  
Ha, fair point! I guess it started  
when I was a kid.

INT. PACK OF PACK RATS - DAY - (FLASHBACK)

A YOUNG LEO walks around. Shoved to the ground by LARGER PACK RATS. Each one holds some shiny object.

LEO (V.O.)  
In my old colony, our worth was  
entirely based on who had the  
shiniest object, so we'd fight and  
sabotage each other all the time to  
stay on top. It was vicious.

Young Leo watches in horror as OTHER PACK RATS tear each other apart over petty riches.

LEO (V.O.)  
Too vicious, so I left. I didn't  
have anywhere to go and I somehow  
stumbled across Sewer City.

EXT. SEWER CITY - EVENING

Young Leo walks up to the entrance of Sewer City.

INT. SEWER CITY - CONTINUOUS

Young Leo is awestruck by the environment. He walks slowly to take it all in and talks to many of the LOCALS.

LEO (V.O.)  
Everyone there was so kind and  
cooperative. A complete culture  
shock, but I liked it. Liked it so  
much that I adopted the philosophy.

INT. THE PLACE WHERE THE CAT RESIDES - NIGHT - (BACK TO PRESENT)

Randall leans back on a support beam as Leo continues.

LEO  
The philosophy that us, rats, have  
to stick together! So here I am,  
paying it forward. Anyway, all that  
reflecting has me tired. Night,  
I'll see you in the morning!

Randall doesn't respond. He stares at Leo as he sleeps. Randall is backlit by the moonlight as he heads down to the air vent. As he unscrews the vent, he's met with the pair of glowing eyes, except this time, Randall can see the whole figure.

MIDNIGHT, a black cat with yellow eyes and black pupils, places its paw down on Randall. Randall squirms under the pressure.

MIDNIGHT

Tsk, tsk. Y'know I don't mind when the human's food is stolen. They hardly ever notice. If it were up to them, the same would go for my food too, but unfortunately for you, I notice when things go missing.

Midnight presses harder onto Randall's body.

MIDNIGHT (CONT'D)

At least now, you get to pay what you owe.

RANDALL

(weakly)

Wait... what if... I told you... I could give you... another rat?

MIDNIGHT

I'd be intrigued but wonder what's the difference between that one and the one I'm about to eat right now.

RANDALL

The rat... it's much sweeter... more tender than I am... You'd feel more full...

Midnight salivates and releases her pressure off of Randall.

MIDNIGHT

When could I receive such a delicacy?

RANDALL

Tomorrow morning.

MIDNIGHT

You have piqued my interest. However, I do warn you. Do not skimp out on me or else I'll have two rats for dinner.

Midnight disappears into the darkness. Randall picks himself up and paces the room for a moment. He looks up and sees the metal of a mouse trap glimmer in the moonlight.

INT. THE PLACE WHERE THE CAT RESIDES - AFTERNOON

Leo wakes up. He sits up slowly and yawns.

LEO  
Good morning, Randall!

No Randall. Leo tilts his head. He searches for him by the cabinets, but Randall isn't there. Leo climbs down the rafters to the air vent. Randall watches him from underneath the bed.

As Leo walks, a mouse traps flies at him from under the bed. Leo's ensnared by the trap. He screams in pain. Randall emerges from the bed but ignores Leo's cries. He climbs through the hole underneath the windowsill.

Midnight emerges from further back in the apartment. She approaches Leo.

EXT. THE SURFACE - ENTRANCE OF SEWER CITY - LATER

Randall travels groggily with a big bag of all of his and Leo's stolen goodies.

RANDALL (V.O.)  
Leo's story taught me an important lesson. He would always be the better man. Better methods for getting food, better motives, better heart, better *everything*. Because of that I realized, I'd never be able to earn back my respect in Sewer City by outdoing him. I needed to get rid of him. Now, nothing's stopping me from climbing back to the top.

Randall places down his bag. Knocks. The entrance opens.

THE END.