

The Race

by Chris Tse

THE COMMENTATOR



* NON-SPEAKING PARTS

SCENE. A swimming pool, which is decorated for a birthday party. The animals are warming up and chatting excitedly about the race.

THE COMMENTATOR. Welcome, everybody, to this great swimming race to mark His Majesty the Emperor's birthday! And what a marvellous day for it, too. We have some great racers competing for a magnificent prize.

RABBIT. What's the prize?

SNAKE. Maybe it's sssssomething we can eat.

RABBIT. I hope it's carrots.

OX. Carrots? Don't be ridiculous! It will be something valuable.

SNAKE. Sssssomething golden? Sssssomething shiny?

RABBIT. A golden carrot!

OX. Whatever it is, I'm going to win it.

THE COMMENTATOR. You sound very confident, Ox. How have you all been preparing for this race?

RABBIT. I've been practising blowing bubbles in the water.

***RABBIT** demonstrates by huffing and puffing. The other animals move away and cover their faces.*

OX. Unlike some of you, I've been doing some **real** training – one hundred laps every day.

SNAKE. That seems a bit excessssssive.

THE COMMENTATOR. But it might be what gives Ox the upper hand – or upper hoof, I should say!

***RAT** appears, out of breath.*

TIGER. You're cutting things fine, Rat.

RAT. I tried to get here as fast as possible. Have I missed the race?

DRAGON. No, we're still waiting for the Emperor to arrive.

RABBIT. Where's Cat?

RAT. I haven't seen Cat since last night.

TIGER. But weren't the two of you travelling here together?

RAT (*nervously*). She was still fast asleep when I left this morning. I'm sure she'll be here any second. I'd better go and change into my swimming togs.

RAT *runs off to change.*



DRAGON. Rat is acting a little suspiciously.

TIGER. You're right. Something doesn't add up.

RABBIT. Why didn't he wake Cat?

TIGER. He knows how important this big race is.

DRAGON. I smell ... a rat!

SNAKE. Sssssabotage!

OX. It doesn't matter. You snooze; you lose. Anyway, I don't think a teeny, tiny rat could ever win this race.

RABBIT. Rats can be very fast when they need to be.

OX. There's no way a rat can beat me. I'll cross that finish line before Rat has even started.

RAT *returns, wearing his swimming togs.*

THE COMMENTATOR. Rat, you're the smallest creature here. Some might say you're the underdog – or the under-rat – of the race.

RAT. Well, I've trained hard, and I think my size might actually help.

THE COMMENTATOR. Some of the other animals don't consider you a threat. What do you think your chances are today?

RAT. I think I've got just as much chance as any of them.

THE COMMENTATOR. Marvellous! Well, best of luck to you, Rat. Now, I've just received word that His Majesty the Emperor is about to arrive.

THE EMPEROR *arrives, waving to the crowd. The animals cheer and greet him with birthday wishes.*

THE EMPEROR. Thank you, you're all too kind. Welcome everyone to the great race! I know the competitors have all been working hard for this moment, and the winner will be rewarded with a great and wonderful prize.

THE COMMENTATOR. The race is about to start. There is a lot of tension and excitement in the air!

*The animals line up along the start line. Most are looking nervous. **OX** and **DRAGON** appear confident.*

THE EMPEROR. Get ready, everyone! On your marks ... Get set ... Go!

*The animals leap into the pool. **OX** takes the lead, followed closely by **TIGER** and **RABBIT**.*



THE COMMENTATOR. What a dramatic start to the race! Ox has taken the lead, but it looks like Tiger and Rabbit – yes, Rabbit – aren't far behind.

THE EMPEROR. How exciting!

RABBIT. This is harder than I thought!

OX. Give up now, Rabbit – this is my race to win!

TIGER. Don't be so sure, Ox!

RAT pulls a length of rope from his swimming togs and lassoes **OX**'s tail.

SNAKE. Wait – what'sss Rat doing?

DRAGON. He's using Ox to pull him along!

THE COMMENTATOR. We have an interesting development. It looks like Rat is hitching a ride with Ox.

SNAKE. That'sss cheating!

THE COMMENTATOR. Your Majesty, is this allowed?

THE EMPEROR. This is my race, so I say ... I'll allow it!

As the animals reach the finish line, they begin to move and talk in slow motion.

DRAGON. What's happening?

SNAKE. Why are we all moving ssssoooooo sssslloooooowly?

OX. Because this is more dramatic!

OX is out in the lead with **RAT** trailing behind, holding on to the rope. **RAT** uses the rope to pull himself closer to **OX**.

*As **OX** nears the finish line, **RAT** leapfrogs over **OX** to take the lead.*

THE COMMENTATOR. What's this? Unbelievable – Rat has just leapt over Ox to take the lead!

OX. Nooooo!

RAT crosses the finish line, winning the race, followed by a dejected **OX** and then **TIGER**.



THE EMPEROR (*shaking RAT's hand*). Congratulations, Rat!
For your cunning method of winning the race, I award
you ... first place in the Chinese zodiac.

RAT (*pausing for a second*). Ha ha, good one! What's the real
prize?

THE EMPEROR (*frowning*). That is the prize. Why? Don't you
like it?

RAT (*hurriedly*). Of course, your Majesty. What a great
honour. Thank you so much!

CAT *appears, looking very angry.*

CAT. You – Rat! Why didn't you wake me up? I missed the
race because of you!



RAT. I ... I ...

RAT *darts off.*

CAT. Come back here, you sneaky Rat!

CAT *chases after RAT.*

TIGER. I don't think Cat is going to forgive Rat in a hurry!

THE COMMENTATOR. Well, what an exciting way to end this
broadcast. It's been a great day! Congratulations, racers,
and to everyone at home – thanks for watching!

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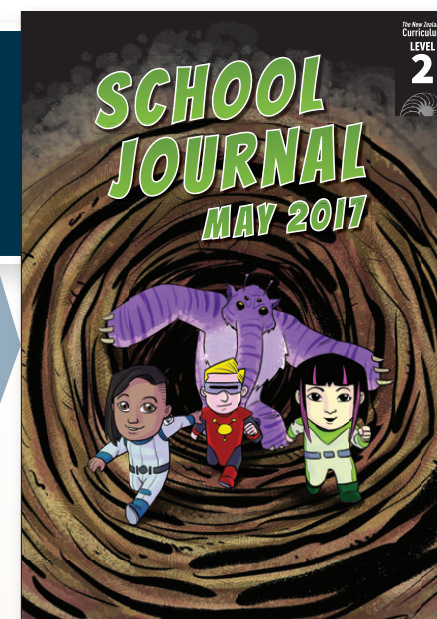
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