

The Quest for the Red Boat

by
Willard

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FADE IN:

EXT. DRAINAGE PIPE - DAY

BILLY (14) and KIM (8), wearing a Pikachu backpack, walk along a rocky drainage ditch. Above them, cars whoosh by along a highway.

KIM

You know what mom will do if she catches us?

BILLY

You want to get your stupid boat or not?

KIM

It was a present!

BILLY

Then quit your whining.

(points)

There it is. Just like I said.

Water trickles from a ten-foot diameter tube protruding from the embankment beneath the highway. A rusty grate bars the way.

KIM

How are we supposed to get in?

BILLY

You promise you won't tell?

Kim crosses her heart. Billy pulls one side of the grate. It groans open.

KIM

How did you--?

BILLY

Jake and the gang showed it to me. It's cool, you'll see.

Kim eyes the blackness within. Billy pulls two flashlights out of his jean jacket and hands her one.

KIM

I'm not going in there.

BILLY

We have to use a buddy system.

He hands her a shiny whistle.

BILLY
Blow this if you need help.

Kim blows the whistle hard: TWEEEEEEEEET!

Billy cringes and scowls.

KIM
I had to make sure it works.

INT. DRAINAGE PIPE - DAY

Billy leads the way through the pipe. The flashlight barely penetrates the foreboding darkness as he steps through shallow water.

Kim follows right on his heels, sometimes stepping on them. Her light flits around the corrugated pipe.

KIM
Ohmygod, what is that?

Billy follows her light to a small mound of twigs and leaves. He opens his mouth to answer--

TWEEEEEEEEET!

BILLY
Stop! It's just leaves and twigs!

KIM
Are you sure?

Billy trudges on. Kim follows, her light fixed on the mound until she passes it.

INT. JUNCTION - DAY

Billy stands at a 4-way junction, reading a plaque. He shines his light left where the tunnel bends.

TWEEEEEEEEEEEEET!

BILLY
What now?!?

KIM
I think I saw a bat.

BILLY
Bats don't live in sewers.

KIM
Oh. Do rats?

BILLY
If you see a rat, you can whistle.

KIM
No, I like rats.

Confounded, Billy shakes his head and trudges into the left tunnel.

INT. TUNNEL

The water is deeper in this tunnel, flowing along a channel between two walkways.

From around the bend ahead--

TWEEEEEEEEET!

BILLY (O.S.)
Really?

KIM (O.S.)
Sorry. I thought it was a blobby thing.

A moment later, a plastic bag floats into view.

EXT. STREET - MANHOLE COVER - DAY

A car zips past. From the manhole cover--TWEEEEEEEEEEEEET!

The driver slams on the brakes, looking for the traffic director.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

An ELDERLY MAN (75) walks with his GRANDDAUGHTER (5). She skips along holding a red balloon. As they pass a gutter--

TWEEEEEEEEET!

The girl jumps, letting go of the balloon. She clutches the Elderly Man's leg and stares at the gutter.

INT. SPILLWAY - DAY

Five pipes pour water into a basin before it flows through a spillway to filter out large objects. Light trickles in from a manhole cover atop a long ladder.

Branches, plastic junk, a hubcap, a boot, and other debris clog the grates.

Kim surveys the graffiti sprayed on every wall.

KIM

Is that what you do down here?

BILLY

Shut up and look for your boat. It has to be here somewhere.

Their lights play across the detritus. As the light leaves one refuse pile, the pile *moves*.

Kim's light stops on a long tube.

KIM

(whisper)

Is that a snake?

Billy sees the whistle approach her lips. He holds her hand still.

BILLY

No! It's okay. It's just a rubber tube or something. Not a snake.

KIM

Not a snake?

BILLY

Yeah. Look, I'll show you.

Kim puts the whistle in her mouth. Billy cringes. She motions for him to go on, whistle ready.

Billy moves to the tube and kicks it. It flicks back at him!

The far end of the rubbish rises and wetly sloughs away. A humongous rat, as large as a wolf, bares its yellow teeth at Billy.

Billy scampers back, falling at Kim's feet.

BILLY

What is that?!?

The rat advances, red eyes gleaming in the dim light.

BILLY
Kim! Blow the whistle!

The whistle drops next to him.

KIM
Oh my god, it's so CUTE!

Kim bounds forward. The rat rears up in surprise.

KIM
Hey, big fella! You must be
hungry! I have crackers and cheese
and...hey, what else do rats eat?

Billy's gone. From the tunnel they came from--

TWEEEEEEEEET! TWEEEEEEEEEEEEET! TWEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEET!

Kim pulls a small plastic container from her backpack and squats down. Opening it reveals the promised crackers and cheese. The rat's huge nose twitches and comes closer.

KIM
Hold on, mister rat!

She puts a cracker on her hand, then a slice of cheese and holds it out. The rat's mouth works frantically as it inches closer, slobbering, and then CHOMP! The snack is gone, leaving her hand untouched.

She sees a red plastic boat attached to the rat's back.

KIM
You found my boat! Thanks...um,
I'm going to call you Mr. Furry.
Come on, Mr. Furry! Let's go find
Billy!

Kim leads the way back, holding a piece of cheese behind her. The rat slinks after her, nose twitching.

FADE OUT.

THE END