

Priscilla's Paw de Deux

Sharon Jennings

Linda Hendry, Illustrator

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Priscilla is an alley rat who dreams of dancing, but her home is so small that she can't pli? without bumps and bruises, so she needs to find a new place to live. Her friend Rosy helps her look for a new home in the city, where they find Madame Genevieve's Dance Studio. Priscilla realizes that she doesn't have to move: she can take dance lessons at the studio after hours.

Practicing her lesson, Priscilla notices a dark shadow looming over her—a large cat! Initially frightened, Priscilla gets mad and declares, “no flea-bitten, mangy fur-ball of a watchcat is going to stop me from dancing.” Priscilla decides to practice before the cat arrives, and her plan almost succeeds. The cat shows up, but to Priscilla's surprise, he begins to dance, too. It turns out that Percival the cat is scared of rats, and he only wants to dance. Priscilla and Percival decide to dance together, ending with a recital for their friends—cats on one side of the auditorium, rats on the other.

The illustrator has won numerous awards, both in Canada and the United States, for illustrating and writing children's books. Her pictures in this book, while a bit dark, are full of details that add interest to the story. The “best table” at Tony's Trattoria, for example, shows the rats enjoying a meal under one of the restaurant tables, complete with human legs, and a rat gnawing on the shoestring of one of the shoes, along with the pasta on his plate. These big city rats are well dressed, too.

The author holds a Master's Degree in English from York University in Toronto. After a stint as senior editor of a primary language arts program, she began writing her own stories, inspired in part by the exploits of her three young children. She and Hendry collaborated on a previous adventure of Priscilla and Rosy, and this is another successful effort.

Priscilla's skinny legs get a real workout in this interesting look at the world of ballet. Her friends demonstrate five ballet terms at the end of the book. Fans of Priscilla and Rosy won't be disappointed, and readers who haven't met these two friends before will be charmed.

TRACY FITZWATER (November / December 2002)

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