

# **RATS**

## **By Jerry Rabushka**

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## CHARACTERS

HOST – Host of the talk show Radio Science, either male or female, who tries to be upper crust and educated despite the goings on of the guests.

KEVIN CARPENTER and CHARMAINE CARPENTER - Husband and wife scientific research team, currently not on the best of terms.

## SETTING

*RATS!* takes place on the studio of a radio talk show. The HOST is seated center, and KEVIN and CHARMAINE are on either side of him. They should pantomime talking into microphones.

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## RATS!

by  
Jerry Rabushka

HOST: Welcome to Radio Science – the show where we take a topic that's above your head... and keep it there. A show for people who are – generally speaking – too smart for *you*. Our guests on this edition are husband and wife team Kevin and Charmaine Carpenter. A couple whose study of rats is second to none. Today, they share with us some of their latest and most fascinating discoveries about this all too pervasive rodent.

CHARMAINE: (*as if SHE's been hurt repeatedly, but taking KEVIN by surprise*) My husband.

HOST: Yes? We can start with him.

CHARMAINE: That's my discovery. He's a rat!

HOST: Now, Charmaine...

CHARMAINE: (*bitter, and as if SHE's said this 1000 times before*) I did all the work, he took all the credit. Then he shared it with Karen Hopper.

KEVIN: That's not true.

CHARMAINE: *What* isn't true? I fed them, watered them, cleaned up their poop, injected them with huge quantities of unknown drugs, and took the fall in front of that animal activist group. The only discovery you made was Karen Hopper. Repeatedly.

KEVIN: (*to HOST*) She kept them from me.

HOST: The rats?

CHARMAINE: I had to keep them from *Karen*. I was guarding my research. If she'll steal my husband, heaven knows what she'll do with my rats.

KEVIN: She's possessive. She didn't trust me with-

CHARMAINE: Karen? Smart move on my part.

KEVIN: With the rats.

CHARMAINE: I couldn't leave him alone with them. He would take them to the park and hide them in old ladies' purses.

KEVIN: She never paid me any attention. (*bitter*) She was too busy with her work.

HOST: That's what we like. A woman driven.

KEVIN: Driven mad with jealousy.

HOST: Driven by her craft – by her love of science.

CHARMAINE: Oh, there was plenty of chemistry, apparently, but very little science.

HOST: (**trying to keep on topic**) Tell me, Mrs. Carpenter! Tell me the processes, the hypotheses, the hours of study, and how it felt when your discoveries all came together, eventually to be compressed into one single and wonderfully debatable theory.

CHARMAINE: Easy! (**HOST is eagerly anticipating something scientific, but is disappointed**) I hypothesize he's cheating, so I check his emails. I theorize he's throwing out evidence, so I rumble through his garbage... hours of study.. oh, and greasy leftovers... and the process? Checking up behind his back. Now, how did it feel? (**getting more into it, standing up with exhilaration**) Mix together pain, vindication, vengeance, a touch of mortified exhilaration, plus a dab of salt in an open wound, and ladies and gentlemen, you have modern science!

HOST: (**pulling CHARMAINE back to the microphone**) All that mixed together! Sounds explosive.

CHARMAINE: Atomic!

KEVIN: (**remembering back**) It blew up in *my* face.

HOST: Well, obviously Mrs. Carpenter was too busy checking up on your philandering to devote any time to scientific research. (**giving him more attention**) Mr. Carpenter, what discoveries do *you* have to share?

KEVIN: (**thinks, with a smile**) Karen Hopper is a remarkable woman!

CHARMAINE: Shut up, Kevin.

KEVIN: Let me finish!

CHARMAINE: *You* finish? *We're* finished!

HOST: Can we just get *started*?

KEVIN: Karen Hopper knows rats.

CHARMAINE: I'll say. She studied the biggest.

KEVIN: Charmaine hid them from me, but Karen and I went to the university lab and chose new rats more conducive to experimentation. Rats who took an interest.

HOST: Please, go on.

KEVIN: Only rats that consented to being a "lab rat" were allowed into the experiment. The rest? (**as if talking to a rat**) Sorry, but you can't help advance the cause of human knowledge until *you* learn to adopt a positive attitude.

HOST: How could you tell?

KEVIN: That's the magic of Karen Hopper! She has a way. (**CHARMAINE is getting angrier by the moment**) She talks to them. She understands them. (**KEVIN is very excited**) She gets inside their minds to see which ones want to aid humanity in the name of science.

CHARMAINE: Bunk. Rats have no emotion. They are eating and pooping machines. They've no appreciation or understanding for any quality remotely human. Except backbiting, perhaps.

KEVIN: And you're better, how? You laughed off humanity like you were Genghis Khan at a peace rally.

CHARMAINE: Humanity is for philosophers. I have no use for it. I'm a scientist!

KEVIN: I wasn't "seeing" Karen Hopper. We were just studying rats. How romantic *is* that?

HOST: Finally! Some scientific debate! Can studying that with no emotion lead to the development of new emotion in those conducting the study? Particularly if it takes the emotion out of them to study it?

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