

Cowgirls Don't Ride Zebras

by

Chris Leyva

Based on the book *Cowgirls Don't Ride Zebras*
written and illustrated by Chris Leyva

Original music by Russell Boiarsky

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Cowgirls Don't Ride Zebras

a play

COWGIRLS DON'T RIDE ZEBRAS received its professional premiere produced by CATCO-Phoenix, Inc. in Columbus, Ohio in March 2017. The production was directed by Joe Bishara. Original music composed by Russell Boiarsky.

CHARACTERS

PENNY, a young girl who LOVES books

CASSANDRA, a young girl who can make a dress out of newspapers

JACK, a young boy whose loyalty to his friends is as great as his love of trains

ANIMALS and OTHERS

(can be doubled)

FLAMINGO

OSTRICH

POLAR BEAR

KANGAROO

CHEETAH

HIPPO

LION

VELOCIRAPTOR

ELEPHANT

ZEBRA

VELOCIRAPTOR TRAINER

WAITER

SETTING

A Zoo

PRODUCTION NOTES

Have fun! The genders of the animals can be swapped as needed. In the premiere production, we used some of the actors as “zookeepers” to help assist the animals with props.

INTRO

Mysterious space sounds and music. Dramatic. Suddenly, someone enters in a makeshift spacesuit, wearing a fish bowl on her head as her helmet. She makes Darth Vader breathing sounds as she slowly makes her way downstage.

We hear a woman's voice, echoing over us.

WOMAN

(offstage)

She explores the far reaches of space.

(Pause)

Who is she?

CASSANDRA

(offstage)

Penny? Is that you?

The girl stops. Then, the lights reveal a normal day as the space music and sounds stop as the girl pulls off the fish bowl. This is Penny.

Two other kids, Jack and Cassandra, are revealed, staring at their friend.

PENNY

Hi, Cassandra! Hi, Jack!

JACK

What are you wearing, Penny?

PENNY

I'm an astronaut!

She puts the fish bowl back on her head and poses as if she has just landed on a new planet.

CASSANDRA

Is that a fish bowl?

PENNY

Yes?

JACK

Astronauts don't wear fish bowls.

Penny takes off the fish bowl.

PENNY

I know, but it's all I had. Sometimes, you have to work with what you've got! But I'm not an astronaut anymore!

CASSANDRA

No?

Penny pulls out a book.

PENNY

I have a new book!

JACK

(a little worried)

Oh, boy.

PENNY

(Singing)

I have a new book
I have a new new new new book
I'm gonna open it up and jump right in
Because a brand new adventure is about to begin
I have a new book

JACK AND CASSANDRA

(Singing)

She has a new new new new book
And whatever it is, we know what she will do

PENNY

(Singing)

I'm going to explore, you are coming, too
I have a new book
I have a new new new new new new new new book!
Let's take a look!

Penny shows the book to her friends.

PENNY (CONT'D)

It's a book about cowgirls! I'm going to be a cowgirl! Look at this. Doesn't this look like fun? I'm going to need your help.

CASSANDRA

I would love to, but I have--

PENNY

You would love to! Great! Thank you for being willing to help.

(To Jack)

What about you, Jack? You're going to help, right?

JACK

I think I hear my dad calling.

(pretending to be his dad, calling)

Jack, it's time to come home!

(back to his voice)

I have to go!

Penny pulls out a lasso and catches Jack as he tries to get away.

PENNY

Cowgirls know how to use a lasso.

CASSANDRA

That's impressive.

JACK

Most impressive.

CASSANDRA

What else?

Penny opens her book.

PENNY

A cowgirl's job is to herd cattle, taking them long distances, and--

JACK

Excuse me.

PENNY

Just a minute. Usually you'll find cowgirls in the western states, due to the climates and--

JACK
Excuse me!

PENNY
What is it?

JACK
Could you please untie me?

PENNY
Oh! Of course! Sorry.

Penny unties Jack.

PENNY (CONT'D)
Where was I?

CASSANDRA
Cowgirls live out west.

PENNY
The desert. So, they have to wear hats, big hats to shield them from the sun.

JACK
Where are you going to get a big hat?

PENNY
I'm not sure.

CASSANDRA
I can do it!

Cassandra rushes off. She returns with a newspaper.

JACK
A newspaper? What are you going to do with that?

CASSANDRA
Just watch.

Cassandra folds the newspaper excitedly and creates a perfect cowgirl hat.

PENNY
Wow! That's perfect!

Cassandra places it on Penny's head.

CASSANDRA

I can also make a dress!

She rushes off to make a dress, but before she can, Jack stops her.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

No dress?

Jack shakes his head; she shrugs.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Oh well. What's next, Penny?

PENNY

A kerchief for the dusty journey.

JACK

I think I have something.

He pulls out a kerchief from his sleeve.

PENNY

Great!

She grabs it, but more and more come out like a magic act.

CASSANDRA

What's going on?

PENNY

Have you been practicing magic tricks?

JACK

Not tricks. Illusions.

PENNY

Well, I'll just use one. Thank you.

Jack helps her tie it around her neck.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Now, I need to rustle up some cows to herd.

She twirls her lasso and looks at Jack.

JACK

I don't want to be a cow. I've already been tied up today.

CASSANDRA

I'll be a cow. I'd make a wonderful cow.

She clears her throat and moos beautifully.

PENNY

You have a very melodious moo.

CASSANDRA

You should hear my rooster call.

PENNY

So, now I need one last thing. A horse.

She looks at Jack.

JACK

Oh no, don't look at me. I'm not going to be a horse.

PENNY

It's pretend.

JACK

Cowgirls don't ride friends. If I have the choice between being a horse or being a cow, I'd rather be a cow.

PENNY

Great! I'll have two cows! But I still don't have a horse.

CASSANDRA

I have an idea! You can use a car!

PENNY

A car?

CASSANDRA

A car has horse power. It's better than a horse.

JACK

Don't use a car. It'd be better to use a train.

CASSANDRA

What? Why?

JACK

Trains are called "iron horses." And a train is way better than a car.

CASSANDRA

No, it's not.

JACK

Yes, it is.

CASSANDRA

Cars are sleek and beautiful.

JACK

Trains are powerful and majestic.

CASSANDRA

(Indicating the audience)

Well, let's ask them.

She asks the audience.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

(To the audience)

Who thinks a fast, slick car is better than a silly, old train?

JACK

(To the audience)

Who thinks that a strong, powerful train is better than a boring, old car?

CASSANDRA

See? They think a car is better.

JACK

Your ears aren't working, they obviously think trains are better.

CASSANDRA

Car!

JACK

Train!

CASSANDRA

Car!

JACK

Train!

PENNY

Stop it, you two. Cowgirls don't ride cars. Or trains. It has to be an animal.

JACK

Well, if you want an animal, there's one place to go.

ALL THREE

The zoo!

PENNY

Well, let's go! Cowgirl Penny is off to find her trusty steed! Come on, cows!

*She rushes off. Jack and Cassandra "moo" after her.
Cassandra stops.*

CASSANDRA

A car would be better.

She follows them off, mooing her beautiful moo.

.2. AT THE ZOO

Penny, Cassandra, and Jack arrive at the zoo.

CASSANDRA

Here we are.

JACK

Lots of animals to choose from.

PENNY

I don't know where to start.

A flamingo enters and stands on one leg.

JACK

How about that?

CASSANDRA

A flamingo?

JACK

It could work.

PENNY

It's worth a try.

Penny goes to the flamingo.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Hello, my name is Penny.

FLAMINGO

Hello, Penny.

PENNY

I'm a cowgirl. Would you be willing to let me ride you?

FLAMINGO

Ride me?

PENNY

A cowgirl needs to ride a horse to herd her cows.

FLAMINGO

But I'm a flamingo.

PENNY

I know. But I can't find a horse. Maybe a flamingo will be better than a horse.

FLAMINGO

Where are the cows to herd?

PENNY

My friends are the cows.

Jack and Cassandra moo.

FLAMINGO

(To Cassandra)

You have a very melodious moo.

CASSANDRA

Thank you.

FLAMINGO

(To Jack)

Keep practicing.

(To Penny)

Since you have the cows, I suppose we could give herding them a try.

Penny hops onto the flamingo.

FLAMINGO (CONT'D)

Are you ready?

PENNY

Oh yes! Let's go herd that cattle!

FLAMINGO

Here we go!

The Flamingo doesn't move.

PENNY

The cows are getting away! Let's go!

FLAMINGO

Yes, let's go!