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Cloud Catchers

A One-Act Play by David Cronin

DAN: If only those clouds would come over here. But they stay way over there. Hello, I'm Dan, the owner of this huge sheep station. It's bigger than a whole city. And you know why we need those clouds? Yes, it hasn't rained here in years. I wish I could blow them over here. Hey, maybe if we all blow together.

(The children blow Dan backwards)

Whoa! I know, let's scare them over here. All together, 123 – Oh no, you scared me! We used to have lots of sheep, but today we're sending off our last ones to market. I've even forgotten what lots of sheep sound like.

(The children tell him)

Yippy and Yappy, the station's sheep dogs stand beside him and nudge his legs.

DAN: Yes fellas, I know. You want to get on with it, eh? Everyone this is Yippy, and this is Yappy. Say hello. OK, let's go and round them up.

Yippy and Yappy leap and bark in the wrong direction.

DAN: Oh, you can hear the school bus coming? Julie must be on her way home.

Julie enters

DAN: Hello Julie!

JULIE: Hi dad. Hello Yippy, hello Yappy!

The dogs leap into Julie's arms for a hug.

JULIE: Yes, I've missed you too! You know dad, coming home just now I thought I heard lots of sheep. Its weird without them, isn't it?

DAN: Yes, it is.

JULIE: Yippy and Yappy are the best sheep dogs in the state. They are so bored without work with.

DAN: I know. But we've still got these last few to load up and send off.

JULIE: I'll do it. Come on Yippy and Yappy, I want you to move those sheep. Girls and boys, you can help too. We call 'Way back!'

*Julie shows the hand signals that go with the calls.
Children repeat the commands. The two dogs run forward, barking their orders.*

JULIE: Get in behind! Get up and over!

The dogs spring up over the backs of the children.

JULIE: Way back! Get in behind! Get up and over!

SHEEP STATION WORK SONG

*INVITE AUDIENCE TO JOIN IN ACTIONS AND REPEAT CHORUS
DAN AND AUDIENCE REPEAT EACH PHRASE:*

JULIE: *CHORUS: Way back, get in behind, get up and over
Way back, get in behind, get up and over*

DAN: *Then somebody beats out an old bush tune*

JULIE: *And we dance and sing by the light of the moon*

DAN: *Or we chase rabbits in the light of a spot*

BOTH: *In a night that's cold as the day is hot*

CHORUS: Way back... REPEAT CHORUS: Way back...

DAN: Well done. Now wash your hands, dinner should be soon.

*Julie exits
Dan removes the last of their sheep offstage, returns to hang them up as clouds.*

DAN: With no work for dogs to do, I may have to sell them too. Our water tanks are almost dry. I'll give those clouds one last try.

*Julie enters as a coy CLOUD TEASE, wearing a cloud as a 'hat'.
She joins in the chorus with the audience.*

RAIN RAIN SONG

DAN: *Come over here, clouds, don't be shy
Why do you keep passing us by?
We need you more than we did last year
So please clouds, come over here*

CORRESPONDING ACTIONS

<i>CHORUS: And bring us rain, rain, beautiful rain</i>	<i>MAKE 'RAIN' SLOWLY DOWN</i>
<i>To make everything start growing again</i>	<i>WEAVE ARMS UP AGAIN</i>
<i>Bring us rain, rain, beautiful rain</i>	
<i>To make everything start growing again'</i>	

Dan brings in two more clouds (or two more CLOUD CHARACTERS enter).

CLOUDS' SONG

CORR. ACTIONS

<i>We're a cloud of water, we sail across the sky</i>	<i>PARACHUTE 'WAVE'</i>
<i>Full of tiny droplets too small for the eye</i>	
<i>When you see us coming, big, black and grey</i>	<i>HANDS TO EYES</i>
<i>You know that it's likely, Crikey, rain!</i>	<i>UMBRELLA OPEN 2 X</i>
<i>CHORUS: We're the river we're the ocean</i>	<i>MIME WAVE</i>
<i>Then we rise and we're the rain</i>	<i>CIRCLE ARMS</i>
<i>We fall and get together, then we do it all again</i>	
<i>We're in every living thing, in the sink and in the sea</i>	
<i>And when you have a drink, we're in you and me</i>	
<i>On the ground we run together, become a flowing creek</i>	<i>SHOULDERS</i>
<i>Gouging holes in rocks, making valleys deep</i>	<i>WAIST; 'DIG'</i>
<i>Along the river bed, we go for a ride</i>	<i>CANOE PADDLE</i>
<i>And rush into the ocean, spreading far and wide</i>	<i>BREAST STROKE</i>
<i>CHORUS: We're the river we're the ocean...</i>	
<i>Covering this planet, salty oceans stretch</i>	<i>'RAP' MOVE - 2 X 2</i>
<i>But there's only very little water fresh</i>	<i>REDUCE 'LARGE' TO</i>
<i>Fresh Water to drink little have we got</i>	<i>LITTLE - SLOW & FAST</i>
<i>It's our precious treasure, so care for every drop</i>	<i>WHISPER / SHOUT</i>

CHORUS: We're the river we're the ocean...

Dan takes a breath, as if to smell whether the hot dusty air has changed.

He lets it out with a sigh. Dan again addresses the coy CLOUD TEASE:

DAN: *I realize you have traveled far, and how important you are
So please clouds, don't disappear, come on, come over here*

CHORUS: *And bring us rain, rain, beautiful rain
To make everything start growing again.
Bring us rain, rain, beautiful rain
To make everything start growing again'*

The coy cloud exits.

DAN: Well, without rain we will have to sell those dogs.

He checks the water tank.

DAN: We've barely got enough water for us.
It'll be hard for Julie when the dogs go.
But it's best for them, they'll be much happier with sheep to chase.
I'll call Honest John right now. I know he's interested in buying them.

Dan takes out his phone and exits, dialing. Julie enters and hears her father talking.

DAN (offstage): So you're happy to take both the dogs? Good, well I'll see you soon.
Bye John.

JULIE: Did dad say he's going to sell Yippy and Yappy? Oh no! How can I come home without you to meet me? And who's going to play with me?

She feels sad, and even a bit angry. Yippy and Yappy come to nuzzle, and lick her face.

JULIE: We can't let this happen.

The dogs whine as if to cry along with her, but wag their tails as well. Julie has to laugh. Yippy and Yappy yelp.

JULIE: What's that, fellas? Dad wants those clouds? Yes I know, I wish I can reach them. If I have a long enough ladder I can. But I've got jobs to do. Come on, help me water the veggie garden.

She fills the watering can from the tank, and walks over to the gate.

Yippy and Yappy: Whoof! Whoof!

JULIE: What's up? Oh, I forgot to turn the tap off? You are so right, Yippy and Yappy. Every drop of water counts, thank you.

*She returns to tighten the tap. They walk up and down the rows of vegetables
(The children in the audience front rows).*

JULIE: Here's my carrots, and cucumber, and celery, (etc...)

SAVE WATER SONG

Dan enters and joins in the chorus.

CORR. ACTIONS

JULIE: *I save water in the garden, I love my plants to grow
but when they've had enough to drink I turn off the hose*

CHORUS: *I turn the tap off when they've had a drink
I save water when I stop and think*

*TWIST WRISTS
TURNING TAPS*

DAN: *I save water in the bathroom when I brush my teeth
I always turn the tap off to use just what I need*

CHORUS: *I turn the tap off, when I brush my teeth
I save water when I stop and think.'*

BRUSH TEETH

JULIE: *I save water when the tap drips, I always turn it off
I twist my wrist and turn until the drip, drop stops*

CHORUS: *I turn the tap off, when I've had a drink
I save water when I stop and think.'*

TWIST WRISTS

*Yippy and Yappy run to the fence and start barking again.
They seem to be barking at the distant clouds.*

JULIE: Yes, Yippy and Yappy, we need those clouds, I know.

But the dogs only bark louder.

JULIE: What? They're not clouds? Oh, yes of course!
You don't know what clouds are. I just remembered.
It hasn't rained here since before you were born.
You've never seen rain falling, have you?

The dogs return to her heels. They listen with heads tilted to the side.

JULIE: You've never played in puddles. You've never even felt the rain.
So if they're not clouds, what are they for you?

Julie kneels down beside the dogs to cuddle them.

JULIE: What do you see? Are they fairy floss? No?
Or maybe they are fluffy, soft pillows? No? Cotton wool?

Yippy and Yappy bark back and forth from Julie to the clouds.

JULIE: I know! They look like the sheep you round up every day!
Is that right? That's what you do best, bringing in the stray sheep.
Hey, imagine if you can round up those stray clouds.'

Yippy and Yappy bark even louder now.

JULIE: What, you can? Well, if anyone can catch them, you can.
You're our last chance. You'll make dad so happy! OK. Are you ready?

Julie gives each dog a farewell hug, and opens the gate. She swings her arm to make the signals.

JULIE: Way back, get in behind, get up and over – Come on everybody,
let's send them off. Count down: 5-4-3-2-1 - ready, steady, go!

Julie waves as the dogs dash off side by side. Yippy and Yappy exit. She watches until they disappear. But Julie sees a man approaching.

Honest John with a weather-beaten face and hat enters (e.g. Dan with a Commedia mask and different hat, or extra actor).

HONEST JOHN SONG

H JOHN: *G'day, I'm Honest John, hello
Dan, your dad, he just phoned
I'm here to buy the sheep dogs, it's time to hand them over*

JULIE: *Well, there aren't any...*

H JOHN: *So times are tough, he says he'll sell
Yippy and Yappy, they're valuable
And I've agreed to pay him well, it's time to hand them over*

JULIE: *They're going to help the station...*

H JOHN: *They are the best dogs, I know
They've won prizes at the show
So my business will grow and grow, it's time to hand them over
Where are they now, can you see?
Hand them over now to me
Those two dogs, where can they be?
It's time to hand them over'*

JULIE: *You don't listen, they've gone.*

H JOHN: *Gone? You mean sold already? Now wait on. Didn't I see two dogs running off? So that's your game! I'll get you back, me buccos! Have you seen the two dogs?*

The dogs are hiding behind the water tank and windmill. They peek out on one side and Honest John is prompted by the children to go that way.

The dogs appear on the other side, and keep switching back and forth, HJ switches. Eventually Honest John runs off chasing the dogs and exits.

Enter Yippy and Yappy trotting and keeping their eyes on the clouds ahead.

Invite children to stand and join in song and actions.

(Musical percussion instruments can be shared)

Y & Y: We're trotting along the track, to bring the stray clouds back
We will bring, we will bring, we will bring them back :ll

YIPPY: Those clouds don't seem to be getting any nearer.

YAPPY: You're right. Let's go faster.

They increase their pace to a run.

Y & Y: We're running along the track, to bring the stray clouds back
We will bring, we will bring, we will bring them back. :ll

YAPPY: We still aren't getting any closer. Let's run faster.

Their paws hardly touch the ground, almost flying over it.

Y & Y: We're running very fast, to bring the stray clouds back
We will bring, we will bring, we will bring them back.

YIPPY: [pants]: This is too tiring. Let's rest and go on later.

YAPPY: We need some shade. What's the best thing for shade?

Children suggest various things.

YIPPY: A tree, yes, but I don't see any.

YAPPY: Well, we'll have to make do with what we have.

The 4 triangles from the windmill are rearranged into the trunk.

YIPPY: But there's still no shade.

YAPPY: This looks like the right shape. Let's see what's on the other side.

Yappy gets a large cloud, turns it around and hangs it up to make the top of the tree.

YAPPY: I'm going to sleep. Have a good rest, Yippy.

Crocodile's head appears around the tree.

J CROC: Hello there!

YAPPY: Hey, can you please keep quiet Yippy?

YIPPY: It wasn't me!

J CROC: Hello there!

*Yappy glares at Yippy, who is looking up into the tree.
They both stare up into the branches of the tree at the crocodile.*

J CROC: Hello, I'm Jock the croc.

YIPPY: Er, hello. I'm Yippy, and this is Yappy.
B-But don't you live in a river?

J CROC: Aye, that's true, you're right. But you see, the sun dried it up.

Y & Y: The sun dried it up?

J CROC: Yes, one by one, every drop.

CROCODILE SONG

Sun character enters, dances and joins in chorus.

J CROC:

CORR. ACTIONS

CHORUS: *The sun dried it up, sip, sip, sop
The sun dried it up, every drop :ll*

*SIP THROUGH STRAW
PINCH UPWARDS*

J CROC: *I was lying like you in the sun
And having a swim when I felt like one
But when I went to jump in the river this time
I landed on the bottom, on this bottom of mine*

CHORUS: The sun dried it up, sip, sip, sop, the sun dried it up, every drop

J CROC: *The sun made the water so hot
So hot it got into tiny drops
The sun sucked the droplets into the sky
So I climbed up to find where they hide*

CHORUS: The sun dried it up, sip, sip, sop, the sun dried it up, every drop

J CROC: And that's how there's no water left in my river.

YAPPY: Why don't you ask the one above you?

J CROC: Who, what?'

*Jock twists around to look up.
Koala enters in tree (or is already there).*

J CROC: Argh! There's a big furry monster in my tree!

YIPPY: That's not a monster, Jock, that's a koala.

J CROC: A what? Oh, hello Koala. Do you know where any water is?

Koala doesn't respond. Jock sees her munching leaves.

J CROC: Koala doesn't drink water. Koala gets all she needs from the gum leaves.

YAPPY: Well, what about that bird in your tree? Listen to him!

Kookaburra enters.

KOOKA: Hoo hoo hoo ha ha ha, hoo hoo hoo ha ha ha.

Y & Y: We love laughing too!

They both join in with Kookaburra.

LAUGH LIKE A KOOKABURRA SONG

INVITE AUDIENCE TO STAND AND JOIN IN SONG, ACTIONS AND SOUNDS

CORR. ACTIONS

ALL: Give a giggle /// and a wriggle ///

*You can hoot like an owl, 'HOO, HOO'
Or cackle like a crow, 'AWRK, AWRK''
But we all know the best way to go*

*FINGERS AS OWL EYES
HANDS AS BEAK
EACH MOVE SIDE TO SIDE*

CHORUS : Laugh like a kookaburra (Repeat 3 x)

*FLAP WINGS
LAUGH LIKE A KOOKABURRA*

*With a smile we begin
Stretch it wide, it's a grin
Some people snicker /// some people snort ///
Some people howl /// and some people roar ///*

CHORUS: Laugh like a kookaburra 3 x.

REPEAT VERSE ONE: Give a giggle... + CHORUS

KOOKA: I need a drink. Would you like one too?

YIPPY Oh, yes please. Do you know where some water is?

KOOKA: I'm a kingfisher; of course I do. Come along with me. Ha ha hoo hoo.

Kookaburra flies around, with the dogs running along behind.

Y & Y: We're trotting along the track, following Kookaburra

We will bring, we will bring, we will bring them back.

YAPPY: We're climbing higher and higher, Yippy.

YIPPY: Yes, it's getting steeper. And look! There are the clouds, up at the top!

Honest John enters.

H JOHN: So here you are. Got you at last!

Honest John blocks their path.

H JOHN: Come here, me little buckos. I've been following you.

Honest John tries to grab their collars. But the dogs dart out and nip at his legs.

H JOHN: Ouch! Hey, I've caught you, and now you're mine. Ow! Stop that.

Honest John turns his back on the dogs, but Yippy and Yappy nip at the seat of his pants.

H JOHN: Ouch! Hey, hold on. I mean, let go! Wait a minute.
What are you two doing up here on my mountain, anyway?

Y & Y: We're going to catch the clouds.

H JOHN: The clouds? Oh, so it's rain you want.

YAPPY: We've never seen it rain.

H JOHN: Eh? You've never seen it rain? What never, ever?
Is that right boys and girls?

YIPPY: That's right.

H JOHN: Well, well. You know, I've dug for diamonds, searched for gold
and I've drilled for oil, but there's one thing more precious
than all of those, isn't there? Yes, water.

Honest John bends down to pat the dogs. They watch warily.

H JOHN: Look, I'll help you catch those clouds. They often gather here.
See how they slide up the slope to the top? Come on; come with me.
Hey, are these people with you?

YIPPY: Oh yes, they are.

H JOHN: Well alright, let's go.

*Honest John rearranges the set. The 4 triangles make one large triangle, a mountain
He gets the puzzle muddled and the children correct him.*

MOUNTAIN MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL THEME

*Honest John slides the clouds up the side of the mountain to meet together
The dogs remember what to do. They all sing:*

Y & Y: Way back, get in behind, get up and over!

*Yippy and Yappy chase the clouds around. They corner the clouds on either side.
The clouds move off. (They can be carried by audience volunteers in a 'parade').
Yippy and Yappy weave their way back down the mountain with the clouds,
Honest John follows.*

Y & Y: We're trotting along the track, to bring the stray clouds back
We will bring, we will bring, we will bring them back.

*Across the plain they run, past Jock's tree and back to their sheep station.
Julie enters, the dogs leap into her arms. She hugs them and they lick her face.*

JULIE: ‘Oh, Yippy and Yappy! Yes, I’m glad you’re home. I’ve missed you too!

H JOHN: Looks like everybody’s happy now. And you’ll be needing these dogs.
I think they belong here, don’t you? So I’ll be off. Bye everyone.

Honest John exits.

JULIE: And what’s this? The clouds are here. Did you do that? Did they really?
Wow, dad will be so happy. Let’s give three cheers for Yippy and Yappy.
Hip hip hooray! 3 x.

Dan enters.

DAN: What’s all the racket, Julie? Oh, so you’re back, you little runaways.
Where have you been?

JULIE: No dad, wait. Look over here.

DAN: Well, goodness me. You’ve done it! You’ve brought the clouds back.
Well done!

*Dan picks up a cloud and squeezes, ‘squirting’ himself.
The clouds bump into each other.*

DAN: I’d better save every drop in the tank.

He puts them safely away. They look up. Julie laughs with delight.

JULIE: Look, dad. Lightning, flish, flash!

DAN: And listen to that thunder, crish, crash!
Woh, here it comes!

Yippy and Yappy lift their noses to sniff the strange, damp smell.

JULIE: Yippy and Yappy, here comes your first rain.
Come on, let’s make it together.
Pitter patter, pitter patter.

ACTIONS: FINGERS, THEN HANDS; PAT BODY; STAMP FEET.

*Start softly whispering, get louder. Make tiny drops, bigger drops, huge ones.
Soon a steady stream is falling.
Julie, Dan, Yippy and Yappy dance and laugh, splashing in the new puddles.*

ALL: Splish, splash, flish, flash, crish, crash!

JULIE: I've got one more surprise for you.

She brings out a rainbow. They hold it and with a 'parachute' move make it rise.

REACH FOR A RAINBOW SONG

AUDIENCE STAND AND JOIN IN CHORUS AND ACTIONS

AUD. REPEAT EACH LINE

ALL:

CORR. ACTIONS

*CHORUS: Reach for a rainbow
High and wide
Reach for a rainbow
Climb, climb, climb*

*ARMS STRAIGHT UP HIGH
ARMS STRAIGHTOUT TO SIDE
ARMS STRAIGHT UP HIGH
CLIMB WITH ARMS AND LEGS*

*What a lovely ribbon
To reach the other side
Reach for a rainbow
Slide, slide, slide*

*ROTATE ARMS IN FRONT
REACH FROM SIDE TO SIDE
ARMS STRAIGHT UP HIGH
SPIRAL DOWN*

JULIE: *Red and orange, yellow and green*

BOTH: *In a rainbow all the colours can be seen*

DAN: *Blue and pink, purple, violet*

BOTH: *Can you see your favourite colour yet?*

CHORUS: Reach for a rainbow...

REPEAT VERSE: Red and orange...

*CHORUS: Reach for a rainbow...
Reach for a rainbow!*

THE END

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