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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Mr. Crow goes and tells

Mr. Coon and Mr. Possum lived near each other in the woods, and one day they decided to give a supper the first bright moonlight night.

"It will be much easier for us to provide the supper together," said Mr. Coon, "because we are bachelors and we can help each other."

But the real reason was that Mr. Coon knew that Mr. Possum had some new tin spoons and all the Coon family love shiny things. He thought he might be able to slip one or two tin spoons into his pocket and never be found out, because there would be so many guests that Mr. Possum would not know which one to suspect when he found it out.

Mr. Possum was delighted to do as Mr. Coon suggested, and they began making out a list of guests to be invited. Of course there was Mr. Fox and Mr. Squirrel and Jack Rabbit and Mr. Owl, who were all bachelors like themselves; so they decided they would not ask any of the married folks, but call it a bachelor party.

"Old James Crow, who lives in the tree near me, will think he should be invited, too, I suppose," said Mr. Possum; "but he is such a quarrelsome old fellow I hate to ask him."

"No, don't ask him," said Mr. Coon, thinking of Mr. Possum's new tin spoons and remembering that the Crow family were very like his own in the matter of

liking bright and glittering things. "He will never know we have a party. He goes to bed at sunset, you know." So it was decided that old James Crow was not to be invited and that only the bachelors of the wood were to be asked.

A few nights after this the moon shone brightly and over to Mr. Possum's house they all went.

Now it happened that they began to sing, when they all sat down to the table, that they all were jolly good fellows and something about being single was a life of bliss, and another about poor married man, and they made so much noise that they awoke old James Crow, who was sound asleep in his bed.

"What is that noise?" he said, jumping up and listening; but when he heard it again old Mr. Crow got out of bed and put his head out of the window.

"Oh, we are jolly bachelor boys," came from Mr. Possum's house and floated right up to Mr. Crow's window.

"Something is going on that I do not know about," said old Mr. Crow, pulling in his head and taking off his night cap. "I must find out what it is. I should say that the noise came from Mr. Possum's house. I'll go right down there and see."

And he did, arriving just as the supper was being put on the table; and while Mr. Crow did not go to the door, he had no trouble at all in looking in through the shutters, for old Mr. Crow was very clever in the art of spying.

There was a big fat turkey, but Mr. Crow did not care about that—that is, he was not crazy about turkey. He

could eat it if there was nothing better, but when the big dish of green corn was brought in Mr. Crow began to think he had been slighted and that he should have been asked to the party.

Jack Rabbit stood up in his chair so he would be tall enough to be seen and held up a crisp radish. "Here is to our hosts, Mr. Coon and Mr. Possum," he said, taking a bite of the radish.

"So," thought old Mr. Crow, "Mr. Possum is giving this supper and he is a neighbor."

Then somebody began to sing, "We are the bachelors of the wood; we wouldn't be married if we could."

And then Mr. Crow was good and mad. "Giving a bachelor party, are they," he thought, "and they left me out. I am a bachelor just as much as any of those fellows. I'll pay them back for slighting me if it takes me a hundred years."

Just then the ice cream was brought in and Mr. Crow espied the new tin spoons and his eyes shone with longing to have one or two or three or as many as he could get, but how could he get them? If only he could scare them and make them all run he would get them easy enough.

Then an idea came to Mr. Crow and he flew away. "I'll have those spoons before I sleep again to-night, and get my revenge, too, or my name is not James Crow," he said, and out of the woods he went.

Mr. Crow flew straight for Mr. Man's farm, and you know crows can fly very straight, it is said.

When he arrived it was all still; not a sound could he hear but Mr. Dog breathing very hard, but it was Mr.

Dog that Mr. Crow wanted, so it was easy to find him by following the noise.

Mr. Crow tapped on the side of Mr. Dog's house, for his door was open and out bounded Mr. Dog with a growl.

"Hush! don't make a noise," said Mr. Crow. "Are you free to run over to the woods? Yes, I see you are," he said, looking at Mr. Dog's collar and seeing there was no chain fastened to it.

"Do you want some fun?" he asked Mr. Dog.

Mr. Dog began to jump about and wag his tail. He was always ready for fun, he told Mr. Crow. "But where is it at this time of night?" he asked.

"You come with me," said Mr. Crow, "and if I do not show you more sport in a minute than you ever had in an hour hunting with Mr. Man, I'll eat all the spoons."

"What spoons?" asked Mr. Dog, standing still and dropping his tail. "I don't want to run after spoons."

"Oh, I did not mean spoons at all," said Mr. Crow. "I should have said I would eat my hat, but I promise you there will be fun and plenty of it. Mr. Coon and Mr. Possum are giving a supper in the woods, and their guests are Mr. Squir"—

"Tell me no more; I do not care about the guests.

Hurry! Hurry! Where are they?" said Mr. Dog, dancing about so fast that Mr. Crow could not turn quick enough to keep up with him.

"Come along and I will show you," he said, and off he flew, keeping close to the ground so Mr. Dog could follow him.

The supper was still going on when they arrived; Mr. Crow flew to a tree close by, for he knew Mr. Dog could

manage alone now that he had shown him the place. Mr. Dog did not stop to knock; he bounded in through the window, taking off a shutter as he went. Out of the back door, out of the front door, and out of the windows went the guests and their hosts, and after them, barking, went Mr. Dog.

"They are jolly fellows, all right, now," croaked Mr. Crow, as he watched them out of sight, "and now my party begins."

Mr. Crow went in and took all the spoons from the deserted supper table and carried them off to his house. He hid them under the bed and then he got in and went to sleep. He did not even bother to go over to see Mr. Dog the next day, so little did he care how the chase came out. He knew Mr. Dog did not catch Mr. Possum or Mr. Coon, because he saw them both the next day; but that was all he knew and all he cared, for those were the two he had in his plan for revenge. The next day when Mr. Coon was out—and Mr. Crow made sure he was not only away from home but out of the woods—Mr. Crow took all the spoons but one under his wing and went over to Mr. Coon's house and got in the cellar window.

He went upstairs and put those spoons between Mr. Coon's feather beds. Mr. Coon had two fat feather beds, always having plenty of feathers on hand as he did. Then Mr. Crow went over to Mr. Possum's house and found him sitting in the doorway, looking very sad. "What is the matter with you, Friend Possum?" asked Mr. Crow in the most friendly tone he could master. "Don't you feel well?"

"I have lost all my new tin spoons," said Mr. Possum. "Some one stole them, I am afraid." He did not want Mr. Crow to know about the party, so he did not tell him any more.

"That is too bad," said Mr. Crow. "Were they anything like those Mr. Coon has? I saw him cleaning some very handsome ones this morning as I passed his window."

"I did not know he had any spoons," said Mr. Possum.



"He has never told me he had any tin spoons. Are you sure you saw them?"

"Just as sure as I am that I see you now, Mr. Possum," said Mr. Crow. "But, of course, they would not have anything to do with your spoons. I was wondering if

his were like yours. If they are I could take a look at them, and then if in my travels I saw any like them I would know they were yours and bring them back to you. I am very clever at finding things that are lost."

Mr. Possum did not seem inclined to say anything, and Mr. Crow went on: "Why don't you come along with me to Mr. Coon's house and get him to show us his spoons. I am anxious to help you if I can. I know how I should feel if I lost some handsome tin spoons."

This seemed to make Mr. Possum interested, so he walked along with Mr. Crow, who was so anxious to get to Mr. Coon's he could hardly keep from flying. Mr. Coon had just returned when they arrived and was unlocking his door.

"I lost all my new tin spoons last night," said Mr. Possum. "Mr. Crow said he saw you cleaning some, and if they were like mine he would like to take a look at them and then he might find mine; but I did not know you had any spoons."

Mr. Crow held his head very high and looked sideways while Mr. Possum was talking, but out of the corner of one eye he could see Mr. Coon, and he saw him turn around and look at him very angrily.

"Mr. Crow said I had some tin spoons?" he said. "He has sharper eyes than I thought and I always knew he had sharp eyes, particularly for bright things, but how he could see spoons in my house is more than I can explain, for I have no spoons."

"Well, of course I do not wish to cause any trouble," said Mr. Crow, "but I certainly saw you cleaning tin spoons. Anyway, it will be easy to prove you have no spoons in the house by letting us search, and of course you rather would, Mr. Coon, for that will clear you from suspicion; that is, if we do not find them."

"Go ahead and look," said Mr. Coon, opening the door and standing aside for them to enter. "I am glad I did not take one of those spoons," he thought to himself, for he remembered that he had intended to do so if Mr. Dog had not come in so unexpectedly.

Of course Mr. Crow held back and let Mr. Possum do all the hunting until they came to Mr. Coon's bedroom, and then he said: "I have always heard that stolen goods are often hidden between beds. We might look there first."

Of course they found the spoons, and when Mr. Coon saw them he almost fell over. "Who put them there? I did not," he said.

"Of course you didn't," said Mr. Crow, with a smile that plainly said: "You are a story-teller."

"There is one spoon missing," said Mr. Possum, who had been counting the spoons. "I had a dozen and there are only eleven here."

"He probably ate his breakfast with that one," said Mr. Crow. "Better give it up, Mr. Coon; we have caught you and there is no use denying it now."

"Go ahead and find it if you can," said Mr. Coon. "I did not take those spoons and I do not know where the other spoon is, even if you do, Mr. Crow."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Mr. Crow, beginning to hop about.

"I mean that you seemed to be pretty sure where those spoons were," said Mr. Coon, "and if I am not mistaken about the history of your family, they are noted for their love of shining things fully as much as ours."

"Come along," said Mr. Crow to Mr. Possum; "we have found your spoons, and that is all I wanted. I cannot bother with this bad fellow, who now wants to make out I took the spoons; but that is always the way with thieves—they blame it on some one else if they can."

The more Mr. Coon thought about those spoons the more certain he was that Mr. Crow had something to do with their being found in his house; so one night about a week after he went to Mr. Crow's house and watched. By and by he saw the light go out, and he thought,

after all, he was not to catch Mr. Crow that night; but just as he was going away he saw a tiny flicker of light at another window. Up went Mr. Coon and peeked in. And what do you think he saw? Mr. Crow sitting at a table eating bread and milk with Mr. Possum's missing tin spoon.

It did not take Mr. Coon long to run to Mr. Possum's house and bring him back with him and show him his spoon, and then right through the window they jumped and grabbed Mr. Crow by the nape of his neck. And how they did shake the old thief! They did not stop to talk to him.

"He is not worth the breath we should waste," said Mr. Coon, "and I feel sure this place is not a place that agrees with Mr. Crow's health. He will move away, I am sure, where the climate will better agree with him."

The next day there was a to-let sign on the house where Mr. Crow had once lived, and the bachelors all met that night to discuss the breaking up of the party and to hear about the tin spoons and how they were found.

"And it is my opinion," said Mr. Coon, "that if some one were to ask Mr. Dog he would tell us that Mr. Crow went and told him about our party."

"But who will ask Mr. Dog?" asked Jack Rabbit.

No one seemed to be interested enough to ask Mr. Dog, and they never knew for sure whether he told or not, but Mr. Coon always said he did. At any rate, the wood folk were rid of old Mr. Crow, and they were glad of it.