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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## How the Mice Caught The Cat

"It is very strange to me," said Gray Mouse to his brother Whiskers, "that Cat lets us run all around this pantry and never so much as makes a try at catching us."

"I suppose she thinks there are traps enough around here to do that," said Whiskers. "There is one on the shelf, and one on the floor back of a barrel, and one in the closet under the shelf. But of course we do not mind those; we have seen too many to be caught by a mere trap."

"Yes, that is the very thing that makes me think it is strange that Cat does not do her duty and try to catch us," replied Gray Mouse.

"I am going to watch," he continued, "and find out, if I can, why she lets us run around here. Here she comes now. Run behind that dish; I'll get into this basket of eggs. Now keep your eyes open."

Cat walked into the pantry with slow steps, sniffed the air and looked about; then she rubbed against some paper bags on the floor, and one mouse who was behind a box ran into his hole; but Cat pretended not to notice him.

She walked over to the shelf where a bowl of cream sat and jumped up; then she waited a minute as if listening, but no one came, and Cat put her head into the bowl and did not remove it until half of the cream

was gone. Then she gently tipped over the bowl and the rest of the cream ran over the shelf.

Cat then helped herself to a piece of meat that was on a plate and jumped down.

Whiskers came out from his hiding place when she was gone and ran over to the basket of eggs, where Gray Mouse was hiding.

"She ate the cream and took a piece of meat; we have seen her do that before," he said.

"Go back and keep quiet," replied his brother. "I think we shall learn her secret if we wait long enough."

Gray Mouse had just time to hide as the door opened just then, and the maid came in.

"Goodness me!" she exclaimed as she saw the overturned bowl, "those mice are so thick about here that they tip over things as well as eat everything in sight; they have even carried off that piece of meat left from breakfast. I'll have to get some more traps. Poor Cat can't catch all of them."

"What did I tell you?" said Whiskers when the maid had gone. "That sly Cat lets us run about so we will be blamed for everything that is eaten and all that happens in this pantry, while all the time she is getting all the cream she wants, and other things, too.

"Now they will put a new lot of traps in here and no knowing what terrible death awaits us. I wish we could do something to pay her back."

"I do not see that we are any worse off than if she were trying to catch us all the time," said Gray Mouse.

"It is either Cat or new traps."

"Yes, that is true," replied Whiskers, "but we know about the old traps and can keep away from them, and all we have to do with Cat is not to run about when she is in the house.

"If she did not eat the cream and other things for which we have no taste at all the little we eat would never be noticed. As it is, she is playing it on us, and she gets all she wants to eat at our expense."

One warm day not long after this, Cat came into the pantry and looked around. A bowl of warm milk had been put by the window a few minutes before, and near it was a dish of soup.

Cat jumped up and helped herself, and by the time she had finished the soup, she was sleepy, so without going out of the pantry, she stretched herself out on the floor and soon was fast asleep.



Gray Mouse and Whiskers were running about a few minutes after and suddenly came upon the sleeping Cat. "Now is our chance," whispered Whiskers to Gray Mouse. "See that trap right beside her tail?"

"Yes, I see the trap, but what can we do to her with a trap she could not get her paw in, let alone her

head?"

"We do not need her head, foolish fellow," said Whiskers. "All we need is her tail."

Gray Mouse watched his brother, not having the least notion of what he intended to do to the sleeping Cat. "O-o!" he spoke, as he saw Whiskers go up to Cat and reach for the end of her tail.

This frightened Whiskers so that he ran behind a barrel until he was sure Cat did not awaken.

"If you can't keep quiet, you better go home," he said, in an angry whisper. Gray Mouse did not answer his brother, but he kept at a safe distance from Cat and watched Whiskers.

This time Whiskers took the end of Cat's tail and poked it into the trap.

It was all done in a second, snap went the trap.

Whiskers ran and Cat jumped. And Cat began to meow as well as jump, for fast on the end of her tail she carried the trap.

Whiskers and Gray Mouse rolled over with laughter to see Cat try to rid herself of the trap, but it was of no use, and out she went into the kitchen, the trap banging after her as she went.

How she was freed from the trap Whiskers and his brother never knew, but they did know that Cat was very careful not to swing her tail about as she walked for the next few days. And they heard the maid say to her, "If you had done your duty, Mistress Cat, instead of stealing the cream, you would not have gone to sleep in the pantry and been caught in the trap. Serves you right."