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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## The Rented House

"I am tired of living behind blinds and under the eaves of houses," said Mrs. Sparrow to her husband one morning. "Why don't you get a nice home for me in a tree, like the Mr. Robins do for their families?"

As everyone knows, Sparrow fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers never do any work if they can avoid it. This particular Mr. Sparrow was no exception to the rule. He hopped about on the top of the fence, standing first on one foot and then on the other, trying to think of a good excuse for not getting his wife a nest in a tree.

"John Sparrow," said his wife, "stand still a minute. You make my head dizzy hopping about like that."

Mr. Sparrow stood still and blinked his bright little eyes.

"Now answer me," said Mrs. Sparrow. "Why don't you build a house in a tree instead of living in such tucked-away places as you do?"

"How about renting a house, my dear?" asked Mr. Sparrow. "We can see if we like living in a tree before building. We must consider the cat as well. She could never reach us behind a blind or under the eaves. But if you insist, my dear, I will look around today and see what is available."

"I wish you would," said his wife. "I promise you a good dinner of crumbs, and perhaps I might find a fat worm if you manage to find a nice house."

Mr. Sparrow spread his wings and flew away. He knew his wife would keep her end of the bargain, and Mr. Sparrow loved to eat.

"I have found the perfect place for us," he said, returning an hour later to where they lived behind the blind. "It is at the top of a big tree near a house, and I saw the maid throwing crumbs out in the yard."

"I don't believe those crumbs were any bigger than these," said Mrs. Sparrow proudly, showing three large cake crumbs to her husband.

"No, they weren't," confessed Mr. Sparrow, devouring them as quickly as possible. "But you better start packing, my dear. You never know about a rented house.

Someone might take it before we get there."



The nest Mr. Sparrow found was a deserted nest left by another bird when it was time to fly south. But that made no difference to the Sparrow family. All they cared about was taking possession. They were ready to fight for

anything they wanted and usually succeeded.

"John, you have good taste. This place is high and airy, and no cat can reach us on this slender limb. I'm sure we'll be happy and comfortable here," said Mrs. Sparrow.

"I wish there were a few leaves on this tree, though. It might get chilly at night," Mr. Sparrow commented. "Oh, John, you always think of unpleasant things!" said Mrs. Sparrow. "Just the other day, I saw Mr. Robin. You know the grass is starting to turn green. Spring will be here soon, maybe it's already here."

"I've seen snow almost in springtime before. If it did snow, it would be far more comfortable behind a blind or under the eaves than up here," Mr. Sparrow argued.

"Snow," scoffed Mrs. Sparrow, tossing her head. "The sun would melt it in no time. Feel how hot it is now."

"That may be," said Mr. Sparrow, "but at night, there is no sun, and the snow would be a very cold covering if it started snowing."

Mrs. Sparrow only laughed at her husband's concerns and busied herself with arranging their new home.

That night, as the sun disappeared, Mrs. Sparrow shivered a little and snuggled up close to her husband. She said nothing and soon both of them were fast asleep.

In the middle of the night, Mrs. Sparrow suddenly woke up with a start. She felt cold, as if a cold, wet blanket covered her instead of her warm feathers.

She got up and shook herself. "Oh, John, something terrible has happened! Wake up!" she cried. "I'm freezing."

Mr. Sparrow opened his eyes. It was dark, but he didn't need light to understand what had occurred.

"It's snowing, my dear," he said. "We'll have to huddle together until morning. Don't worry; nothing will happen to us."

"We'll freeze, John Sparrow, I know we will," Mrs. Sparrow sobbed, clinging to her husband. "Oh dear! Will morning ever come?"

At the first ray of light, Mrs. Sparrow hopped out of her new home and spread her wings. "Come, John," she said. "Let's go back to our old home behind the blinds. I don't understand how anyone with sense can live in an open house like this. It'll be full of snow if the storm continues."

"You're right, my dear, as you always are," wise Mr. Sparrow replied. "If we hadn't been in the nest, it would be completely filled with snow."

After this incident, Mr. Sparrow never heard another word about houses in trees. He felt that a little inconvenience had brought him much comfort for the rest of his days.