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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Tale of Fatty Coon: Fatty Coon Plays Robber (16/20)

After Fatty Coon played barber-shop with Jimmy Rabbit and his brother it was a long time before he met them again. But one day Fatty was wandering through the woods when he caught sight of Jimmy. Jimmy dodged behind a tree. And Fatty saw Jimmy's brother peep from behind another. You see, his ears were so long that they stuck far beyond the tree, and Fatty couldn't help seeing them.

"Hello!" Fatty called. "I'm glad to see you." And he told the truth, too. He had been trying to find those two brothers for weeks, because he wanted to get even with them for cutting off his moustache. Jimmy and his brother hopped out from behind their trees.

"Hello!" said Jimmy. "We were just looking for you." Probably he meant to say, "We were just looking AT you." He was somewhat upset by meeting Fatty; for he knew that Fatty was angry with him.

"Oh, ho! You were, were you?" Fatty answered. He began to slide down the tree he had been climbing. Jimmy Rabbit and his brother edged a little further away.

"Better not come too near us!" he said. "We've both got the pink-eye, and you don't want to catch it."

Fatty paused and looked at the brothers. Sure enough! their eyes were as pink as anything.

"Does it hurt much?" Fatty asked.

"Well—it does and it doesn't," Jimmy replied. "I just stuck a brier into one of my eyes a few minutes ago and it hurt awful, then. But you'll be perfectly safe, so long as you don't touch us."

"How long does it last?" Fatty inquired.

"Probably we'll never get over it," Jimmy Rabbit said cheerfully. And his brother nodded his head, as much as to say, "That's so!"

Fatty Coon was just the least bit alarmed. He really thought that there was something the matter with their eyes. You see, though the Rabbit brothers' eyes were always pink (for they were born that way), he had never noticed it before. So Fatty thought it would be safer not to go too near them.

"Well, it's too bad," he told Jimmy. "I'm sorry. I wanted to play with you."

"Oh, that's all right!" Jimmy said. "We can play, just the same. I'll tell you what we'll play. We'll play—"

"Not barber-shop!" Fatty interrupted. "I won't play barber-shop, I never liked that game."

Jimmy Rabbit started to smile. But he turned his smile into a sneeze. And he said— "We'll play robber. You'll like that, I know. And you can be the robber. You look like one, anyhow."

That remark made Fatty Coon angry. And he wished

that Jimmy hadn't the pink-eye. He would have liked to make an end of him right then and there.

"What do you mean?" he shouted. "Robber nothing! I'm just as good as you are!"

"Of course, of course!" Jimmy said hastily. "It's your face, you know, That black patch covers your eyes just like a robber's mask. That's why we want you to be the robber."

Fatty had slipped down his tree to the ground; and now he looked down into the creek. It was just as Jimmy said. Fatty had never thought of it before, but the black patch of short fur across the upper part of his face made him look exactly like a robber.



"Come on!" said Jimmy. "We can't play the game without you."

"Well—all right!" said Fatty. He began to feel proud of his mask.

"What shall I do?"

"You wait right here," Jimmy ordered. "Hide behind that tree. We'll go into the woods. And when we come back past this spot you jump out and say 'Hands up!' ... You understand?"

"Of course!" said Fatty. "But hurry up! Don't be gone long."

"Leave that to us," said Jimmy Rabbit. He winked at his brother; and they started off together.

Fatty Coon did not see that wink. If he had, he wouldn't have waited there all the afternoon for those

Rabbit brothers to return. They never came back at all. And they told everybody about the trick they had played on Fatty Coon. For a long time after that wherever Fatty went the forest-people called "Robber!" after him. And Jasper Jay was the most annoying of all, because whenever he shouted "Robber!" he always laughed so loudly and so long. His hoarse screech echoed through the woods. And the worst of it was, everybody knew what he was laughing at.