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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Tale of Fatty Coon: Fatty Meets Jimmy Rabbit (13/20)

For once Fatty Coon was not hungry. He had eaten so much of Farmer Green's corn that he felt as if he could not swallow another mouthful. He was strolling homewards through the woods when someone called to him.

It was Jimmy Rabbit.

"Where are you going, Fatty?" Jimmy Rabbit asked.

"Home!" said Fatty.

"Are you hungry?" Jimmy Rabbit asked anxiously.

"I should say not!" Fatty answered. "I've just had the finest meal I ever ate in my life."

Jimmy Rabbit seemed to be relieved to hear that.

"Come on over and play," he said. "My brother and I are playing barber-shop over in the old sycamore tree; and we need you."

"All right!" said Fatty. It was not often that any of the smaller forest-people were willing to play with him, because generally Fatty couldn't help getting hungry and then he usually tried to eat his playmates. "What do you need me for?" Fatty asked, as he trudged along beside Jimmy Rabbit.

"We need you for the barber's pole," Jimmy explained. "You can come inside the hollow tree and stick your tail out through a hole. It will make a fine barber's pole—though the stripes DO run the wrong way, to be sure." Fatty Coon was greatly pleased. He looked around at his tail and felt very proud.

"I've got a beautiful tail—haven't I?" he asked.

"Um—yes!" Jimmy Rabbit replied, "though I must say it isn't one that I would care for myself... But come along! There may be people waiting to get their hair cut." Sure enough! When they reached the make-believe barber-shop there was a gray squirrel inside, and Jimmy Rabbit's brother was busily snipping the fur off Mr. Squirrel's head.

"How much do you charge for a hair-cut?" Fatty asked.

"Oh, that depends!" Jimmy Rabbit said. "Mr. Squirrel will pay us six cabbage leaves. But if we were to cut your hair we'd have to ask more. We'd want a dozen cabbage leaves, at least."

"Well, don't I get anything for the use of my tail?" Fatty asked. He had already stuck it out through the hole; and he had half a mind to pull it in again.

Jimmy Rabbit and his brother whispered together for a few moments.



"I'll tell you what we'll do," Jimmy said. "If you'll let us use your tail for the barber's pole, we'll cut your hair free. Isn't that fair enough?"

Fatty Coon was satisfied. But he insisted that Jimmy begin to cut his hair at once.

"I'm doing my part of the work now," he pointed out.

"So there's no reason why you shouldn't do yours."

With that Jimmy Rabbit began. He clipped and snipped at Fatty's head, pausing now and then to see the effect. He smiled once in a while, behind Fatty's back, because Fatty certainly did look funny with his fur all ragged and uneven.

"Moustache trimmed?" Jimmy Rabbit asked, when he had finished with Fatty's head.

"Certainly—of course!" Fatty Coon answered. And pretty soon Fatty's long white moustache lay on the floor of the barber-shop. Fatty felt a bit uneasy as he looked down and saw his beautiful moustache lying at his feet.

"You haven't cut it too short, I hope," he said.

"No, indeed!" Jimmy Rabbit assured him. "It's the very latest style."

"What on earth has happened to you?" Mrs. Coon cried, —when Fatty reached home that night. "Have you been in a fire?"

"It's the latest style, Mother," Fatty told her. "At least, that's what Jimmy Rabbit says." He felt the least bit uneasy again."

"Did you let that Jimmy Rabbit do that to you?" Mrs. Coon asked.

Fatty hung his head. He said nothing at all. But his mother knew.

"Well! you ARE a sight!" she exclaimed. "It will be months before you look like my child again. I shall be ashamed to go anywhere with you."

Fatty Coon felt very foolish. And there was just one thing that kept him from crying. And THAT was THIS: he made up his mind that when he played barber-shop with Jimmy Rabbit again he would get even with him. But when the next day came, Fatty couldn't find Jimmy Rabbit and his brother anywhere. They kept out of sight. But they had told all the other forest-people about the trick they had played on Fatty Coon. And everywhere Fatty went he heard nothing but hoots and jeers and laughs. He felt very silly. And he wished that he might meet Jimmy Rabbit and his brother.