



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Catbird

Abbie Phillips Walker

Once upon a time, the birds were talking about the dangers of the woods and how hard it was for them to bring up their families when so many hunters came along with guns, and bad boys sometimes stole their eggs.

"I am going out of the woods to live," said a little thrush. "I will live right in the yards where the houses are, and that may help me, for who would think of looking for a nest right near where folks live."

"You are very silly to take such a chance," said the other birds. "And besides getting your nest robbed, there is Cat; she will catch you."

"I don't care, I am going away from here and try it," said the little thrush. "It cannot be any worse than here, and besides, I shall have all the crumbs I want, and more worms, and I know there will be plenty of bugs around the garden of Mr. Man's house."

So off flew the little thrush and left the woods to seek a home nearer where Mr. Man lived. He built a nest right in the big bush in a yard and took his wife with him, and one morning there were five little ones in the nest.

There was a Kitty Cat living in the house in the same yard, and Mr. Thrush had his eye on Kitty Cat from the very first. So one morning, when he saw her looking right up at his nest, he told his wife to keep quite still and not leave the baby birds, no matter how near to the nest the Kitty Cat came.

Mr. Thrush had been watching Cat, and he had been listening to her voice as well. Every day he had tried to make a "mi-ow, mi-ou," just as he had heard Cat.

This morning, he hid behind some leaves on a branch and watched Cat as she came under the bush and looked up at his nest. And when she was near enough so she could hear him, he began to call, "Mi-ow, mi-eu, mi-ow, mi-eu."

Cat stopped and looked around. "There is another cat in the yard," she said. "I won't stand that. No cat can come in here and share my home. Now, where can she be, I wonder?"



Cat stood still and looked all around, but she could not see the cat she had heard. "That's funny," thought Cat, "I was sure I heard a cat call." Mr. Thrush hopped around to the nest and told his wife how he had fooled Cat, and then he taught her to make the same noise so that, after a while, Kitty Cat did not know what to make of it, hearing so many cat calls and never finding a cat.

One morning, however, she was determined to get at the nest, for she was sure the birds were ready to fly and would be gone before she had what she thought was her share. So she came under the bush and began to climb toward the nest when up from the nest flew Mr. and Mrs. Thrush and their young ones, all calling, "Mi-ow, mi-eu, mi-ow, mi-eu, mi-ow, mi-eu."

Cat tumbled off the bush with surprise and stood staring after the birds that were mocking her. "You little wretches," she said, "I dare you to come here again. I'll eat everyone of you if I catch you."

But the birds only laughed back at her, "Mi-ow, mi-eu," and off they went to the woods to visit their cousins and tell them about how they had fooled Cat and escaped from her too.

And that is how the American Thrush, who is really a cousin of the mockingbird, got its name of Catbird, for all the birds called them Catbirds after that. And they never lived in the woods again but always build their nests near where Mr. Man and Mistress Cat live without fear.

They are very bold, too, for they build a large nest of dry twigs and weeds and never try to conceal it, but choose a bush or tree where it can readily be seen. And if there is one bird that Cat likes to bother more than another, it is the bird who mocks her by calling, "Mi-ow, mi-eu." But they are all good fighters, and Cat seldom gets one, I am glad to say.

Stories help us explore cultures, learn moral lessons, connect with nature — or simply have fun. That's why ririro.com offers 3,000+ free stories — fairy tales, fables, bedtime stories, myths and more — for every age, in 13 languages, with free printable PDFs and often audio. Reading should be a right, not a privilege. Share ririro.com and spread the joy of reading.

Instagram: @ririro_reading · Pinterest: pinterest.com/ririrocom