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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

## The Greedy Cat

*Carolyn Sherwin Bailey*

Once upon a time there lived a cat and a mouse, and they thought they would ask each other to dinner, turn and turn about. First it was the cat's turn to ask the mouse, and he set his table and invited her, but he did not have much to eat; only a dry crust of bread and some water. But the mouse, who was very polite, ate it and thanked the cat.

When it was the mouse's turn to give a dinner, she spread a fine feast, platters of fish, and saucers of milk, and joints of meat. Then she baked a large cake with sugar on the top for the cat, and for herself she made a very tiny cake with no frosting.

The cat came to the mouse's dinner, and he ate the fish and the meat, and lapped the milk, and ate the cake. Then he looked around in a greedy way, and he said: "What a very light dinner. Have you nothing more in the house to eat, mouse?"

"Here is my cake," said the mouse, who was not at all greedy.

So the cat ate the mouse's cake, and then he looked about again in a greedy way, and he said: "Have you anything more to eat, mouse?"

"Nothing, kind sir," said the mouse, "unless you eat me."

She thought the cat would never be so greedy as that, but he opened his mouth wide, and down his throat went the mouse.

Then the greedy cat walked out of the mouse's house and down the road, swinging his tail, for he felt very fine.

On his way he met an old woman. Now the old woman had been peeping in at the window, and she had seen what that greedy cat had done.

"You greedy cat," she said, "to eat your friend, the mouse."

"Greedy, indeed," said the cat, "I have a mind to eat you."

Then he opened his mouth very wide, and down his throat went the old woman.

Then on down the road went the cat, swinging his tail, and feeling finer than ever. As he went he met an old man taking his load of apples to market. The old man was beating his donkey to make it go faster.

"Scat, scat" said the man, "my donkey will tread on you."

"Tread on me, indeed," said the cat, shaking his fat sides, "I have eaten my friend the mouse, I have eaten an old woman. What is to hinder my eating you?"

So the greedy cat opened his mouth very wide, and down his throat went the man and his donkey.

Then he walked along in the middle of the road again. After a while he spied a great cloud of dust, and he heard a great tramping of feet. It was the king riding in his chariot, and behind him marched all his soldiers and his elephants.

"Scat, scat" said the king, "my elephants might step on you."



"Step on me, indeed," said the cat, "I have eaten my friend the mouse, I have eaten an old woman, I have eaten an old man and a donkey. What is to hinder my eating a king and a few elephants?"

So the cat opened his mouth wide, and down his throat went the king and the soldiers and all the elephants.

Then the cat started on again, but more slowly. He was really not hungry any more. As he traveled he met two land crabs, scuttling along in the dust.

"Scat, scat" squeaked the crabs.

"I have eaten my friend the mouse," said the cat, "I have eaten an old woman, and a man and a donkey, and a king and all his soldiers and all his elephants. What is to hinder my eating you, too?"

Then the cat opened his mouth wide, and down his throat went the two crabs.

But the crabs began to look about them there in the dark. There were the soldiers trying to form in fours, but there was not room. The elephants were stepping on each other's toes. The old woman was scolding, and in a corner sat the poor little mouse, her paws and ears all drooping.

"We must go to work," said the crabs.

Then they began snipping and snipping with their sharp little claws. Soon there was a hole large enough, and they crept out.

Then out came the king and his soldiers and all his elephants. Out came the old woman scolding her cat. Out came the man and his donkey. Last of all, out came the little mouse with one little cake under her arm, for one cake was all that she

had wanted.

But the greedy cat had to spend all the rest of the day sewing up the hole in his coat.

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