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The Shoemaker Rat

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One day a rat gnawed his way into a pantry, and after he had eaten all he wanted he grew bold and went into the kitchen.

There the cook saw him and chased him with a broom, but, not being able to hit him as he ran out of the door, she picked up a pair of shoes that were standing near and threw them after him.

The rat picked them up and put them on. On his way home he met a cat. "What have you on your feet?" he asked the rat.

"Can you not see, my dear Tom?" said the rat. "They are shoes. I am a shoemaker, and, of course, must wear my own product."

"Make me a pair," said the cat, "and I will spare your life."

"Very well," replied the rat, "but first you must bring me some leather."

So the cat ran away and brought back two hides.

When the rat saw the amount of leather he was struck with an idea. "My dear Tom," he said, "I can make you a suit of clothes and a pair of gloves as well as the shoes, and you will be the envy of all the other cats."

Tom was delighted and told the rat to hurry and make the outfit.



The wise rat first made the gloves and covered Tom's sharp claws. Then he made the shoes for the hind feet, and when he had that done he felt safe.

"Now you must wait," he said; "until I get something with which I can fasten the coat." He ran away and returned with some long, sharp thorns.

Next the rat put the leather around Tom's body and drew it tight, fastening it with a thorn which he pushed so that the sharp point pricked Tom.

"What are you doing?" asked Tom, angry at being hurt; but he could not move, the leather costume was so stiff and tight, but he grabbed at the rat with his mouth, and caught him by the tail.

The rat ran, leaving his tail in Tom's mouth.

"I'll know you," Tom called after him. "When I am out of this suit I will catch you and eat you."

The rat had not thought of that and he wondered what he should do, but he was a wise old fellow, and when he reached home he called all his brothers and sisters and cousins and aunts about him.

"I met a cat to-day," he said, "who had been to the city where all the styles are new, and he told me that all the city rats are having their tails cut off, so I had mine done. If you want to be in style," he told them, "you must have your tails like mine."

"Does it hurt?" asked one.

"Not a bit," answered the sly fellow, "and you have no idea how comfortable it is running about without a tail to look after. It is very expensive to have it cut," he explained; "that is the only difficult part. I had to pay twenty pieces of cheese. But I watched while another fellow was having his cut, and I am sure I can do it as well as the rat that did mine. And if you wish to be in style at a very low rate I will take off your tails for five pieces of cheese each."

The rats all agreed, and ran away to get the cheese, and while they were gone the wise rat ran for a chopping-knife.

Soon he had the tails cut and a goodly store of cheese. "Now," he said to himself, "Tom will never know me from the other rats."

He kept his eyes open for Tom, who had called his friends to help him out of his suit and told them to watch for a rat without a tail. But when they saw all the tailless rats they gave up looking for one who had put Tom into the suit of leather, and Tom, not liking to hunt any too well, gave it up also. "But the next time I meet a rat," said Tom, "I will catch him, no matter whether he has a tail or not."

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