



The Cat and the Rat

THERE was once a rat who was feeling very hungry. He glanced around his hole but there was nothing for him to eat. He decided to leave his hole and go out in search of some food. He soon came to a shop and, peeping in, he said to himself, "I'm sure I'll find some good food in there."

Without waiting any longer, he darted into the shop. He was so hungry that he ran through the shop without thinking of any danger. He nibbled at this, he nibbled at that and filled himself up.

Then suddenly a huge cat appeared. The cat jumped at the rat. The rat just managed to escape. Mr. Rat ran and ran. If only he could get out of the shop, he would be able to get away from the cat. But, poor Mr. Rat, while he was running out of the shop, he stumbled and fell into a barrel of rum.

What was Mr. Rat to do now? He tried and tried but could not climb out of the barrel of rum. The cat had seen what had happened to the rat. He had gone and perched himself quietly on the edge of the barrel. There he sat, patiently waiting for the rat to climb out. Mr. Cat was sure he would soon have a rat to eat for his dinner !

Meanwhile, the rat realized that he could not get out of the barrel all by himself. And if he stayed too long in the barrel, he would certainly drown. Even at that very moment, rum was seeping into his nose and ears. He tried very hard not to let any rum get into his mouth because he could not afford to get drunk. He had to keep his mind clear. If he did get drunk, he most certainly would not survive.

Mr. Rat had to think of some plan that would get him out of that barrel alive. He thought and thought and finally came up with a plan.

“Mr. Cat,” he called out, talking very slowly and pretending that he was very drunk. “Mr, Cat, can you hear me? You know and I know that I will soon be dead. This rum is killing me. If I don’t get out of here I shall drown. And if I do get out, there you are, just waiting to eat me up.”

“How clever you are!” said the cat, purring with contentment at the thought of a delicious rat dinner.

“Well, Mr. Cat, I can tell you one thing. You won’t be able to eat me up if I drown in this rum. My body will sink to the bottom of the barrel if I drown and you can’t come down here to get me. The only way you’ll be able to eat me is if you help me to get out of this barrel of rum. Now, since I am bound to die, won’t it be better for you if I don’t drown? Won’t it be better if you get me out so that you can eat me up instead?”

“Just tell me what to do!” the cat answered,



anxious to get his paws on the rat.

"Simple," said the rat, who was now behaving as if he were completely drunk. "Oh, so simple! Just bend down and take me out of this barrel. Please take me out before I sink to the bottom and die."

"All right," agreed the cat. Bending down, Mr. Cat took the rat out of the barrel of rum. But just as he was about to gobble him up, the rat shouted out, "Wait! Not yet! Don't eat me as yet! Can't you see how drunk I am! What do you think will happen to you if you eat me now? You will become drunk and so filled with rum that you yourself would



hardly be able to continue living."

"Well, tell me, Mr. Rat, what should I do?" asked the cat who himself did not want to die.

"Very simple," said the rat. "Just take me out into the yard and put me in the sun to dry out. As soon as I am dry, you can eat me up."

The cat saw nothing wrong with the rat's suggestion. He believed that the rat was too drunk to be able to move properly on his own. Besides, even if the rat could move, the cat was sure that he would be able to run faster than the rat.

So the cat again did what the rat suggested. He lifted the rat from the floor of the shop and took him out into the yard. There he placed him on the ground under the blazing sun. Mr. Cat then sat near to the rat waiting for him to dry out. But Mr. Cat had not yet realized what a sneaky fellow Mr. Rat was. He did not think that he had to keep his eyes fixed on Mr. Rat. He turned his head away for just a second. In a flash, Mr. Rat was up and away, disappearing into a hole not too far away.

At last Mr. Cat realized that he had been tricked. All he could do now was to place himself outside the hole and hope that the rat would appear soon in



order to keep his side of the bargain. "After all," thought Mr. Cat, "that rat did promise that I could eat him if I got him out of the barrel of rum."

Mr. Cat waited and waited but all in vain. He begged the rat to come out, but there was no sign of the rat. He reminded the rat of the agreement they had made but the rat, chuckling inside the hole, shouted out to him, "Never trust the words of a drunk rat!"

And so, Mr. Cat was forced to give up his delicious rat dinner and he left the hole disappointed.

