

THE CAT AND THE PARROT

A Tale from India

Once upon a time a cat and a parrot decided to be friends. They agreed to take turns inviting the other over for meals. The cat was first. However, the cat was mean. He provided very little at his meal, just a small bowl of milk, a tiny piece of fish, and a hard biscuit. The parrot was a gracious guest and did not complain.

When it was the parrot's turn to host a meal, he went all out. He provided a large roast, a huge pot of tea, a nice variety of fruit, and for desert, 500 little cakes. When the two friends sat down to eat, the parrot held back only two small cakes for himself. The cat ate everything else all by himself, and then asked for more!

Surprised by the cat's request the parrot offered his two small cakes, which the cat took and quickly ate. The cat then asked for more. The parrot had nothing else, so the cat ate his friend with a *slip, slop, slurp*.

The cat then left the parrot's house and began walking down the street. Almost immediately he met an old woman who had seen

the whole thing. She scolded the cat for eating his friend. Instead of being ashamed, the cat decided to eat the woman too; and *slip, slop, slurp*, down his throat went the old woman.

Satisfied, the cat began walking down the street again. He soon came upon a man and his donkey. The man asked the cat to move aside so his donkey would not step on him. The cat bragged about eating 500 cakes, a parrot and an old woman. At that, with a *slip, slop, slurp*, he ate the man and his donkey too.

As you can imagine, the cat was quite large by now. He waddled down the road once more and soon came upon a procession. The king had just gotten married. The royal couple was at the head of the procession, followed by a battalion of soldiers and a dozen elephants. Upon seeing the fat cat, the king kindly asked him to move aside so he would not be trampled by the elephants.

Rather than obey the king, the cat bragged about eating 500 cakes, a parrot, an old woman, and a man and his donkey. At that, with a *slip, slop, slurp*, he ate up the entire procession, including the king, his queen, the battalion of soldiers and the dozen elephants.

After eating all of that, the cat was HUGE. He continued waddling along the road and soon came upon two small land crabs. They kindly asked the cat to move aside so they could get by. The cat gave those two crabs a wicked grin and began bragging about eat-

ing 500 cakes, a parrot, an old woman, a man and his donkey, and a royal procession consisting of the king and his bride, a battalion of soldiers and a dozen elephants. Then, with a *slip, slop, slurp*, down the cat's throat went the two land crabs.

When the crabs got into the cat's belly, they saw all the others. As you can imagine it was very crowded inside the cat. The crabs got right to work. With a *snip, snap, snip, snap*, they used their sharp claws to cut a hole in the side of the cat. Once it was big enough, the crabs crawled out. Right behind the crabs came the elephants, the battalion of soldiers, the king and his queen, the man and his donkey, the old woman and the parrot (carrying two small cakes – one in each claw).

The cat had to be content with 498 cakes (and the rest of the parrot's meal) being left in his stomach. He then had to spend the remainder of the day sewing the hole in his side back up. After that, he managed his meals by eating only the types of food meant for good cats.

*Adapted by Kathleen Simonetta. Inspired by the following tale:

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