



Tha bat

Bats are a bit like rats with wings which live in dark, hidden places and only come out at night, so nobody can see them. But it wasn't always that way. It all started with a rat that was embarrassed to be seen by the birds.

This bat never wanted to leave his cave, because he didn't like his looks. He thought he was ugly, skinny and misshapen, and there was no way to get him to budge. Often the birds in the forest would stop by his cave to see if he wanted to go out for a bit or join some celebration, but the bat never wanted to leave the cave.

"I'm too ugly. I don't want to go out."

And that was all the birds ever saw or heard from their strange neighbor: "The Bat".

One day the birds got together to discuss this very worrisome situation because they felt badly that a forest buddy would be so ashamed of his looks that he wouldn't leave home. One of the birds said:

"You know what we could do? We could each give him one of our feathers. That way he can cover himself with colorful plumes and then, if he feels that he looks more like us, he won't be so embarrassed to go out."

The birds thought that was a great idea and they acted on it right away. The bee-eater gave him an orange feather. The robin redbreast a red one, the bluebird a blue one, the parrot a purple one, the canary a yellow one, and so on and so forth, until the bat had so many colorful feathers that he felt like the most beautiful bird in the world.

That day, the bat went out and flew all around the forest, as happy as a lark with his colorful feathers that shone like a rainbow in the sunlight.

The birds were also happy, because they figured that now the bat would stop being a lonely old grump and would want to go out and about with them. But just the opposite happened.

When he saw himself decked out in all those colors, he became full of himself and haughty and he didn't want to have anything to do with the other birds. Every time one of the birds went to visit him, he would say:

"No other bird compares with me. I'm so beautiful that I don't want to share the limelight with anyone."

The other birds were very disappointed, but they waited to see if, after a few days, the bat would get over being so obsessed with his looks and decide to mingle with the other forest dwellers. But no. The more time that went by, the ruder the bat became and the more he mocked the other birds.

The birds finally got fed up with the bat's snobby attitude. So, one by one, each bird went to the bat to ask for his or her feather back. The canary was the first to do so.

The flamingo went and demanded his feather back.

"Mr. Bat, I guess you won't be needing my pink feather any more, will you?"

"Of course not. It's one of the ugliest ones I have. You can keep it."

And he gave him back the feather without so much as a thank you. And the same thing happened when the parrot went to see him.

"It doesn't match with anything. It's horribly ugly. Like you."

So the parrot took back its feather, as did the bluebird, to whom the bat said:

"You want me to give you back your feather because you're jealous of me, right?

Well, too bad for you, because even without it I'm still the prettiest bird of all."

And that's how, little by little, all of the birds took back their feathers, having to put up with taunts and insults from the bat, who soon looked like a plucked chicken.

Ah, but when the bat was left without a single feather, his attitude suddenly changed and he grew very sad. That wasn't because he now looked like his old self, but because he saw that by being so concerned with his appearance, he hadn't realized that the birds had done everything they could to make him feel like part of the group.

And from that day on he went back to living in his dark, damp cave. And they say he only comes out at night when no one can see him.

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