

## Modern Stories : Tikku and The Rats

Tikku hated rats. His mother had told him how rats brought disease and sickness wherever they went. Tikku himself had seen rats in his building compound. His father had often called the municipality to get rid of those rats.

The municipal workers had brought iron cages and placed them in each corner of the building. Tikku's mother had made wheat chapattis which were broken into pieces and placed in each cage. However, not a single rat was caught in this way.



Tikku had read somewhere that rats were attracted to cheese but cheese was expensive in his country. His mother had told him that only Americans could afford to use cheese as a bait to catch rats. Tikku had remained silent at this explanation.

Meanwhile, the rat problem in the building became worse day by day. Rats came and went at will in the compound. All the children in the building were scared.

Finally, a parents meeting was held to discuss the problem. It was decided that a cat was needed for the building. Soon a cat was purchased and let loose in the compound.

However, the cat too could not solve the rat problem. The building tenants did not know what to do.

One day Tikku chanced to climb the stairs to reach his flat. As he reached the end of the stairway, he saw a rat squatting outside the flat door. Tikku was terrified! He made a wild movement with his arms but the rat merely escaped to the next door.

When Tikku told his mother about the rat, she burst into tears. Tikku felt very sad.

A week went by. Tikku's exams were approaching. Every evening Tikku sat in his room with his books and refused to come out till he completed his studies. Raja, his 10-year old servant, brought him dinner in his room.

One evening Tikku was having dinner in his room. The windows were open and a gentle breeze was blowing in. As Tikku lifted his face from the food tray to catch the breeze, he saw a strange sight. A big, blackish brown rat jumped from the ledge to the window sill and dropped quickly into his room. Tikku held his breath.

The rat hid itself behind a sofa. Tikku jumped onto his bed and yelled for Raja. Raja, who was minding the house in his parents' absence, took his time to reach Tikku's room. He was not the least frightened. Raja simply took a broom and reached behind the sofa. The rat jumped onto the sofa and from there onto the window sill. Before Tikku could say anything, the rat disappeared into the darkness outside the window.

Tikku was dumbfounded. He was also ashamed when he saw Raja moving about calmly. From then on, Tikku's mother told him to keep the window shut in the evenings. Tikku felt miserable. Thereafter he ate little and lost weight as a result. His parents were worried.

One evening Tikku was thirsty. As he paused on his way to the kitchen, he saw Raja, the houseboy, cutting bread and meat and throwing little pieces now and then into the building compound. When Raja saw Tikku enter, he stopped abruptly and went outside. Though it was getting dark, Tikku could see several sleek rats crowd around the food pieces thrown down by Raja. They were nibbling away on the food without the least fear. Tikku was shocked!

In a flash, Tikku realized that it was Raja and the other servants in the building who were to blame for the rat problem. Only servants threw out food from the homes they worked in to feed rats and crows. That is why the rats had lost fear of the people in the building.

Tikku told his parents about the incident and they in turn told the neighbors.

The tenants of the building held another meeting. It was decided to punish all servants who fed rats with a fine and a warning. Within a week the rats disappeared from the building compound and all the children, including Tikku, resumed their games and studies.

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