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The Cherry Bandit.

A story for the youngsters

By

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The Cherry Bandit.

From the series Old Ian and his stories.

The first story. Ian tells about the Cherry Bandit.

A story for the children by Jan Brodaty

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The Cherry Bandit.

Lets take a walk up to old Ian. He lives just of the other end of the little forest. The road is narrow and the gravel rattles under our feet as we go into the dark forest. The road is turning and twisting. It goes up and it goes down. You can see a little lake to the left. Only a few trees separate us from the blue water.

Did you see the duck?

Look, there's another one.

And the ducklings..

Aren't they cute?

We must hurry. It will soon be dark now.

Look!

There is a house.

That's old Ian's house. I think...

No need to knock. Old Ian wouldn't hear us anyway. He is so old and gets often lost in his dreams, just let's step inside and have a look if he is home.

Put your shoes on the shelf kids, we don't want to mess up here, do we?

That's right on the shelves please. Now, let's see if we can find Ian. Hope he is at home.

"IAN!"

No answer. We have to look trough the house for him.

Not in the kitchen. But it smells good her. Ian must have cooked something.

Not in the study. Look so much papers and books! He really needs a housekeeper that's for sure.

"Ian!"

"Yes, yes here I am"

The voice came from the living room.

"Please come in, come in my friends."

The old man in the chair next to the fireplace had a long white beard. He could have been Santa if he had a red hat.

"Please step in and have a seat."

Invitingly the old-timer waves hand to the visitors.

"No room? There's lot's of space for everybody on the floor. Just sit close in a circle and listen. You came for a story, didn't you?"

He adjusts him selves in the large armchair.

"Please, put some more wood at the fire will you?"

Let's put some firewood on Old Ian's large open fireplace.

"Thank you my friends, it will get cold tonight.

What are your names?"

He looks at us over his eyeglasses as we tell him.

"Ok, I try to remember it, and yours my friend?"

He always says so. Probably mean it too, but he can hardly hear anymore and to remember new names is far too hard. I'm not sure if he even remember the name he have.

"You se folks, a long time ago there lived a man called Oscar in a village not far from here

Have you heard that one before? Have you ever heard of the Cherry Bandit?

No, thought so, well... Hrmmmm. "

"Oh yes, Oscar. It was...

A long time ago a man called Oscar lived in a village not far from here. His house was small and red and the corners where painted white but the wood was old and worn. It had tiny, tiny windows with white painted frames and the roof was covered by turf. It was a wonderful place just like cut out of a fairy-tale, but the garden was a mess. The only that could be seen over the high grass was some wonderful red roses, a cherry tree and an apple tree. Oscar wasn't lazy, just didn't like to work alone

for him self. More fun to help others, so he often took his old grey horse and rode over to the neighbours to talk and help them a little. His big red cat didn't bother to go anywhere. She just stayed on the stair to the front door, sleeping in the sun."

Old Ian paused thought a little and says. "If you want to fry some apples on the fire, please help your self. There are apples in the bowl on the table and some long sticks by the fireplace."

Ian's cat Rosie jumps up to his lap looking at us and then lies down. At first, watching with one eye only, then it turned in to a red ball of fur, purring loudly.

"You see folks" Old Ian continued, "Oscar was well known and respected in the village. Knew everybody and everybody knew him. He only had one problem. He loved cherries. Cherries were his passion. He had a cherry tree him self, but it never gave him more than a hand full of cherries. Therefore he once a year, just at full moon in July, took a red bandanna over his face and an old grain sack of hemp over his shoulder and turned into The Mysterious Cherry Bandit! This was a name that everybody feared. The Mysterious Cherry Bandit was a mysterious robber. The only thing he took was a cherry or two from every cherry-tree in the neighbourhood. Not that it mattered. Everybody always had lots and lost of cherries in July and The Mysterious Cherry Bandit only took a few, never more than three at a time. But he was a bandit, a masked bandit and bandits are feared. Watch out kid you are burning that apple!" Old Ian shouted with a loud voice. "Move it a little or you can't eat it." He continued with a softer voice, not to scare anybody. "One must be careful when being so close to a fireplace. Never forget to watch what you are doing."

Rosie had lifted her ears to hear if there was more to say.

"Ok, lets see" Old Ian continued.

Rosie relaxed and started purring again.

"Once a year, just at full moon, Oscar takes his bandanna and the grain sack and turns into The Cherry Bandit. Careful at night, when the moon has risen, he mounts the old grey horse and rides slowly down the gravel road. Nose high, sniffing for cherries. This particular night he had to ride further and further of and had nearly given up hope when he stopped. Wasn't it?"

Old Ian raised his nose to the air and sniffs show how it's done.

"Yes it was! Then The Cherry Bandit wet his finger in the mouth, holds it into the air."

Old Ian shows how it's done.

"Just to find out where the wind comes from." He continued.

"From the south? Yes from the south. He looked to the right in disbelief. That's where Farmer Benjamin lives. Oh no! He has two enormous dogs. Chihuahuas they were and black belt in karate they had and they was known for beating up a mailman who once blew his horn to loud a morning in May. Those feared killer Chihuahuas made The Mysterious Cherrie Bandit hesitate. The mailman had been carrying the colours of all the flags in the world for a long time after that battalion and the horn where never found again."

"Now you se, "Old Ian says, "It's a hard decision to make. Was it worth the risk to steal a cherry or two? The Mysterious Cherry Bandit wasn't a coward, but two Chihuahuas with a reputation like that?"

Old Ian looks around.

"Can anyone spare an apple for me. They smell lovely.

Ouch! They are hot!" Complains Old Ian. He blew on his fingers and waved his hand. "They are very hot!" He complained. "Please let them cool of a little."

He leans back. "Well, there he was, the Cherry Bandit, sitting on his horse just outside the fence and drooling in the sweet smell of Cherries. He tried to turn his horse but circled a full turn and was back again. He tried once more and again. After the third try to turn his horse back home he couldn't hold him selves back. Carefully he stepped down to the ground, tiptoed to the fence and looked very, very carefully around.

May I now have that apple please? Thank you.

You se, that the Cherry Bandit was so... Mmmm, those apples really are something. Aren't they?

You see he was so excited about the cherries that he kept staring into the garden looking for those monstrous Chihuahuas that he didn't watch his steps. The fence wasn't more than a feet high but he didn't lift his foot high enough and stumbled into the garden with a loud crash!

The Chihuahuas woke up, started to howl like monstrous wolves and run toward him. Our Bandit panicked, run into a tree, bounced back to his butt, rose again and headed for his horse. Once again he stumbled on the fence and when he got back on his feet he stepped on a snail that yelled like a pig in pain. Oiii! That scared the bandit even more and he speeded of as fast as he could. The last view the furious Chihuahuas and the angry snail got of the Bandit was the black silhouette of man and horse, running side by side toward the rising sun."

Old Ian finished of the fried apple before he continued.

"Have you ever heard a snail yell? No? Let's hope you never do, it's the most fearsome yell you can ever hear. It's so fearsome that all the cows within a mile start milking ice cream, that's for sure. You don't believe me? Well look in the refrigerator in the hall, there's a bucket full of ice-cream, you can bring it in here and have as much as you like."

"You mean the story is true?"

"Well, go and look for your selves and don't forget plates and spoons."

When everybody got back from the kitchen to eat ice-cream and listen to more stories Old Ian was gone. The chair was empty and the only sound comes from near the fireplace were the red cat on a red bandanna in a big straw hat purrs. If you look closely you can see how it smiles.

Where had Old Ian gone? Perhaps he will tell us next time.

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