



How Six Umbrellas Took Off Their Straw Hats to Show Respect to the One Big Umbrella

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Wherever Dippy the Wisp went she was always changing hats. She carried two hat boxes with big picture hats on her right arm. And she carried two hat boxes with big picture hats on her left arm. And she changed from green and gold hats to purple and gray hats and then back to green and gold whenever she felt like it. Now the hill that runs down from the shanty of Hatrack the Horse toward the Village of Cream Puffs is a long, long hill. And one morning the old man sat watching and away down at the bottom of the long, long hill he saw four hat boxes. Somebody was coming to call on him. And he knew it was Dippy the Wisp. The hat boxes came up the hill. He saw them stop once, stop twice, stop more times. So he knew Dippy the Wisp was changing hats, changing from green and gold to purple and gray and then back to green and gold. When at last she got to the top of the hill and came to the shanty of Hatrack the Horse, she said to him, "Make up a story and tell me. Make up the story about umbrellas. You have traveled all over the Rootabaga Country, you have seen so many umbrellas, and such wonderful umbrellas. Make me up a big elegant story about umbrellas." So Hatrack the

Horse took his hat off his head, reached around and hung it on one of the shoulder bones sticking out behind on his back. And the old man looked with a far- away look down the long, long hill running from his shanty toward the Village of Cream Puffs. Then he told her this story: One summer afternoon I came home and found all the umbrellas sitting in the kitchen, with straw hats on, telling each other who they are. The umbrella that feeds the fishes fresh buns every morning stood up and said, "I am the umbrella that feeds the fishes fresh buns every morning." The umbrella that fixes the clocks free of charge stood up and said, "I am the umbrella that fixes the clocks free of charge." The umbrella that peels the potatoes with a pencil and makes a pink ink with the peelings, stood up and said, "I am the umbrella that peels the potatoes with a pencil and makes a pink ink with the peelings." The umbrella that eats the rats with pepper and salt and a clean napkin every morning, stood up and said, "I am the umbrella that eats the rats with pepper and salt and a clean napkin every morning." The umbrella that washes the dishes with a wiper and wipes the dishes with a washer every morning stood up and said, "I am the umbrella that washes the dishes with a wiper and wipes the dishes with a washer every morning." The umbrella that covers the chimney with a dishpan before it rains stood up and said, "I am the umbrella that covers the chimney with a dishpan before it rains." The umbrella that runs to the corner to get corners for the handkerchiefs stood up and pencil and makes a pink ink with the peelings, stood up and said, "I am the umbrella that peels the potatoes with a pencil and makes a pink ink with the peelings."

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The umbrella that runs to the corner to get corners for the handkerchiefs stood up and said, "I am the umbrella that runs to the corner to get corners for the handkerchiefs."

Now while the umbrellas are all sitting in the kitchen with their straw hats on telling each other who they are, there comes a big black stranger of an umbrella, walking into the kitchen without opening the door, walking in without knocking, without asking anybody, without telling anybody beforehand.

“Since we are telling each other who we are,” said the stranger, “since we are telling each other who we are, I am going to tell you who I am. “I am the umbrella that holds up the sky. I am the umbrella the rain comes through. I am the umbrella that tells the sky when to begin raining and when to stop raining. “I am the umbrella that goes to pieces when the wind blows and then puts itself together again when the wind goes down. I am the first umbrella, the last umbrella, the one and only umbrella all other umbrellas are named after, first, last and always.”

When the stranger finished this speech telling who he was and where he came from, all the other umbrellas sat still for a little while, to be respectful. Then they all got up, took off their straw hats, walked up to the stranger and laid those straw hats at his feet. They wanted to show him they had respect for him. Then they all walked out, first the umbrella that feeds the fishes fresh buns every morning, then the umbrella that fixes the clocks free of charge, then the umbrella that peels the potatoes with a pencil and makes pink ink with the peelings, then the umbrella that eats the rats with pepper and salt and a clean napkin, then the umbrella that washes the dishes with a wiper and wipes the dishes with a washer, then the umbrella that covers the chimney with a dishpan before it rains, then the umbrella that runs to the corner to get corners for the handkerchiefs.

They all laid their straw hats at the feet of the stranger because he came without knocking or telling anybody beforehand and because he said he is the umbrella that holds up the sky, that big umbrella the rain goes through first of all, the first and the last umbrella. That was the way Hatrack the Horse finished his story for Dippy the Wisp.

She was changing hats, getting ready to go. The old man put his loose bony arms around her and kissed her for a good-by. And she put her little dimpled arms around his neck and kissed him for a good-by. And the last he saw of her that day she was walking far away down at the bottom of the long, long hill that stretches from Hatrack's shanty toward the Village of Cream Puffs. And twice going down the long hill she stopped and changed hats, opening and shutting the hat boxes, and changing hats from green and gold to purple and gray and back to green and gold.