



# *The Story of Rags Habakuk, the Two Blue Rats, and the Circus Man Who Came with Spot Cash Money*

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*Intermediate*  
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Rags Habakuk was going home. His day's work was done. The sun was down. Street lamps began shining. Burglars were starting on their night's work. It was no time for an honest ragman to be knocking on people's back doors, saying, "Any rags?" or else saying, "Any rags? any bottles? any bones?" or else saying "Any rags? any bottles? any bones? any old iron? any copper, brass, old shoes all run down and no good to anybody to-day? any old clothes, old coats, pants, vests? I take any old clothes you got."

Yes, Rags Habakuk was going home. In the gunnysack bag on his back, humped up on top of the rag humps in the bag, was an old vest. It was the same old vest Jason Squiff threw out of a door at Rags Habakuk. In the pocket of the vest was the gold buckskin whincher with a power in it.

Well, Rags Habakuk got home just like always, sat down to supper and smacked his mouth and had a big

supper of fish, just like always. Then he went out to a shanty in the back yard and opened up the gunnysack rag bag and fixed things out classified just like every day when he came home he opened the gunnysack bag and fixed things out classified.

The last thing of all he fixed out classified was the vest with the gold buckskin whincher in the pocket. “Put it on—it’s a glad rag,” he said, looking at the vest. “It’s a lucky vest.” So he put his right arm in the right armhole and his left arm in the left armhole. And there he was with his arms in the armholes of the old vest all fixed out classified new.

Next morning Rags Habakuk kissed his wife g’by and his eighteen year old girl g’by and his nineteen year old girl g’by. He kissed them just like he always kissed them—in a hurry—and as he kissed each one he said, “I will be back soon if not sooner and when I come back I will return.”

Yes, up the street went Rags Habakuk. And soon as he left home something happened. Standing on his right shoulder was a blue rat and standing on his left shoulder was a blue rat. The only way he knew they were there was by looking at them.

There they were, close to his ears. He could feel the far edge of their whiskers against his ears.

“This never happened to me before all the time I been picking rags,” he said. “Two blue rats stand by my ears and never say anything 92even if they know I am listening to anything they tell me.”

So Rags Habakuk walked on two blocks, three blocks, four blocks, squinting with his right eye slanting at the blue rat on his right shoulder and squinting with his left eye slanting at the blue rat on his left shoulder.

“If I stood on somebody’s shoulder with my whiskers right up in somebody’s ear I would say something for somebody to listen to,” he muttered.

Of course, he did not understand it was the gold buckskin whincher and the power working. Down in the pocket of the vest he had on, the gold buckskin whincher power was saying, “Because you have two K’s in your name you must have two blue rats on your shoulders, one blue rat for your right ear, one blue rat for your left ear.”

It was good business. Never before did Rags Habakuk get so much old rags.

“Come again—you and your lucky blue rats,” people said to him. They dug into their cellars and garrets and

brought him bottles and bones and copper and brass and old shoes and old clothes, coats, pants, vests.

Every morning when he went up the street with the two blue rats on his shoulders, blinking their eyes straight ahead and chewing their whiskers so they sometimes tickled the ears of old Rags Habakuk, sometimes women came running out on the front porch to look at him and say, “Well, if he isn’t a queer old mysterious ragman and if those ain’t queer old mysterious blue rats!”

All the time the gold buckskin whincher and the power was working. It was saying, “So long as old Rags Habakuk keeps the two blue rats he shall have good luck—but if he ever sells one of the blue rats then one of his daughters shall marry a taxicab driver—and if he ever sells the other blue rat then his other daughter shall marry a moving-picture hero actor.”

Then terrible things happened. A circus man came. “I give you one thousand dollars spot cash money for one of the blue rats,” he expostulated with his mouth. “And I give you two thousand dollars spot cash money for the two of the blue rats both of them together.”

“Show me how much spot cash money two thousand dollars is all counted out in one pile for one man to carry away home in his gunnysack rag bag,” was the answer of Rags Habakuk.

The circus man went to the bank and came back with spot cash greenbacks money.

“This spot cash greenbacks money is made from the finest silk rags printed by the national government for the national republic to make business rich and prosperous,” said the circus man, expostulating with his mouth.

“T-h-e f-i-n-e-s-t s-i-l-k r-a-g-s,” he expostulated again holding two fingers under the nose of Rags Habakuk.

“I take it,” said Rags Habakuk, “I take it. It is a whole gunnysack bag full of spot cash greenbacks money. I tell my wife it is printed by the national government for the national republic to make business rich and prosperous.”

Then he kissed the blue rats, one on the right ear, the other on the left ear, and handed them over to the circus man.

And that was why the next month his eighteen year old daughter married a taxicab driver who was so polite all the time to his customers that he never had time to be polite to his wife.

And that was why his nineteen year old daughter married a moving-picture hero actor who worked so hard being nice and kind in the moving pictures that he never had enough left over for his wife when he got home after the day's work.

And the lucky vest with the gold buckskin whincher was stolen from Rags Habakuk by the taxicab driver.

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