

Richie the Rat

“Hi Marilyn!” The Sandman made himself comfortable, sitting next to Marilyn, and took half of a book out from his pocket.

“What happened to it?” Marilyn pointed her finger at the book.

“This book belongs to Richie the Rat,” the Sandman explained. “Richie the Rat didn’t manage to finish reading it yet.”

“But it’s been eaten, not read,” Marilyn examined the book.

“This is the way Richie the Rat reads books – he eats them,” the Sandman said.

“And where does he get them from?” Marilyn asked.

“I suppose he steals them from the household. There are lots of books in the basement of the house in which Richie lives. It’s a proper small library they’ve got over there.”

Marilyn opened the half-eaten book. “This is a nice collection of fairy tales. Why did Richie want to eat it?”

“Richie can’t read,” the Sandman replied. “He looks at all the pictures and then gobbles the book up. He is especially fond of cookbooks with pictures. He said they were especially delicious. And fairy tales were also quite okay. The

bitterest ones, he said, were sad poems. Once he came down with a sad mood disease after reading sad poems and had to stay in bed for two weeks.”



“What are you on about!” Marilyn laughed. “Nobody can get ill from just reading books.”

“Richie can because he reads everything very thoroughly. He finishes every book up to the very last bite,” the Sand-

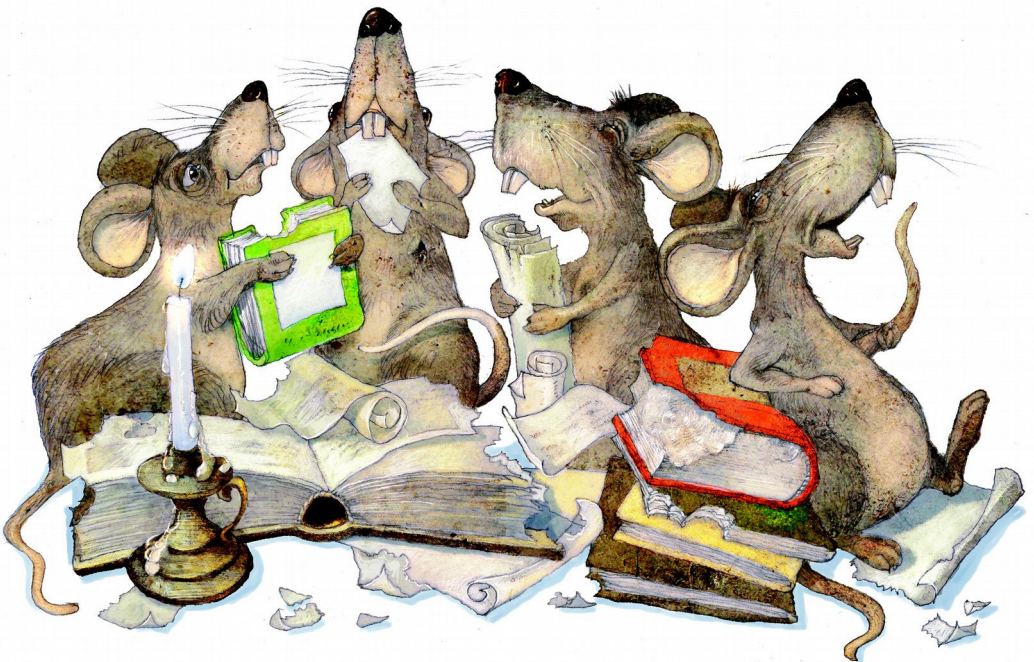
man said. “If I hadn’t given him a fun children’s book, the back cover of which was spread with jam, Richie would have died of sadness.”

“And did this jammy children’s book cure him?” Marilyn asked.

“Like magic!” the Sandman replied. “I saw him complete the reading of the sweet back cover in a couple of minutes. And after that he got straight up and felt fine. He even held a party to celebrate his recovery and invited his closest neighbors. The table was full of books and the party went on until the early hours of dawn.

Roland the Rat from next door read so many fairy tales that his belly touched the floor and he couldn’t get through the rat hole, so he had to spend the night at Richie’s.”

When the Sandman stayed silent, they could hear scrab-



bling coming from somewhere. “Oh god!” Marilyn got frightened. “Could it be that Richie is coming after my books as well now!?”

“I don’t know about that,” the Sandman said. “He lives pretty far away. But I suppose there might be other rats who love reading.”



Marilyn quickly got her favorite book from the night stand and hid it under the pillow. Her eyes closed slowly and straight away she had a dream about Richie the Rat and his party table, covered with cookbooks, fairy tales and jammy children’s books.

The Sandman looked at the book, half-eaten by Richie, and licked the back of it with his tongue. The back cover was quite sweet!

Messy



Marilyn had almost fallen half-asleep when she heard rustling at the desk. She got up to investigate. The lower desk drawer was open and the Sandman was peeking out from there.

“What are you doing here?” Marilyn asked.

“Looking for Messy,” the Sandman said and disappeared into the depths of the drawer.

Marilyn opened the drawer and watched the Sandman on all fours going through her stuff.

“Who is this Messy?” Marilyn enquired.

“Messy is a kind of a bundle who collects rubbish at the bottom and in the corners of the drawer,” the Sandman explained. “He is like a hedgehog who gathers mushrooms on its back. The only difference is that Messy gathers the junk that is in the drawers and he has no spines on his back.”

“Does he speak?” Marilyn asked.

“Boy, and how he speaks!” The Sandman smiled widely. “You can even say that he talks far too much. And he has so