

HOW THE RHINOCEROS



GOT HIS SKIN

Words and Pictures by
Rudyard Kipling

A LearningIsland.org
Tale of Old

THIS Uninhabited Island
Is off Cape Gardafui,
By the Beaches of Socotra
And the Pink Arabian Sea:

But it's hot--too hot from Suez
For the likes of you and me
Ever to go
In a P. and O.
And call on the Cake-Parsee!

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How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin/Rudyard Kipling

Summary: A fun tale explaining how the rhino got his crinkly skin and his bad temper.

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2. Legends. Juvenile Literature.
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THIS is the Parsee Pestonjee Bomonjee sitting in his palm tree. He is watching the Rhino Storks bathing near the beach of the Altogether Uninhabited Island.

Storks had taken off his skin. The Parsee has put the cake-crumbs into the skin, and he is smiling to think how they will tickle Storks when Storks puts it on again.

The skin is just under the rocks below the palm-tree in a cool place. That is why you can't see it.

The Parsee is wearing a new more-than-oriental-splendor hat of the sort that Parsees wear. He also has a knife in his hand to cut his name on palm trees.

The black things on the islands out at sea are bits of ships that got wrecked going down the Red Sea; but all the passengers were saved and went home.

The black thing in the water close to the shore is not a wreck at all. It is Storks the Rhino bathing without his skin. He was just as black underneath his skin as he was outside. I wouldn't ask anything about the cooking-stove if I were you.



HOW THE RHINOCEROS

GOT HIS SKIN



ONCE upon a time, on an uninhabited island on the shores of the Red Sea, there lived a Parsee from whose hat the rays of the sun were reflected in more-than-oriental splendor. And the Parsee lived by the Red Sea with nothing but his hat and his knife and a cooking-stove of the kind that you must particularly never touch.

One day the Parsee took flour and water and currants and plums and sugar and things. He made himself one cake which was two feet across and three feet thick. It was indeed a Superior Cake. He put it on the stove because he was allowed to cook on the stove. Then he baked it and he baked it till it was all done brown and smelt most wonderful.

But just as he was going to eat it there came down to the beach from the Altogether Uninhabited Interior one Rhinoceros. This rhinoceros had a horn on his nose, two piggy eyes, and few manners.

In those days the Rhinoceros's skin fitted him quite tight. There were no wrinkles in it anywhere. He looked exactly like a Noah's Ark Rhinoceros, but of course much bigger.

All the same, he had no manners then, and he has no manners now. More than that, he never will have any manners.

He said, 'How!'

This scared the Parsee so much that he left that cake. He climbed to the top of a palm tree with nothing

Then he lay down on the sands and rolled and rolled and rolled. And every time he rolled the cake crumbs tickled him worse and worse and worse.

Then he ran to the palm-tree and rubbed and rubbed and rubbed himself against it. He rubbed so much and so hard that he rubbed his skin into a great fold over his shoulders. Then he rubbed another fold underneath, where the buttons used to be (but he rubbed the buttons off). Then he rubbed some more folds over his legs.

It spoiled his temper, but it didn't make the least difference to the cake-crumbs. They were inside his skin and they tickled.

So he went home, very angry indeed and horribly scratchy. And from that day to this every rhino has great folds in his skin and a very bad temper. And it's all on account of the cake-crumbs inside.

But the Parsee came down from his palm tree, wearing his hat, from which the rays of the sun were reflected in more-than-oriental splendor. He packed up his cooking stove, and went away in the direction of the Upland Meadows, and the Marshes of Sonaput.

But the Rhino took off his skin and carried it over his shoulder as he came down to the beach to bathe. In those days it buttoned underneath with three buttons and looked like a raincoat.

He said nothing whatever about the Parsee's cake, because he had eaten it all. He never had any manners, then, since, or ever. He waddled straight into the water and blew bubbles through his nose, leaving his skin on the beach.

That's when the Parsee came by and found the skin. He smiled one smile that ran all round his face two times. Then he danced three times round the skin and rubbed his hands. Then he went to his camp and filled his hat with cake-crumbs. There were lots of crumbs, for the Parsee never ate anything but cake, and he never swept out his camp.

He took that skin, and he shook that skin. He scrubbed that skin, and he rubbed that skin. He filled it just as full of old, dry, stale, tickly cake-crumbs and some burned currants as ever it could possibly hold. Then he climbed to the top of his palm-tree and waited for the Rhino to come out of the water and put it on.

And the Rhino did. He buttoned it up with the three buttons, and it tickled like cake crumbs in bed. Then he wanted to scratch, but that made it worse.

on but his hat, from which the rays of the sun were always reflected in more-than-oriental splendor.

Then the Rhinoceros upset the oil-stove with his nose. The cake rolled on the sand, over and over. The rhino spiked that cake on the horn of his nose, and he ate it. Then he went away, waving his tail, to the desolate and Exclusively Uninhabited Interior.

Then the Parsee came down from his palm-tree and put the stove on its legs and said the following:--

Them that takes cakes
Which the Parsee-man bakes
Makes dreadful mistakes.

And there was a great deal more in that than you would think.

Because, five weeks later, there was a heat wave in the Red Sea. Everybody took off all the clothes they had. The Parsee even took off his hat



THIS is the Parsee beginning to eat his cake on the Uninhabited Island in the Red Sea on a very hot day. The Rhino is coming down from the Altogether Uninhabited Interior, which, as you can see, is all rocky.

The Rhino's skin is quite smooth, and the three buttons that button it up are underneath, so you can't see them.

The squiggly things on the Parsee's hat are the rays of the sun reflected in more-than-oriental splendor. If I had drawn real rays they would have filled up all the picture.

The cake has currants in it. The wheel-thing lying on the sand in front belonged to one of Pharaoh's chariots when he tried to cross the Red Sea. The Parsee found it, and kept it to play with. The Parsee's name was Pestonjee Bomonjee.

The Rhino was called Storks, because he breathed through his mouth instead of his nose. I wouldn't ask anything about the cooking-stove if *I* were you.