THE GREAT RACE

STORY OF THE CHINESE ZODIAC



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Children's Books

Long ago, in very ancient China, there were no years, or days, or hours. The sun rose and fell without anyone knowing how much time had passed, as there was no way of telling.

One day, the Jade Emperor realised that he did not know how old he was. “We must have a way of measuring time!” he thought.

So he gathered all the animals in the kingdom together and said, “Tomorrow there will be a Great Race! The first twelve animals to cross the river will each have a year named after them.”

All the animals wanted to win this wonderful prize.

Among the animals were
the cat and the rat,
who were great friends.





"Let's win this race
together!" said the cat.
"Make sure you wake me
up," he added,
for he often slept all day.

In the morning,
the rat tried to wake the cat.
He nudged, pushed, tickled
and shouted, but it was
impossible to wake him!





So he crept out of
the house and headed
for the river.

On his way, the rat met an ox. "Are you joining the race, Rat?"
asked the ox. "Ride on my back, and I will carry you across."



"I will sing to you to say thanks," said the rat, and he climbed aboard.



The Great Race had begun! The big ox, such a kind and gentle beast,
swam gracefully across the big river, serenaded by his new friend.

But as soon as the rat saw land…

… he leapt from the ox
and fell at the feet of the Emperor.

"Congratulations, clever rat!"
said the Emperor.

"The first year
will be named after you.
And the second year,
my kind ox, will belong
to you."