FEET PROBLEMS

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Children's Book Trust, New Delhi
One morning Batty, the caterpillar, looked down at his worn-out shoes and sighed. He could not wear them any longer. He had to get himself new shoes!
Caterpillars do not like going to shoe shops, and shoe shop assistants do not like caterpillars either! Caterpillars have so many legs, and to pull off old shoes and put on new ones on all those feet took hours.

Reluctantly, Batty set off for the shoe shop with his dozens of feet taking lagging steps. He went down the tree, across the lawn to the rose bush under which a beetle had his shop.
When he saw Batty, the beetle called, "Ladybird, my pal, shoes needed for the gent."
"In a minute," answered the ladybird, cheerfully. When she saw Batty, her smile faded. "I have not finished with the butterfly yet!" she said, glumly.

“Never mind, I will wait,” said Batty and sat patiently as the butterfly changed its mind five times. The ladybird fawned upon the butterfly till it left finally, wearing red high-heeled shoes on four legs and yellow on the other two.
The ladybird turned to Batty. Grimly she worked at Batty’s feet till it was time to close the shop. Batty was stiff with embarrassment.
As Batty trudged back he thought, ‘How lovely the butterfly looks with just six feet! How I wish I could look like that!’
When Batty climbed up his tree, he was very hungry. He crunched into a tender shoot, then another, and another till he ate through the night. The food made him very sleepy. He wove himself a cosy cocoon and slept. Weeks passed.
Batty awoke slowly. He tried to stretch but could not. ‘Where am I?’ he thought, in panic. ‘I must get out of here.’

He bit the cocoon and banged at it with all his might. At last it broke up. Breathing in the fresh air, Batty flopped back on a leaf, exhausted.

Looking at the elegant long legs waving in front of him, Batty wondered, “Whose are these lovely legs?”
He gazed down and discovered they were attached to his body. Batty leapt up, his mind whirling. He looked over himself and realized that he had become a truly beautiful, gloriously-coloured butterfly. He was no longer a dull, brown caterpillar with dozens of tubby, black legs. Joy filled him.

Opening his new wings, he flew off the tree, across the lawn to the shoe shop, under the rose bush.
“High heels, three pairs! Three colours!”
He sang out.
The pert ladybird rushed forward eagerly to serve him.
Feet Problems won second prize in the category Read-aloud Books/Picture Books in the Competition for Writers of Children's Books organized by Children’s Book Trust. The other stories by the author, published by CBT, are 'No Dead End' in Kaleidoscope and 'Twin Trouble' in 22 Short Stories.

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