

(2) The Lion and the Mouse

Once upon a time, in a large and quiet forest, a big lion was taking a long nap. The afternoon sun was very warm, and the trees gave him a nice place to hide from the heat. The lion was the king of all the animals because he was very strong and brave. He rested his heavy head on his large paws and fell fast asleep. He felt very safe and happy in his forest home.

Nearby, a tiny mouse was looking for some seeds to eat for her lunch. She was moving very fast because she was afraid of the big animals. In her great rush, she did not look where she was going. She ran right onto the lion's face! She scrambled over his nose and near his ears. The lion woke up quickly because he was mad that someone had disturbed his sleep. He reached out his big paw and caught the mouse.

"What are you doing on my nose?" the lion roared. "You woke me up from a very good nap! I think I will eat you for a snack right now because I am hungry."

"Oh, please, King Lion!" the mouse cried. "I am so sorry! I did not mean to wake you up. Please spare my life today. If you let me go, I promise to help you one day. I will be your best friend."

The lion looked at the tiny mouse and began to laugh. He laughed so hard that the trees shook. "You help me?" he asked. "You are so small, and I am so big. How could a tiny mouse ever help a king like me? That is the funniest thing I have ever heard!" But the lion was in a kind mood, so he decided to be generous. He lifted his paw and let the mouse run away. "Go on then," he said. "Run away before I change my mind!"

A few weeks passed. The lion was walking through the forest. He did not see that some hunters had hidden a trap. Suddenly, a thick net fell over the lion, and he was caught! He tried to pull away, but the ropes were very strong. The more he moved, the tighter the net became. The lion began to roar in anger because he was trapped. He roared loudly so every animal could hear him.

The mouse heard the lion's voice. She ran through the tall grass until she found him. "Do not worry, King Lion," the mouse said. "I am here to save you today!"

"How can you help?" the lion asked. "The ropes are too thick for me to break with my sharp claws."

The mouse began to chew on the thick ropes because her teeth were sharp. She worked very hard for a long time. Bit by bit, the rope started to break. Finally, the lion was able to crawl out of the net, and he was free at last!

"You were right," the lion said. "I was wrong to laugh at you. You are a small mouse, but you are a great friend."

They stayed friends for a long time. Even a small friend can do a big thing.