



LION AND MOUSE

Aesop

It was a hot day, and Lion was sleeping under a rock. He was a big lion, very splendid and noble. In fact, as everyone knows, he was king of all animals. Now it so happened that Mouse had lost her way. Running hither and thither, she stumbled over Lion's very nose and woke him. Instantly Lion put out a paw and held Mouse fast to the ground. Mice, as everyone knows, are very little animals, and this mouse was especially little. But she stuck her head out from under Lion's paw and began to speak piteously.

"Oh, Your Majesty," she squeaked, "please forgive me. I didn't mean to trip over Your Majesty's nose and wake Your Majesty, truly I didn't. Of course Your Majesty *could* squash me dead with one squash, but would it be worth it for such a noble and dignified animal as a lion to squash such a miserable little creature as a mouse?"

"Stop squeaking!" ordered Lion. "Tell me why I should be merciful to such an insignificant creature as you."

"Well," said Mouse, "it is a noble act for a king to be merciful. It shows how noble he is. Besides, Your Majesty, perhaps one day even a

miserable little creature like me *might* be able to do Your Majesty a good turn. Who knows?”

“Ho, ho, ho!” laughed Lion, king of all animals, with a great roar that nearly terrified Mouse out of her small wits. “That’s a good one—a mouse help a lion! Well, that’s a good joke, upon my whiskers.”

And he twiddled his whiskers to show what fine whiskers they were, and also how amused he was.

“Well, I didn’t say it *would* happen,” said Mouse, “I only said it *might*.”

And *she* twiddled *her* whiskers, just to show that she too had whiskers, even though they were such little whiskers.

“Very well,” said Lion. “Off you go, and leave me to my sleep. And in the future, mind where you’re going.”

“Oh, I will, Your Majesty,” said Mouse. “Thank you so *very* much for sparing my life.”

But Lion only snored. He was asleep again.

Well, a long time afterward, Lion was roaming through the jungle, not looking where he was going, because he was king of all animals and had become just a bit careless. And he fell right into a trap that some hunters had set for him. It was a deep pit covered over with a net covered over with leaves. Into the pit fell Lion with the net all around him, so that he got tangled up in it and couldn’t free himself. So he let out a great roar, and the whole jungle shook with his roaring, and every creature in the jungle stopped what he was doing and trembled with fear.

Not far off the little mouse put down a cornstalk she was nibbling and said to herself, “Now, where have I heard *that* noise before? Why, of course, it’s King Lion, and it sounds as if he’s in trouble.”

So in less than one minute she had run to the place where Lion was caught in the net and begun to bite through the strings of the net. Soon she had made a hole large enough for Lion to get through, so he was able to escape and wasn’t caught by the hunters after all.

But I am sorry to say that he didn’t thank Mouse quite so graciously as he ought to have done. But Mouse did not mind. She scampered away to look for the cornstalk she had put down when she heard King Lion’s roar.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Why does Lion let Mouse go?

- Why does Mouse keep telling Lion that he is “noble” and she is “a miserable little creature”? (1)
- Why does Lion think the idea of Mouse helping him is a “good joke”? (2)
- Why does Mouse say to Lion, “Well, I didn’t say it *would* happen . . . I only said it *might*”? (2)
- Why does Mouse twiddle her own whiskers after Lion does?