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THE LION AND THE MOUSE

Once upon a time, there was a big, strong, and majestic lion who lived in the heart of the jungle. His golden mane shone when the sunlight came through the trees, and his roar was so powerful that it could be heard from far away. All the animals respected him, and sometimes they were even a little afraid of him, because they knew he was the king of the jungle.

Every day, the lion walked through his land with calm and steady steps. He looked at the tall trees, listened to the birds singing, and

felt the wind moving through his mane. He liked to explore the jungle and rest when the day became too warm.

One hot afternoon, after walking for a long time, the lion looked for a cool place to sleep. He found the shade of a large tree, lay down on the grass, and slowly closed his eyes. In just a few minutes, he was fast asleep. Everything around him seemed peaceful. The leaves moved gently, butterflies flew near the flowers, and the air felt warm and quiet.

Very close by lived a little mouse who was small, curious, and full of energy. He was quick, playful, and always exploring new corners of the jungle. He loved to run between rocks, hide under dry leaves, and look for seeds to store. That day, while walking nearby, he saw the great lion sleeping under the tree.

The little mouse stopped for a moment and looked at him in amazement.

—What a huge animal! —he whispered—. I have never seen a lion so close before.

At first, he felt a little scared, but he was very curious, so he moved closer little by little. He walked around the lion, looked at

his big paws, his long tail, and his thick mane. Then, because everything seemed so surprising, he carefully climbed onto one of the lion's legs.

The little mouse climbed a bit higher and, without thinking about the danger, started running and playing on the lion's body as if he were climbing a small hill. He went here and there, jumping happily, until suddenly the lion opened his eyes.

In an instant, the great lion lifted one paw and caught the little mouse.

—How dare you disturb my sleep? —roared the lion—. You are so small that I could eat you right now.

The little mouse became terribly frightened. His tiny body shook, his whiskers trembled, and he could hardly speak.

—Please, Mr. Lion —he said in a shaky voice—, don't hurt me. I did not mean to wake you. I was only playing without thinking. Please forgive me. If you let me go, one day I might help you.

When he heard that, the lion burst into laughter.

—You help me? —he said, laughing—. You are one of the smallest animals I have ever seen. How could you help a lion as strong as I am?

The little mouse was still afraid, but he gathered his courage and answered honestly:

—Maybe it seems impossible to you now, Mr. Lion, but I will never forget your kindness if you set me free.

The lion looked at him for a few seconds. It was true that the mouse was very small, but he also seemed kind and brave. Then, in a good mood, the lion decided to forgive him.

—All right —he said at last—. I will let you go today. But do not wake me again.

He lifted his paw and set the little mouse free.

The tiny animal jumped back and breathed in relief.

—Thank you very much, Mr. Lion —he said gratefully—. I will never forget what you have done for me.

Then he quickly ran away through the grass until he disappeared.

Several days passed. The jungle was still full of life, with its usual sounds, colors, and movement. One morning, the lion went for a walk as he did every day. He moved calmly, looking around, without knowing that a dangerous trap was very close.

Some hunters had left a large net hidden among the trees. The lion did not see it, and after taking a few more steps, the net suddenly fell over him.

—Grrr! —he roared loudly.

The lion began to struggle to get out. He pulled with his paws, moved his body, shook his head, and tried to tear the ropes apart. But the more he moved, the more tangled he became. The net was thick and strong, and he could not escape.

Then he let out a mighty roar that shook the air.

—Help! Help me! —he roared desperately.

Not far away, the little mouse was looking for food among some roots when he heard that roar.

He lifted his head and opened his little ears wide.

—That roar... it is Mr. Lion! —he said in alarm—. He must be in trouble.

Without wasting a second, the little mouse ran as fast as he could. He rushed past branches, stones, and bushes, following the sound until at last he reached the place. When he saw the lion trapped in the net, he understood at once what had happened.

—Do not worry, Mr. Lion —said the little mouse—. I will help you. The lion looked at him with surprise and even a little shame.

—My little friend... you came —he said in a tired voice.

—Of course I did —answered the little mouse—. Now stay still so I can work better.

Then he began to gnaw at the ropes of the net with his tiny teeth. He bit one rope, then another, and then one more. He worked very quickly, but also with patience. Even though he was small, his teeth were sharp, and little by little they cut through the strong fibers of the net.

The lion stayed as still as he could. He watched the little mouse carefully and no longer thought he was weak or unimportant.

Now he understood that every living creature has something valuable.

After a good while, one part of the net broke. Then another rope fell to the ground. The little mouse kept biting without giving up until he made a hole big enough.

—Now, Mr. Lion! —he said.

The lion pushed hard one more time, pulled out one paw, then the other, moved his body, and finally freed himself completely. Once he was out, he took a deep breath and lifted his head with relief.

He looked at the little mouse with eyes full of gratitude.

—Thank you, my little friend —he said softly—. Today you saved my life. I laughed when you said you could help me, but now I see that I was wrong.

The little mouse smiled humbly.

—It does not matter if someone is small, Mr. Lion. Sometimes even the tiniest one can do something great.

The lion nodded.

—That is true. I have learned a very important lesson.

From that day on, the lion and the mouse became good friends. Whenever they met in the jungle, they greeted each other with joy and respect. The lion never again made fun of small animals, and the little mouse always remembered that an act of kindness can return when it is needed most.

And so, in that great jungle, everyone learned that no one is too small to help, and no one is too big to need help.

THE END

