



Aesop's Fables

17. THE LION AND THE MOUSE

By Rob John

A Mouse was scurrying through the forest when he saw a Lion sleeping under a tree.

The Mouse stopped and said to the Lion: 'You may be very big but I'm not scared of you.'

The Mouse climbed up the Lion's tail and sat down on its back leg. 'Oh no, Mr Lion, you don't frighten me one little bit.'

Still the Lion didn't move so the Mouse walked along the Lion's side and climbed up towards his head. 'All the animals in the forest are scared of you, Mr Lion, but not us mice 'cos mice are the bravest creatures in the world.'

Again the Lion didn't move so the mouse climbed up the lions face and shouted in his ear. 'Why should we be scared of lazy lions who spend all day snoring under trees?'

The Mouse was enjoying himself and feeling very brave when he noticed that the Lion's eye was open and looking straight at him.

Quick as a flash the Lion grabbed the little Mouse in his paw.

'What were you saying?' said the Lion.

'Nothing,' said the little Mouse.

'Something about brave mice and lazy lions..?'

'That wasn't me,' said the Mouse. 'I'd never say that. I think lions are...'

'Quiet,' said the Lion. 'I'm going to eat you. What do you think about that?'

'Don't think that's a good idea,' said the Mouse.

'Why's that?' said the Lion.

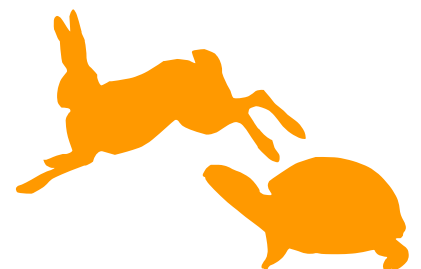
'Because...'

'Because what?' said the Lion.

'Because...' And suddenly an idea flashed into the Mouse's tiny head. 'Because one day I could help you.'

The Lion roared with laughter. 'You? How could a tiny Mouse help a huge Lion like me..?'

'I don't know,' said the Mouse. 'Maybe I could...'





‘Yes?’ said the Lion.

‘Maybe I could...’

‘Yes?’

The Mouse couldn’t think of a single way in which a tiny mouse could help a lion. He shut his eyes and waited to be eaten. But the Lion didn’t eat the Mouse. He just laughed and gently put the Mouse down on the ground.

‘That’s the funniest thing I’ve ever heard,’ said the Lion. ‘A tiny mouse helping a huge lion like me. I’m not going to eat you after all, little Mouse. You’re too funny to eat. I’m going to let you go.’

‘Oh, thank you,’ said the Mouse. ‘I think that’s a very wise decision. I meant what I said. I will help you Mr Lion. One day. Just you wait and see.’

The Lion laughed again: ‘Off you go little one,’ he roared, ‘before I die laughing.’

The Mouse ran away feeling very lucky. But the very next day he was scurrying through the forest when he heard more roaring.

This time though, it wasn’t a roar of laughter but a roar of pain and fear. The Mouse crept closer to the terrible sound and saw the same Lion all tangled up in a hunter’s net. The more he struggled the more tangled up he became.

He was just about to run away when the Mouse remembered how the Lion could have eaten him but let him go. And then the Mouse remembered saying: ‘I will help you, Mr Lion. One day. Just you wait and see.’

Suddenly the Mouse was chewing at the ropes and gnawing as fast as he could. His teeth were tiny but razor sharp and soon he had cut the ropes and the Lion was free. The Mouse looked at the Lion. The Lion looked at the Mouse.

‘Yesterday I laughed when you said you would help me. I’m not laughing now. You are a very brave little Mouse. Just goes to show you don’t have to be big to be a big friend. Thank you.’

‘That’s alright,’ said the Mouse. ‘You get into trouble again just give me a shout, OK?’

‘OK,’ said the Lion and he turned and walked away.

The Mouse watched him go. He smiled to himself and now somehow he didn’t feel quite so little.