

A MOUSE ADVENTURE

WHEN Mousie came home from a journey, the Mouse family asked him to tell them what had happened. And he told them of his adventure in a blue vase.

"I saw a little house in a forest," he said. "I looked at it. I sat there alone in the night and wished and wished I could get into that little house. I was very hungry. Then, suddenly, the door opened. A man stood in the doorway. He looked up at the stars and down at the water, and he breathed the air, deep. He said, 'What a lovely night!' and just stood there."

"Well," said Auntie Mouse, "a night beside the water is nice."

"Then I slipped right into the house," squealed Mousie Mouse, "just as easy! The man never saw me."

"Was there any way to get out?" asked Madame Mouse.

"That's just it, Mother," said Mousie Mouse. "There wasn't any way to get out."

"That was one time you didn't use your head, Mousie," said his mother.

Mousie cast down his eyes. "No, Mother, I forgot everything you had taught me. You see, I smelled cheese."

"Oh!" said Auntie Mouse.

"Well, there I was," Mousie Mouse said. "The man came in and closed the door. And there on a big chair was a great white cat."

"O-oh!" squealed little brother Mouse. "A great white cat! What did you do, Mousie?"

"It was a very lazy cat. He just didn't bother to come after me—at first."

"Maybe he didn't even notice you, Mousie. Some cats haven't much sense,"

sniffed Auntie Mouse.

"I think the cat saw me, Auntie. You know, I was dreadfully frightened! I couldn't move. I just stood still and the cat and I stared straight at each other."

"Staring at a cat!" exclaimed Madame Mouse.

"The cat had big shining eyes. He looked at me as if I were nothing at all. Then he stretched out his paws, lazier than ever. 'I don't care for mice,' he said. 'But I'll catch him after a while!' He yawned. He had very sharp teeth."

"That house was a trap!" said Madame Mouse. "Just a trap! And a son of mine walked right into it!"

"But Mother, I got out. I did use my head!" squealed Mousie Mouse. "There was only one large room to that house,



"A Mouse!" said the cat. "A mouse is fun."

and a little kitchen. Well, of course I slipped into the kitchen right away."

"Cheese!" Auntie Mouse settled her glasses directly over her eyes. "Cheese!"

"Yes, cheese and crackers, too, Auntie Mouse, but I ate very little. I knew if I ate very much I might get sleepy. After I had eaten, I went into the large room again, and there was the cat, sitting there looking at me with his big shining eyes.

"Pretty soon the man put down the book he had been reading. He locked the door. He put the cat down on the floor and went to bed. The chair was his bed, you see."

"Oh, Mousie!" cried Madame Mouse. "And then the cat ———."

"The cat went off to a much smaller chair that was his bed," Mousie explained. "He doubled himself up comfortably. 'A mouse!' he said. 'I haven't had a mouse in the house—well, never in this house. A mouse is fun!'"

"Fun!" sniffed Auntie Mouse with a great leap in the air.

"But I'm so sleepy!" the cat said. "I think I ate too much liver for supper. Well, he can't get out. Time enough!"

"Just as soon as I thought it was safe," Mousie went on, "I tried the windows of the little house. They were tightly fastened. There was no way to get out of the house. Then I began to plan. I said to myself, 'The man will go out in the morning, and I'll go out, too!'"

"But there was the whole night with that old cat!" exclaimed Auntie Mouse. "I can't think what cats are good for, anyway."

"Well, the big cat on the chair went to sleep," said Mousie. "I thought and thought, I had noticed a shelf, up rather high, and on it was a blue vase. I said to myself, 'The cat can't get in that vase

and I can. In the morning I can get out again.' So I climbed up to the shelf and sat close to the blue vase.

"The night seemed to get blacker and blacker. I could hear some water outside making a kind of rushing noise. Then a wind began to blow about the little house. It seemed a long time before anything happened. Everyone in the place was sleeping except me, and I felt sleepy, too. I just *had* to keep my eyes open, and it was not easy to do it. Then I saw the great white cat moving—moving—"

"O-ooh!" cried little brother Mouse.

"There he is," said the cat, "up on the shelf. But who ever heard of a mouse getting away from a cat?"

"Well, I had, but I didn't care to argue just at that moment. In another second that horrid cat jumped up to the shelf, and I was tucked away in the blue vase. It was a vase with a narrow top, and wider underneath. I knew that the cat couldn't get his paw into the opening. But my heart beat pretty fast. 'Ha! Ha!' said the cat. I could just hear the cat's voice echoing through that vase. 'In the vase—think of that!' said the cat. 'What a wise little mouse!' He gave one push with his paw, and the vase went—bang—down to the floor!"

"Oh, Mousie!" exclaimed Auntie Mouse.

"It was a long fall, Auntie, but only the neck of the vase broke. I was stunned. I just stayed in the lower part of that vase, trembling. I simply couldn't move.

"Then the man jumped up. He made a light, and said to the cat in a cross voice, 'There! you've knocked my vase off the shelf and broken it. Aren't you ashamed!'"

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TURTLE AND DEER

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"You must sit here in the grass, wife, and when the deer comes up, you must say, 'How slow you are! I have been waiting for you at least ten minutes!'"

Then the turtle trudged to the starting point of the race where all the animals were assembled to witness the unusual event.

"Caw! Caw! Maybe the turtle will win! Caw! Caw! Maybe the turtle will win!" croaked the wise old crow.

Old Judge Billy Goat was there to start them off. The two contestants lined up.

"One! Get ready. Two! Get set. Three! Go." Like a flash the deer sped away at a terrific speed. The turtle waddled along a short distance until the tall grass hid him from view, and then he squatted down to await the return of the deer.

The deer ran with all his might until presently he neared the large rock which was the turning point of the contestants.

To his amazement the turtle's wife stood up as he approached, and said, "How slow you are! I have been waiting for you at least ten minutes." (The deer thought this was his op-

ponent in the race.)

"About face, and return," said the surprised deer. And he started back, running faster than ever.

When the turtle saw the deer coming a long distance away, he started to waddle back to the starting point. He arrived there just a few feet ahead of the deer. He sank down under the great tree, and pretended to be all out of breath from hard running.

When the deer saw the turtle fanning himself all out of breath, he felt so ashamed that he did not wait to hear the decision of old Judge Billy Goat. He turned and ran toward the forest, not daring to show his face any more.

"Caw! Caw! I told you the turtle would win! Caw! Caw! I told you the turtle would win!" croaked the wise old crow.

And all the animals shouted, "Hurrah for old Slow Foot! He is not so slow after all!"

Thousands of years ago Aesop, the wise Greek, told this same story, only in his version the hedgehog and the hare were the contestants.

At the end of the story Aesop said, "It is not always the swiftest who wins the race; sometimes the quickest witted wins."

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"There's a mouse in it!" said the big white cat.

"But the man didn't understand what the cat said. He picked up the two pieces of the blue vase, pulled the door open, and threw the pieces of vase right toward the water."

"And you were in one of them, Mousie!" Madame Mouse cried.

"The minute the man picked up the pieces," Mousie said, "my head began to work. It worked hard and quickly, Mother. I knew that if I reached the water in that piece of blue glass I'd sink to the bottom and probably drown. So just as the man threw the pieces toward the water, I jumped.

"I landed on the branch of a tree that was hanging over the water. The wind whirled the branch this way and that way, but I hung on. Pretty soon I was safe on the ground. I ran up to the window sill of the little house, and I said to the cat, 'Whoever heard of a mouse getting away from a cat!' Then I laughed, jumped down, and ran as hard as I could for home. And here I am."

Wasn't that a mouse adventure!