

THE TINY BRAVE MOUSE

Once there was a little mouse named Neal. He was so little that when he was young, all the other mice made fun of him. But he was a spirited mouse, he did not let the others stop him from exploring and playing.

When he grew up, the other mice found him very helpful, for he had learned to squeeze into tiny, tiny places to find food for them. He could do lots of things the bigger mice could not do. As he got older, he became sort of a hero to the other mice.

A cat had been killing off many of the mice from Neal's family. Even some of his closest friends had been eaten by this cat. One day the cat pounced on Neal and was about to eat him. "Wait! Wait!" demanded Neal, "If you are smart, you wouldn't want to eat me."

"Who are you kidding," laughed the cat, "you are so tiny, how could you help me?" "Give me a chance", said Neal, "I am very clever; I can help you in many ways. If I do not help you, you can always eat me later," the mouse acted very certain of his powers.

"OK," demanded the cat, "show me what you can do?"

"You must be hungry," squeaked Neal, "I'll help you get something else to eat besides me."

They walked until the mouse suddenly stopped. He had a plan. The cat listened intently as Neal described it. Some blackbirds were sitting in a nearby tree. "Those blackbirds love to eat tiny mice like me. They would gobble me right up," he said. His plan was to walk boldly across the meadow as bait for a blackbird.

"When the bird swoops down to grab me, you had better grab him quick. My life depends upon it," warned the mouse. Sure enough, it happened just as the mouse described. The cat got his bird, and the Neal got his life.

"You are very clever," said the cat, "and very brave." The cat was impressed, and the mouse was grateful. They soon became good friends.

One day, as they walked together, a big dog jumped in front of them growling and snapping at the cat and mouse. The cat arched his back, spat at the dog, spun around and was about to run away when another dog blocked his way. Another dog and then another surrounded them.

As these dogs were closing in for the kill, the mouse screamed as loud and as high as he could. His voice was so loud and so high in pitch, the dogs froze in pain and terror. They were so frightened that they ran away yelping and holding their tails down between their legs.

"You saved my life," cried the cat, "I shall have to repay you." So, the cat let the mouse go home to his family and friends and never ate any mice ever again.