

## **The Buffalo and the Field Mouse**

### **A Native American Tale**

Once upon a time, when the Field-Mouse was out gathering wild beans for the winter, his neighbor, the Buffalo, came down to graze in the meadow. This the little Mouse did not like, for he knew that the other would mow down all the long grass with his prickly tongue, and there would be no place in which to hide. He made up his mind to offer battle like a man.

"Ho, Friend Buffalo, I challenge you to a fight!" he exclaimed in a small, squeaking voice.

The Buffalo paid no attention, thinking it only a joke. The Mouse angrily repeated the challenge, and still his enemy went on quietly grazing. Then the little Mouse laughed with contempt as he offered his defiance. The Buffalo at last looked at him and replied carelessly:

"You had better keep still, little one, or I shall come over there and step on you, and there will be nothing left! "

"You can't do it!" replied the Mouse.

"I tell you to keep still," insisted the Buffalo, who was getting angry. "If you speak to me again, I shall certainly come and put an end to you! "

"I dare you to do it!" said the Mouse, provoking him.

Thereupon the other rushed upon him. He trampled the grass clumsily and tore up the earth with his front hoofs. When he had ended, he looked for the Mouse, but he could not see him anywhere.

"I told you I would step on you, and there would be nothing left!" he muttered.

Just then he felt a scratching inside his right ear. He shook his head as hard as he could, and twitched his ears back and forth. The gnawing went deeper and deeper until he was half wild with the pain. He pawed with his hoofs and tore up the sod with his horns. Bellowing madly, he ran as fast as he could, first straight forward and then in circles, but at last he stopped and stood trembling. Then the Mouse jumped out of his ear, and said:

"Will you own now that I am master? "

"No!" bellowed the Buffalo, and again he started toward the Mouse, as if to trample him under his feet. The little fellow was nowhere to be seen, but in a minute the Buffalo felt him in the other ear. Once more he became wild with pain, and ran here and there over the prairie, at times leaping high in the air. At last he fell to the ground and lay quite still. The Mouse came out of his ear, and stood proudly upon his dead body.

"Eho!" said he, "I have killed the greatest of all beasts. This will show to all that I am master! "

Standing upon the body of the dead Buffalo, he called loudly for a knife with which to dress his game.

In another part of the meadow, Red Fox, very hungry, was hunting mice for his breakfast. He saw one and jumped upon him with all four feet, but the little Mouse got away, and he was terribly disappointed.

All at once he thought he heard a distant call: "Bring a knife! Bring a knife ! "

When the second call came, Red Fox started in the direction of the sound. At the first knoll he stopped and listened, but hearing nothing more, he was about to go back. Just then he heard the call plainly, but in a very thin voice, "Bring a knife!" Red Fox immediately set out again and ran as fast as he could.

By and by he came upon the huge body of the Buffalo lying upon the ground. The little Mouse still stood upon the body.

"I want you to dress this Buffalo for me and I will give you some of the meat," commanded the Mouse.

"Thank you, my friend, I shall be glad to do this for you," he replied, politely.

The Fox dressed the Buffalo, while the Mouse sat upon a mound near by, looking on and giving his orders. "You must cut the meat into small pieces," he said to the Fox. When the Fox had finished his work, the Mouse paid him with a small piece of liver. He swallowed it quickly and smacked his lips.

"Please, may I have another piece?" he asked quite humbly.

"Why, I gave you a very large piece! How greedy you are!" exclaimed the Mouse. "You may have some of the blood clots," he sneered. So the poor Fox took the blood clots and even licked off the grass. He was really very hungry.

"Please may I take home a piece of the meat?" he begged. "I have six little folks at home, and there is nothing for them to eat."

"You can take the four feet of the Buffalo. That ought to be enough for all of you!"

"Hi, hi! Thank you, thank you!" said the Fox. "But, Mouse, I have a wife also, and we have had bad luck in hunting. We are almost starved. Can't you spare me a little more?"

"Why," declared the Mouse, "I have already overpaid you for the little work you have done. However, you can take the head, too!"

Thereupon the Fox jumped upon the Mouse, who gave one faint squeak and disappeared.

If you are proud and selfish you will lose all in the end.