

THE STORY MUSEUM

Mouse Deer and Tiger

I wonder whether you've heard of a Mouse Deer. A Mouse Deer has the face of a mouse with a cute little snout. He also has the legs and body of a deer. Mouse Deer is tiny, no taller than your knee, and brown all over with white markings, rather like a fawn. He lives in the forests of Indonesia and Malaysia and many large animals there want to eat him. But Mouse Deer is cunning and always gets away. As he scampers through the forest he often sings a little song:

*I am quick and sharp and I have no fear
Who am I? I'm the Little Mouse Deer*

One day, little Mouse Deer was walking through the forest when Tiger pounced out before him. "I want you for my lunch, Mouse Deer." Mouse Deer looked at a nearby puddle and replied. "I'd love to be your lunch, Tiger, but I'm doing a very important job guarding the king's pudding. It's smooth and creamy and tastes like chocolate." "I want to taste it," begged Tiger. "Oh no" replied Mouse Deer I couldn't possibly let you. The king doesn't want anyone to eat his pudding. That's why I'm guarding it." "Just a tiny taste," pleaded Tiger. The King will never know." "Oh very well then," said Mouse Deer, "but I'll have to run away. Then if you get caught no one will blame me." Mouse Deer shot away into the forest and the Tiger sampled the king's pudding: a muddy puddle!

Tiger followed Mouse Deer's tracks and found him calmly waiting for him under a tree where Mouse Deer had secretly discovered a wasp's nest. "Now I shall have you for my lunch, Mouse Deer," said Tiger. "I'd love to be your lunch, Tiger, but I'm doing a very important job guarding the king's drum," said Mouse Deer, excitedly. "When you bang it, it has the deepest sound. It goes through your ears and all the way down to your toes and all you can do is dance!" "I would love to beat the king's drum," begged Tiger." "I couldn't possibly let you do that" said Mouse Deer. "The King doesn't want anybody to touch his drum! That's why I'm guarding it." "Just one thump," pleaded the Tiger."The King would never know." "Oh very well then," said Mouse Deer, "but I'll have to run away. Then if you get caught no one will blame me." Mouse Deer scampered away into the forest and the Tiger banged the king's drum. The angry wasps stung him and chased him into a river where he had to hide until the wasps got bored and left.

Tiger was furious and tracked Mouse Deer down again. This time he found him standing alongside a coiled up cobra snake who was fast asleep. "Now I really shall have you for my lunch," he roared. "I'd love to be your lunch, Tiger, but unfortunately, I'm guarding the king's belt," said Mouse Deer. Tiger looked at the beautiful scaly pattern on the king's belt. "I want to try it on," he begged, spellbound by the colours and design." "Oh no" said Mouse Deer, "I couldn't possibly let you do that. The King doesn't want anyone to wear his belt." "Just for a minute," pleaded Tiger. "The King need never know." "Oh very well then," said Mouse Deer, "but I'll have to run away. Then if you get caught no one will blame me." Mouse Deer shot into the forest and when Tiger put the belt on, the snake awoke and began to tie itself around the Tiger, hissing and spitting into his face. "Help!" Tiger cried.

But Mouse Deer was already far away in the forest singing his song....

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