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THE COZY LION

I SHALL never forget the scolding I gave him to begin with. One of the advantages of being a Fairy even quite a common one is that Lions can't bite you. A Fairy is too little and too light. If they snap at you it's easy to fly through their mouths, and even if they catch you, if you just get behind their teeth you can make them so uncomfortable that they will beg you to get out and leave them in peace.

Of course it was all the Lion's fault that I scolded him. Lions ought to live far away from people. Nobody likes Lions roaming about – particularly where there are children. But this Lion said he wanted to get into Society, and that he was very fond of children – little fat ones between three and four. So instead of living on a desert, or in a deep forest or a jungle he took the large Cave on the Huge Green Hill, only a few miles from a village full of the fattest, rosiest little children you ever saw.

He had only been living in the Cave a few days, but even in that short time the mothers and fathers had found out he was

there, and everybody who could afford it had bought a gun and snatched it up even if they saw a donkey coming down the road, because they were afraid it might turn out to be a Lion. As for the mothers, they were nearly crazy with fright, and dare not let their children go out to play and had to shut them up in top rooms and cupboards and cellars, they were so afraid the Lion might be hiding behind trees to jump out at them. So everything was beginning to be quite spoiled because nobody could have any fun.

Of course if they had had any sense and believed in Fairies and had just gone out some moonlight night and all joined hands and danced slowly around in a circle and sung:

> Fairies pink and Fairies rose
> Fairies dancing on pearly toes
> We want you, Oh! we want you!
> Fairy Queens and Fairy slaves
> Who are not afraid of Lions' Caves
> Please to come to help us,

then it would have been all right, because we should have come in millions, especially if they finished with this verse:

> Our troubles we can never tell
> But if *you* would come it would all be well
> Par–tic–u–lar–ly Silverbell.

But they hadn't sense enough for that – of course they hadn't

—*of course they hadn't*! Which shows what loonies people are.

But you see I am much nicer than *un*– fairy persons, even if I have lost my nice little, pink little, sweet little Temper and if I am cross. So when I saw the children fretting and growing pale because they had to be shut up, and the mothers crying into their washtubs when they were washing, until the water slopped over, I made up my mind I would go and talk to that Lion myself in a way he wouldn't soon forget.

It was a beautiful morning, and the Huge Green Hill looked lovely. A shepherd who saw me thought I was a gold and purple butterfly and threw his hat at me – the idiot! Of course he fell down on his nose – and very right and proper too.

When I got to the Cave, the Lion was sitting outside his door and he was crying. He was one of these nasty–tempered, discontented Lions who are always thinking themselves injured; large round tears were rolling down his nose and he was sniffling. But I must say he was handsome. He was big and smooth and had the most splendid mane and tail I ever saw.

He would have been like a King if he had had a nicer expression. But there he sat sniffling.

"I'm so lonely," he said. "Nobody calls. Nobody pays me any attention. And I came here for the Society. No one is fonder of Society than I am."

I sat down on a flowering branch near him and shouted at him, "What's the use of Society when you eat it up?" I said.

He jumped up and lashed his tail and growled but at first he

could not see me.

"What's it for *but* to be eaten up?" he roared. "First I want it to entertain me and then I want it for dessert. Where are you? Who are you?"

"I'm Queen Crosspatch – Queen Silverbell as was," I said. "I suppose you have heard of *me*?"

"I've heard nothing good," he growled. "A good chewing is what *you* want!"

He *had* heard something about me, but not enough. The truth was he didn't really believe in Fairies – which was what brought him into trouble.

By this time he had seen me and he was ignorant enough to think that he could catch me, so he laid down flat in the thick, green grass and stretched his big paws out and rested his nose on them, thinking I would be taken in and imagine he was going to sleep. I burst out laughing at him and swung to and fro on my flowery branch.

"Do you want to eat me?" I said. "You'd need two or three quarts of me with sugar and cream – like strawberries."

That made him so angry that he sprang roaring at my tree and snapped and shook it and tore it with his claws. But I flew up into the air and buzzed all about him and he got furious – just furious. He jumped up in the air and lashed his tail and *thrashed* his tail and CRASHED his tail, and he turned round and round and tore up the grass.

"Don't be a silly," I said. "It's a nice big tufty sort of tail and

you will only wear it out."

So then he opened his mouth and roared and roared. And what do you suppose *I* did? I flew right into his mouth. First I flew into his throat and buzzed about like a bee and made him cough and cough and cough – but he couldn't cough me up. He coughed and he houghed and he woughed; he tried to catch me with his tongue and he tried to catch me with his teeth but I simply made myself tinier and tinier and got between two big fierce white double ones and took one of my Fairy Workers' hammers out of my pocket and hammered and hammered and hammered until he began to have such a jumping toothache that he ran leaping and roaring down the Huge Green Hill and leaping and roaring down the village street to the dentist's to get some toothache drops. You can just imagine how all the people rushed into their houses, and how the mothers screamed and clutched their children and hid under beds and tables and in coalbins, and how the fathers fumbled about for guns. As for the dentist, he locked his door and bolted it and barred it, and when he found *his* gun he poked it out of the window and fired it off as fast as ever he could until he had fired fifty times, only he was too frightened to hit anything. But the village street was so full of flashes and smoke and bullets that Mr. Lion turned with ten big roars and galloped down the street, with guns fired out of every window where the family could afford to keep a gun.

When he got to his home in the Huge Green Hill, he just laid down and cried aloud and screamed and kicked his hind legs until

he scratched a hole in the floor of his cave.

"Just because I'm a Lion," he sobbed, "just because I'm a poor, sensitive, helpless, orphan Lion nobody has one particle of manners. They won't even sell me a bottle of toothache drops. And I wasn't going to touch that dentist – until he had cured me and wrapped up the bottle nicely in paper. Not a touch was I going to touch him until he had done that."

He opened his mouth so wide to roar with grief that I flew out of it. I had meant to give him a lesson and I'd given him one. When I flew out of his mouth of course his beautiful double teeth stopped aching. It was such a relief to him that it made quite a change in his nature and he sat up and began to smile. It was a slow smile which spread into a grin even while the tear–drops hung on his whiskers.

"My word! How nice," he said. "It's stopped."

I had flown to the top of his ear and I shouted down it.

"I stopped it," I said. "And I began it. And if you don't behave yourself, I'll give you earache and that will be worse."

Before I had given him his lesson he would have jumped at me but now he knew better. He tried to touch my feelings and make me sorry for him. He put one paw before his eyes and began to sniff again.

"I am a poor sensitive lonely orphan Lion,' he said.

"You are nothing of the sort," I answered very sharply. "You are not poor, and heaven knows you are not sensitive, and you needn't be lonely. I don't know whether you are an orphan or not

– and I don't care. You are a nasty, ill–tempered, selfish, biting, chewing thing."

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