

The King who needed to be taught a lesson (XR)

By: Tom Hetherington

This is a story about greedy King lion and how a group of animals saved their homes from fire. It was inspired by the need for protective action by political leaders, their reluctance to respond appropriately and the need to teach them a lesson.

Once upon a time there was a lion who lived on a beautiful grassy savanna with trees that gently swayed beside a clear and gentle river that teemed with bugs, birds and fish. As we all know, lions are sometimes called the king of beasts and this story is about one King Lion and his **terrible love of human fire**.

Just like people, some lions are very nice and friendly and some are not. The lion in this story believed that he was king of the jungle and that **the world was there to serve him**. In the beginning, most animals liked Lion, even if they were a little afraid of him. They even called him Good King Lion. But something happened to him, he started thinking less and less about all the animals on the savanna and more and more **only** about himself.

He became greedy and selfish, nasty and mean, determined to lord his power over the other animals. He even posed for pictures when the tourist buses came to see the watering hole. It was at “must see” tourist spot. It was also the best place for animals to go for a refreshing swim. So sacred was the hole that it was taboo that any animal should harm another animal while at the watering hole. It was here that Lion learned to like fire. Recently, he had even killed for pleasure and left the carcass of a young antelope for the tourists to cook on their fire.

As a result, the animals grew more and more afraid. Especially, since they knew that a fire could be spread by a sudden wind and their homes destroyed. Everyone agreed that a Good King would roar at the tourist fires and not pose for pictures beside a kill that gave it to them to cook! They all agreed that he was **not good** and **should not be called King**. However, they said nothing to King Lion’s face and fear of him made a difference to almost everything in their lives. They were afraid to go sleep or even to walk out of their dens. They started having nightmares and some of them even had trouble eating.

Lion did not seem to care about any of this at all. He just continued to bully them, hurt them, scare them and allow the tourists to BBQ dead animals without even sounding a single roar. Of course, the real reason the lion was behaving badly was that he was feeling alone and powerless. He thought that the only way he could be happy was to be powerful. And that only way to be powerful was make others do things that **they do not want to because they are afraid**.

One day, a little field mouse named Tiny finally had had enough. She was tired of being bullied and she was especially afraid of fire. “No more,” she cried. “I have had it!” She was tired of hearing all the other animals complain about Lion and of the animals being grouchy because they were having

nightmares and could not sleep in peace because they were afraid. She said to her friends that she would go to the old owl and ask him what to do.

For her, the problem was that Lion needed to be taught a lesson and that she was too small and powerless for him to even hear her voice. She also worried that she would eat her if she made him angry. So she went to Owl and asked: "how can I teach Lion a lesson and stop him from being a selfish bully? I am too small for him to even hear me."

Owl thought for a moment and said: "you need a plan. It is true that you are small and could be eaten but there are many less dangerous ways to **tame a lion**," Owl said, with a mischievous hoot and a wink. First go and get badger and ask the other digging animals to dig a big hole in the road. Then ask the elephants to cover the hole with branches and leaves. This is the scariest part, you and the other mice will have to go up to Lion and all work together to get his attention. He may not hear one mouse but he will notice one hundred! Once you have his attention, **be like mosquitoes buzz and land and bother him in many little ways.**

This will make Lion angry and he will try to swat and chase you. When this happens all of the mice should run down path and over the covered hole. The mice are light and **will not fall** but Lion is heavy and **most certainly will!** Once he is contained in the hole all of the animals are to line up and one by one tell Lion all of the bad things that he has done and what he could do **to make it better.** I will make a list to make sure that he has heard all of the voices, **even the tiniest ones.** Once we are finished, we will tell him we would like him to be **good King Lion again** and to stop bullying us. **We will not let him up until he agrees.**

Tiny returned to her friends and told them what Owl had said. Most of the other animals were frightened. "We do not have big teeth or big claws like Lion or the bad smell of a skunk, we will be eaten," they exclaimed. And many walked away or hid in their dens. But a few, six good diggers, 2 elephants and 20 mice stood up and said, **our savanna, our future,** we are with you Tiny, **there is no other choice!** This small band talked about how deep to dig, the best branches and leaves to use and how 20 mice would disturb and trick Lion into falling into the trap. They were very brave because they knew that to fail would mean death.

At midnight, the diggers silently left their warm beds and ventured to the path where they began to dig. Just before dawn the elephants arrived with the leaves and branches and covered the hole. At dawn, the band met, wished each other luck and sang savanna songs together to boost their courage. The mice were particularly afraid. **They were the smallest and had the most dangerous job.** They had to climb directly onto Lion and move to his ears so that they could yell him awake, others were to go directly to his feet and stab his paws with sticks. Tiny had the scariest job of all, she had to plug Lion's nose so he could not easily breathe. This was something that the animal band was sure Lion would notice and **make him angry enough to chase them.**

Armed only with the plan and bravery this band of mice walked up the path and toward sleeping Lion. Each singing their animal songs softly to themselves for courage. The paw mice were the first in position, then the ear mice and then it was time for Tiny to scamper to the nose. Shaking with fear

Tiny grabbed Lion's long main and lifted her tiny body up the side of Lions face. Lion stirred and Tiny's heart raced. And so it was, hand over hand, grabbing, lifting, pulling her tiny body up Lions nose. Once there, Tiny retrieved two large balls of seed fluff from her bag. Putting one ball on her hand like a big boxing glove she plugged lions left nostril and then she did the same to the right one. The warmth and strength of the Lions breath frightened Tiny but she held strong and used every ounce of courage that her tiny body possessed, to finish the job and ready herself, to leap off and start running at exactly the right moment.

Tiny jumped and started to run as soon as she felt the lion try to take a deep in breath. This inhale was quickly followed by a forceful exhale that drove the fluff balls out of Lion's nose. Tiny was lucky to be able to jump to the ground before Lion knew what was happening. Meanwhile, the feet mice drove twigs into lions paws and the ear mice began yelling as loudly as they could. They cried out, "our savanna our future.

They yelled this out twice before they felt Lion's body start move, then they scampered to the ground and ran around wildly in front of Lion taunting him. When Lion roared in anger, the mice turned and ran just as fast they could toward the trap. Lion ran after them. Just as planned, the mice ran across the branches and leaves without problem but Lion crashed through and came to rest and the bottom of the hole. Roaring in anger, demanding to be free.

The animals waited. Owl flew down to ground and walked to edge of the hole and looked at Lion and waited patiently for Lion to stop roaring. Then Owl started, "King Lion you are our King and it is sad to see you at the bottom of this hole. We feel sad and sorry for you. In the beginning you were a good King and all the animals loved you but then you changed. You have become greedy and mean. We want you to change - we want our old Good King Lion back. **We want our savanna back!**

And so it was that, one by one, the each animal spoke from their hearts about how good the savanna was and how it had changed. All the animals agreed that Lion's love of fire was the most frightening thing of all. Fire was the only thing that could completely destroy their savanna forever and every animal feared it.

Lion had once been good and the words of the animals spoke to his heart and made him see how he had become mean, more concerned about himself than the animals. It was almost dark when the last animal spoke. It was Tiny.

"I am Tiny and I am the one that plugged your nose this morning, Tiny said, standing proudly. **I am no longer afraid.** I love my life, I love my savanna, I want to love you, please stop being mean and selfish. With that, Tiny turned away from Lion and scampered under the legs of the bigger mammals and back into the crowd. Every being waited for Lions reply.

"Animals," he started, "thank you for capturing me and making me **"listen."** I heard your **voice** for the first time and I am moved. I see that I was a selfish bully and from now on I will I promise to be your Good King Lion again and **to roar at any human with fire on the savanna.** I will protect you. All the

animals danced and made their special sounds in celebration because this is exactly what Good Kings are **meant to do**. The animals helped their King out of his hole.

King Lion was true to his word. And the savanna and all the animals returned to the world they had known before. **A world without fear of human fire.**

**The End**