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Ririro

IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

Ririro

Bambi (16/25)

They were all standing around in the middle of the thicket in a little clearing. Gobo was talking to them. Even Friend Hare was there. Full of astonishment, he would lift one spoonlike ear, listen attentively, and let it fall back, only to lift it again at once.

The magpie was perched on the lowest branch of a young beech and listened in amazement. The jay was sitting restlessly on an ash opposite and screamed every once in a while in wonder.

A few friendly pheasants had brought their wives and children and were stretching their necks in surprise as they listened. At times they would jerk them in again, turning their heads this way and that in speechless wonder.

The squirrel had scurried up and was gesturing, wild with excitement. At times he would slide to the ground, at times he would run up some tree or other. Or he would balance with his tail erect and display his white chest. Every now and again he tried to interrupt Gobo and say something, but he was always told sternly to keep quiet.

Gobo told how he had lain helpless in the snow waiting to die.

"The dogs found me," he said. "Dogs are terrible. They are certainly the most terrible creatures in the world.

Their jaws drip blood and their bark is pitiless and full of anger." He looked all around the circle and continued, "Well, since then I've played with them just as I would with one of you." He was very proud. "I don't need to be afraid of them any more, I'm good friends with them now. Nevertheless, when they begin to grow angry, I have a roaring in my ears and my heart stops beating. But they don't really mean any harm by it and, as I said, I'm a good friend of theirs. But their bark is terribly loud."



"Go on," Faline urged. Gobo looked at her. "Well," he said, "they would have torn me to pieces, but He came."

Gobo paused. The others hardly breathed.

"Yes," said Gobo, "He came. He called off the dogs and they quieted down at once. He called them again and they crouched motionless at His feet. Then He picked me up. I screamed but He petted me. He held me in His arms. He didn't hurt me. And then He carried me away." Faline interrupted him. "What does 'carry' mean?" she asked.

Gobo began to explain it in great detail.

"It's very simple," Bambi broke in, "look at what the squirrel does when he takes a nut and carries it off"

The squirrel tried to speak again. "A cousin of mine ..."
he began eagerly. But the others cried out at once, "Be still, be still, let Gobo go on."

The squirrel had to keep quiet. He was desperate and, pressing his forepaws against his white chest, he tried to begin a conversation with the magpie. "As I was saying, a cousin of mine ..." he began. But the magpie simply turned her back on him.

Gobo told of wonders. "Outside it will be cold and the storm is howling. But inside there's not a breath of wind and it's as warm as in summertime," he said.

"Akh!" screamed the jay.

"The rain may be pouring outside so that everything is flooded. But not a drop of it gets inside and you keep dry."

The pheasants craned their necks and twisted their heads.

"Everything outside may be snowed under, but inside I was warm," said Gobo; "I was even hot. They gave me hay to eat and chestnuts, potatoes and turnips, whatever I wanted."

"Hay?" they all cried at once, amazed, incredulous and excited.

"Sweet, new-mown hay," Gobo repeated calmly, and gazed triumphantly around.

The squirrel's voice cut in, "A cousin of mine ..."

"Keep quiet," cried the others.

"Where does He get hay and all the rest of the things in winter?" asked Faline eagerly.

"He grows them," Gobo answered, "He grows what He wants and keeps what He wants."

Faline went on questioning him: "Weren't you ever afraid, Gobo, when you were with Him?" she asked.

Gobo smiled a very superior smile. "No, dear Faline," he said, "not any more. I got to know that He wouldn't hurt me. Why should I have been afraid? You all think He's wicked. But He isn't wicked. If He loves anybody or if anybody serves Him, He's good to him. Wonderfully good! Nobody in the world can be as kind as He can."

While Gobo was talking that way the old stag suddenly stepped noiselessly from the bushes.

Gobo didn't notice him and went on talking. But the others saw the old stag and held their breath in awe. The old stag stood motionless, watching Gobo with deep and serious eyes.

Gobo said, "Not only He, but all His children loved me. His wife and all of them used to pet me and play with me." He broke off suddenly. He had seen the old stag. A silence followed.

Then the old stag asked in his quiet commanding voice, "What kind of a band is that you have on your neck?" Everybody looked at it and noticed for the first time the dark strip of braided horsehair around Gobo's neck. Gobo answered uneasily, "That? Why that's part of the halter I wore. It's His halter and it's the greatest honor to wear His halter, it's ..." He grew confused and stammered.

Everyone was silent. The old stag looked at Gobo for a long time, piercingly and sadly.

"You poor thing!" he said softly at last, and turned and was gone.

In the astonished silence that followed, the squirrel began to chatter again. "As I was saying, a cousin of mine stayed with Him, too. He caught him and shut him up, oh, for the longest while, till one day my father ..."
But nobody was listening to the squirrel. They were all walking away.