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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Rosy's Journey

Louise M. Alcott

Rosy was a nice little girl who lived with her mother in a small house in the woods. They were very poor, for the father had gone away to dig gold, and did not come back; so they had to work hard to get food to eat and clothes to wear. The mother spun yarn when she was able, for she was often sick, and Rosy did all she could to help. She milked the red cow and fed the hens; dug the garden, and went to town to sell the yarn and the eggs.

She was very good and sweet, and every one loved her; but the neighbors were all poor, and could do little to help the child. So, when at last the mother died, the cow and hens and house had to be sold to pay the doctor and the debts. Then Rosy was left all alone, with no mother, no home, and no money to buy clothes and dinners with.

"What will you do?" said the people, who were very sorry for her.

"I will go and find my father," answered Rosy, bravely.

"But he is far away, and you don't know just where he is, up among the mountains. Stay with us and spin on your little wheel, and we will buy the yarn, and take care of you, dear little girl," said the kind people.

"No, I must go; for mother told me to, and my father will be glad to have me. I'm not afraid, for every one is good to me," said Rosy, gratefully.

Then the people gave her a warm red cloak, and a basket with a little loaf and bottle of milk in it, and some pennies to buy more to eat when the bread was gone. They all kissed her, and wished her good luck; and she trotted away through the wood to find her father.

For some days she got on very well; for the wood-cutters were kind, and let her sleep in their huts, and gave her things to eat. But by and by she came to lonely places, where there were no houses; and then she was afraid, and used to climb up in the trees to sleep, and had to eat berries and leaves, like the Children in the Wood.

She made a fire at night, so wild beasts would not come near her; and if she met other travellers, she was so young and innocent no one had the heart to hurt her. She was kind to everything she met; so all little creatures were friends to her, as we shall see.

One day, as she was resting by a river, she saw a tiny fish on the bank, nearly dead for want of water.

"Poor thing! go and be happy again," she said, softly taking him up, and dropping him into the nice cool river.

"Thank you, dear child; I will not forget, but will help you some day," said the fish, when he had taken a good drink, and felt better.

"How can a tiny fish help?" laughed Rosy.

"Wait and see," answered the fish, as he swam away with a flap of his little tail.

Rosy went on her way, and forgot all about it. But she never forgot to be kind; and soon after, as she was looking in the grass for strawberries, she found a field-mouse with a broken leg.

"Help me to my nest, or my babies will starve," cried the poor thing.

"Yes, I will; and bring these berries so that you can keep still till your leg is better, and have something to eat."

Rosy took the mouse carefully in her little hand, and tied up the broken leg with a leaf of spearmint and a blade of grass. Then she carried her to the nest under the roots of an old tree, where four baby mice were squeaking sadly for their mother. She made a bed of thistledown for the sick mouse, and put close within reach all the berries and seeds she could find, and brought an acorn-cup of water from the spring, so they could be comfortable.

"Good little Rosy, I shall pay you for all this kindness some day," said the mouse, when she was done.

"I'm afraid you are not big enough to do much," answered Rosy, as she ran off to go on her journey.

"Wait and see," called the mouse; and all the little ones squeaked, as if they said the same.

Some time after, as Rosy lay up in a tree, waiting for the sun to rise, she heard a great buzzing close by, and saw a fly caught in a cobweb that went from one twig to another. The big spider was trying to spin him all up, and the poor fly was struggling to get away before his legs and wings were helpless.

Rosy put up her finger and pulled down the web, and the spider ran away at once to hide under the leaves. But the happy fly sat on Rosy's hand, cleaning his wings, and buzzing so loud for joy that it sounded like a little trumpet.

"You've saved my life, and I'll save yours, if I can," said the fly, twinkling his bright eye at Rosy.

"You silly thing, you can't help me," answered Rosy, climbing down, while the fly buzzed away, saying, like the mouse and fish,--

"Wait and see; wait and see."

Rosy trudged on and on, till at last she came to the sea. The mountains were on the other side; but how should she get over the wide water? No ships were there, and she had no money to hire one if there had been any; so she sat on the shore, very tired and sad, and cried a few big tears as salt as the sea.

"Hullo!" called a bubbly sort of voice close by; and the fish popped up his head.

Rosy ran to see what he wanted.

"I've come to help you over the water," said the fish.

"How can you, when I want a ship, and some one to show me the way?" answered Rosy.

"I shall just call my friend the whale, and he will take you over better than a ship, because he won't get wrecked. Don't mind if he spouts and flounces about a good deal, he is only playing; so you don't be scared."

Down dived the little fish, and Rosy waited to see what would happen; for she didn't believe such a tiny thing could really bring a whale to help her.

Then what looked like a small island came floating through the sea; and turning round, so that its tail touched the shore, the whale said, in a roaring voice that made her jump,--

"Come aboard, little girl, and hold on tight. I'll carry you wherever you like."

It was rather a slippery bridge, and Rosy was rather scared at this big, strange boat; but she got safely over, and held on fast; then, with a roll and a plunge, off went the whale, spouting two fountains, while his tail steered him like the rudder of a ship.

Rosy liked it, and looked down into the deep sea, where all sorts of strange and lovely things were to be seen. Great fishes came and looked at her; dolphins played near to amuse her; the pretty nautilus sailed by in its transparent boat; and porpoises made her laugh with their rough play. Mermaids brought her pearls and red coral to wear, sea-apples to eat, and at night sung her to sleep with their sweet lullabies.

So she had a very pleasant voyage, and ran on shore with many thanks to the good whale, who gave a splendid spout, and swam away.

Then Rosy travelled along till she came to a desert. Hundreds of miles of hot sand, with no trees or brooks or houses.

"I never can go that way," she said; "I should starve, and soon be worn out walking in that hot sand. What *shall* I do?"

"Wait and see," said a friendly voice; and there was the mouse, looking at her with its bright eyes full of gratitude.

"Why, you dear little thing, I'm very glad to see you; but I'm sure you can't help me across this desert," said Rosy, stroking its soft back.

"That's easy enough," answered the mouse, rubbing its paws briskly. "I'll just call my friend the lion; he lives here, and he'll take you across with pleasure."

"Oh, I'm afraid he'd rather eat me. How dare you call that fierce beast?" cried Rosy, much surprised.

"I gnawed him out of a net once, and he promised to help me. He is a noble animal, and he will keep his word."

In a moment a loud roar was heard, and a splendid yellow lion, with fiery eyes and a long mane, came bounding over the sand to meet them.

"What can I do for you, tiny friend?" he said, looking at the mouse, who was not a bit frightened, though Rosy hid behind a rock, expecting every moment to be eaten.

Mousie told him, and the good lion said,--

"I'll take the child along. Come on, my dear; sit on my back and hold fast to my mane, for I'm swift, and you might fall off."

Then he crouched down like a great cat, and Rosy climbed up, for he was so kind she could not fear him; and away they went, racing over the sand till her hair whistled in the wind. As soon as she got her breath, she thought it great fun to go flying along, while other lions and tigers rolled their fierce eyes at her, but dared not touch her; for this lion was king of all, and she was quite safe. They met a train of camels with loads on their backs; and the people travelling with them wondered what queer thing was riding that fine lion. It looked like a very large monkey in a red cloak, but went so fast they never saw that it was a little girl.

"How glad I am that I was kind to the mouse; for if the good little creature had not helped me, I never could have crossed this desert," said Rosy, as the lion walked awhile to rest himself.

"And if the mouse had not gnawed me out of the net I never should have come at her call. You see, little people can conquer big ones, and make them gentle and friendly by kindness," answered the lion.

Then away they went again, faster than ever, till they came to the green

country. Rosy thanked the good beast, and he ran back; for if any one saw him, they would try to catch him.

"Now I have only to climb up these mountains and find father," thought Rosy, as she saw the great hills before her, with many steep roads winding up to the top; and far, far away rose the smoke from the huts where the men lived and dug for gold. She started off bravely, but took the wrong road, and after climbing a long while found the path ended in rocks over which she could not go. She was very tired and hungry; for her food was gone, and there were no houses in this wild place. Night was coming on, and it was so cold she was afraid she would freeze before morning, but dared not go on lest she should fall down some steep hole and be killed. Much discouraged, she lay down on the moss and cried a little; then she tried to sleep, but something kept buzzing in her ear, and looking carefully she saw a fly prancing about on the moss, as if anxious to make her listen to his song,-- "Wait and see...". It was the fly!

Rosy was very glad to see him and hear his cheerful song, so she held out her finger, and while he sat there told him all her troubles.

"Bless your heart! My friend the eagle will carry you right up the mountains and leave you at your father's door," cried the fly; and he was off with a flirt of his gauzy wings, for he meant what he said.

Rosy was ready for her new horse, and not at all afraid after the whale and the lion; so when a great eagle swooped down and alighted near her, she just looked at his sharp claws, big eyes, and crooked beak as coolly as if he had been a cock-robin.

He liked her courage, and said kindly in his rough voice,--

"Hop up, little girl, and sit among my feathers. Hold me fast round the neck, or you may grow dizzy and get a fall."

Rosy nestled down among the thick gray feathers, and put both arms round his neck; and whiz they went, up, up, up, higher and higher, till the trees looked like grass, they were so far below. At first it was very cold, and Rosy cuddled deeper into her feather bed; then, as they came nearer to the sun, it grew warm, and she peeped out to see the huts standing in a green spot on the top of the mountain.

"Here we are. You'll find all the men are down in the mine at this time. They won't come up till morning; so you will have to wait for your father. Goodbye;



good luck, my dear." And the eagle soared away, higher still, to his nest among the clouds.

It was night now, but fires were burning in all the houses; so Rosy went from hut to hut trying to find her father's, that she might rest while she waited: at last in one the picture of a pretty little girl hung on the wall, and under it was written, "My Rosy." Then she knew that this was the right place; and she ate some supper, put on more wood, and went to bed, for she wanted to be fresh when her father came in the morning.

While she slept a storm came on,--thunder rolled and lightning flashed, the wind blew a gale, and rain poured,--but Rosy never waked till dawn, when she heard men shouting outside,--

"Run, run! The river is rising! We shall all be drowned!"

Rosy ran out to see what was the matter, though the wind nearly blew her away; she found that so much rain had made the river overflow till it began to wash the banks away.

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" cried Rosy, watching the men rush about like ants, getting their bags of gold ready to carry off before the water swept them away, if it became a flood.

As if in answer to her cry, Rosy heard a voice say close by,-- "Wait and see."

And there in the water was the little fish swimming about, while an army of beavers began to pile up earth and stones in a high bank to keep the river back. How they worked, digging and heaping with teeth and claws, and beating the earth hard with their tails like shovels!

Rosy and the men watched them work, glad to be safe, while the storm cleared up; and by the time the dam was made, all danger was over. Rosy looked into the faces of the rough men, hoping her father was there, and was just going to ask about him, when a great shouting rose again, and all began to run to the pit hole, saying,--

"The sand has fallen in! The poor fellows will be smothered! How can we get them out? how can we get them out?"

Rosy ran too, feeling as if her heart would break; for her father was down in the mine, and would die soon if air did not come to him. The men dug as hard as they could; but it was a long job, and they feared they would not be in time.

Suddenly hundreds of moles came scampering along, and began to burrow down through the earth, making many holes for air to go in; for they know how to build galleries through the ground better than men can. Every one was so surprised they stopped to look on; for the dirt flew like rain as the busy little fellows

scratched and bored as if making an underground railway.

"What does it mean?" said the men. "They work faster than we can, and better; but who sent them? Is this strange little girl a fairy?"

Before Rosy could speak, all heard a shrill, small voice singing,-- "wait and see."

Then all saw a little gray mouse sitting on a stone, waving her tail about, and pointing with her tiny paw to show the moles where to dig.

The men laughed; and Rosy was telling them who she was, when a cry came from the pit, and they saw that the way was clear so they could pull the buried men up. In a minute they got ropes, and soon had ten poor fellows safe on the ground; pale and dirty, but all alive, and all shouting as if they were crazy,--

"Tom's got it! Tom's got it! Hooray for Tom!"

"What is it?" cried the others; and then they saw Tom come up with the biggest lump of gold ever found in the mountains.

Every one was glad of Tom's luck; for he was a good man, and had worked a long time, and been sick, and couldn't go back to his wife and child. When he saw Rosy, he dropped the lump, and caught her up, saying,--

"My little girl! She's better than a million pounds of gold."

Then Rosy was very happy, and went back to the hut, and had a lovely time telling her father all about her troubles and her travels. He cried when he heard that the poor mother was dead before she could have any of the good things the gold would buy them.

"We will go away and be happy together in the pleasantest home I can find, and never part any more, my darling," said the father, kissing Rosy as she sat on his knee with her arms round his neck.

She was just going to say something very sweet to comfort him, when a fly lit on her arm and buzzed very loud,-- "wait and see."

"You have to leave now. The other men will try to take your gold. I know where you can go and be safe," said the fly.

Then they followed Buzz to a quiet nook in the wood; and there were the eagle and his mate waiting to fly away with them so fast and so far that no one could follow. Rosy and the bag of gold were put on the mother eagle; Tom sat astride the king bird; and away they flew to a great city, where the little girl and her father lived happily together all their lives.

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