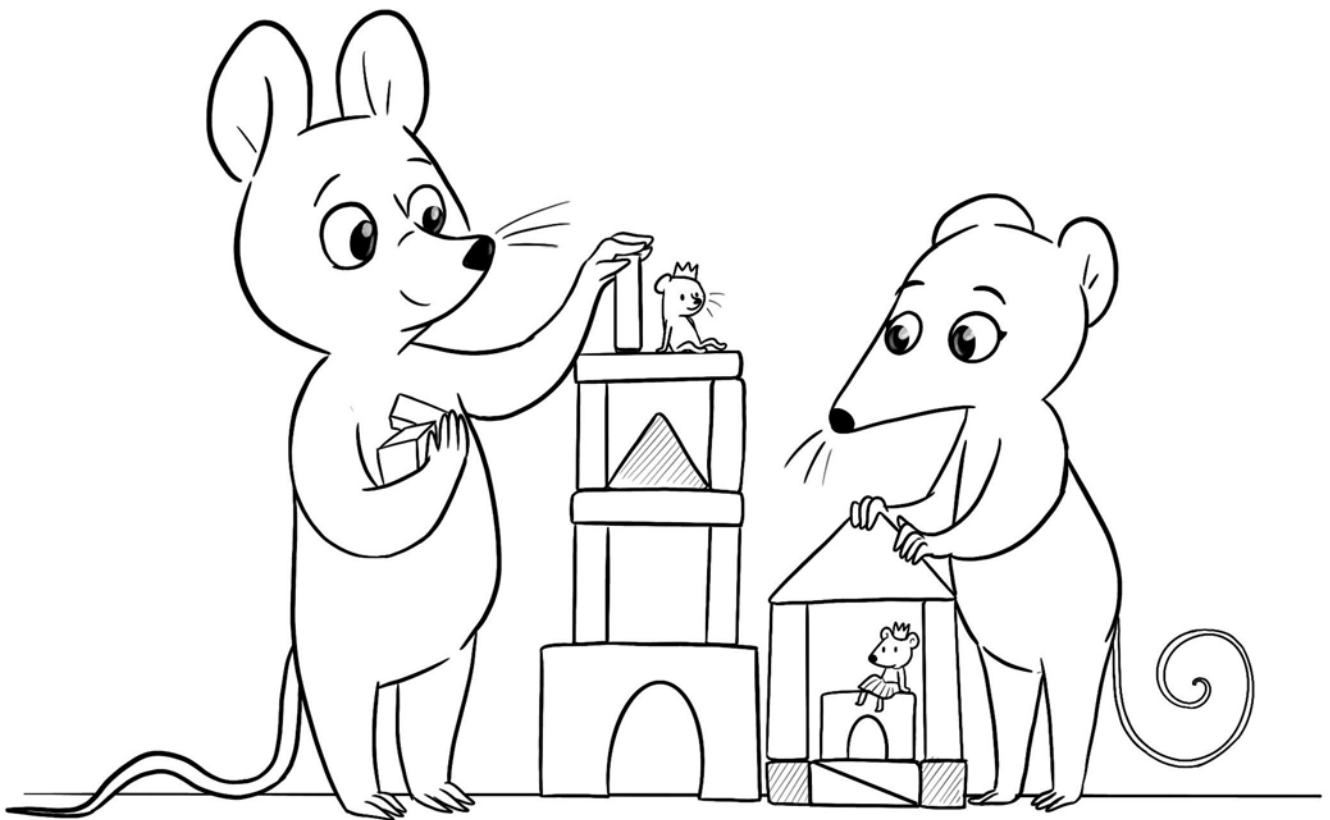


Meeting a Hero

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It was already night time when someone knocked at the Shrews' house.

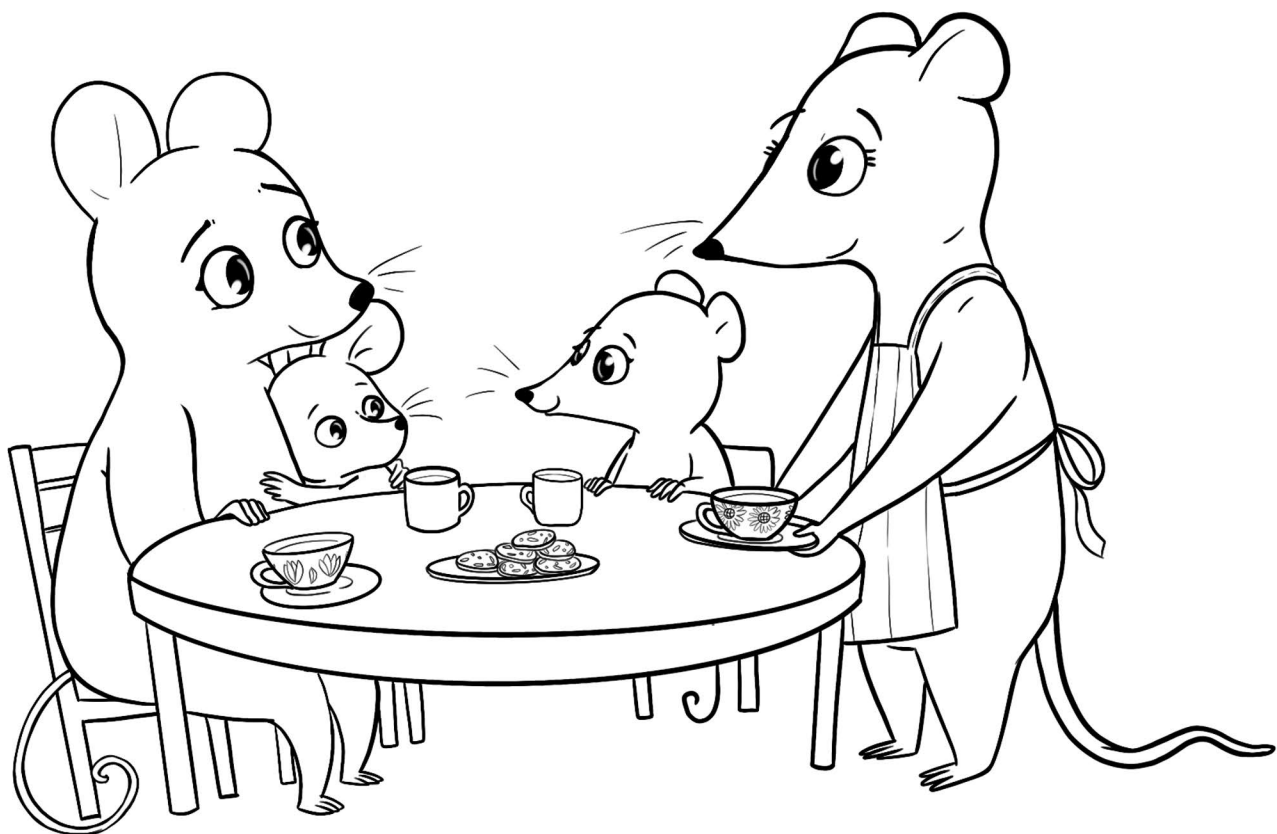
“Mum, who is this?” Little Shrew got scared.

Mum opened the door. On the doorstep were two forest mice; one big and the other small. The smaller mouse was hidden behind the leg of the bigger mouse.

Little Shrew saw the forest mice for the first time. They looked similar to her, but slightly different.

“Mum, why don't I understand what they're saying?” she asked, when Mum invited them in and offered them tea.

“Honey, forest mice are used to eating fruit and mushrooms, they are not used to our cereal cakes” replied Mum. “We have to respect that our food might not be tasty for them.”

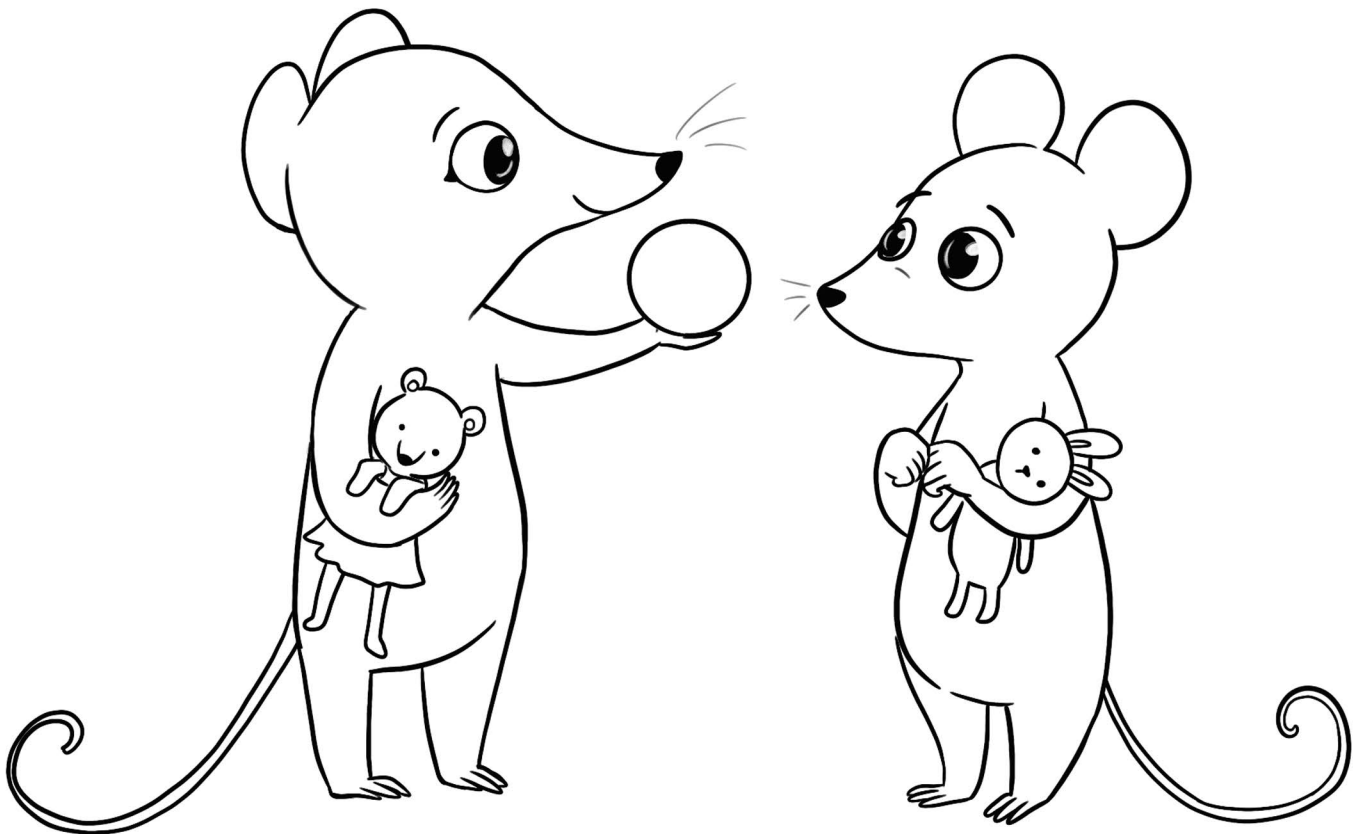


“Mum, I don't want that Mouse to sleep in my bed!” Little Shrew cried when Mum offered the lost mice a place to stay.

“I understand, Honey,” said Mum, “you have a right to feel angry and sad, but sometimes there are things we must do even if we don't feel like it. These mice have come a long way and are very tired. They'll get a good night's sleep in your bed, and we can just sleep together.”

“I don't like her playing with my toys,” Little Shrew grumbled.

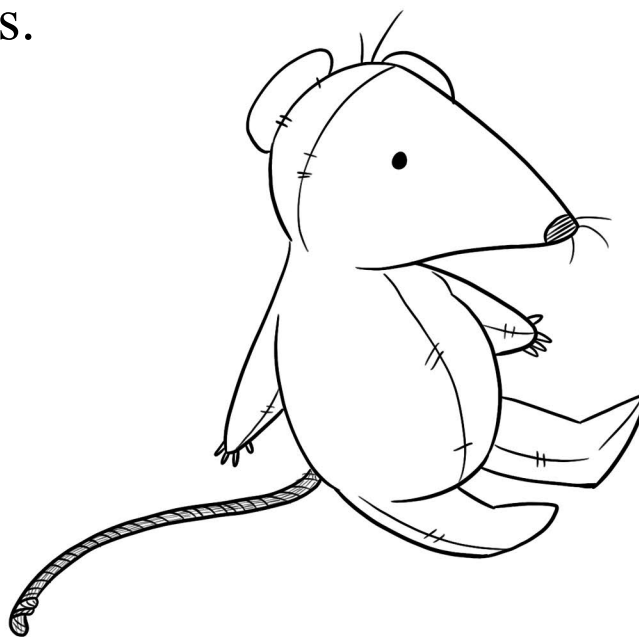
“So let's put the toys that you want to have only for yourself into the cupboard, and we'll share the rest, okay?” - Mum suggested. She hugged Little Shrew, now more reassured.



The Mice family's home was destroyed. They had to flee the forest where they lived and took only a small bundle of things with them and only one of Little Mouse's favourite toys.

Little Shrew gave Little Mouse some of her clothes and toys.

She chose what she wanted to share. Little Mouse was strange, cried very often, woke up at night, and she hardly ate anything. Her mother often looked sad and sometimes looked outside the window for a long time, as if she was looking for something there.



“Mum, why does she not want to play with me?”

“You know, honey, Little Mouse has gone a long way. She left her house in the forest, her favourite cuddly toys and books, and most of all, her Dad who she misses very much. It is very hard for her, so she doesn't want to play just yet” answered Mum.

“It's terrible that she had to leave everything,” Little Shrew said, feeling sad. “Will we also have to run away?”

“I hope not, Honey” Mum hugged Little Shrew. “But in life everything changes; sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. This is how life is and this is how it will always be.”

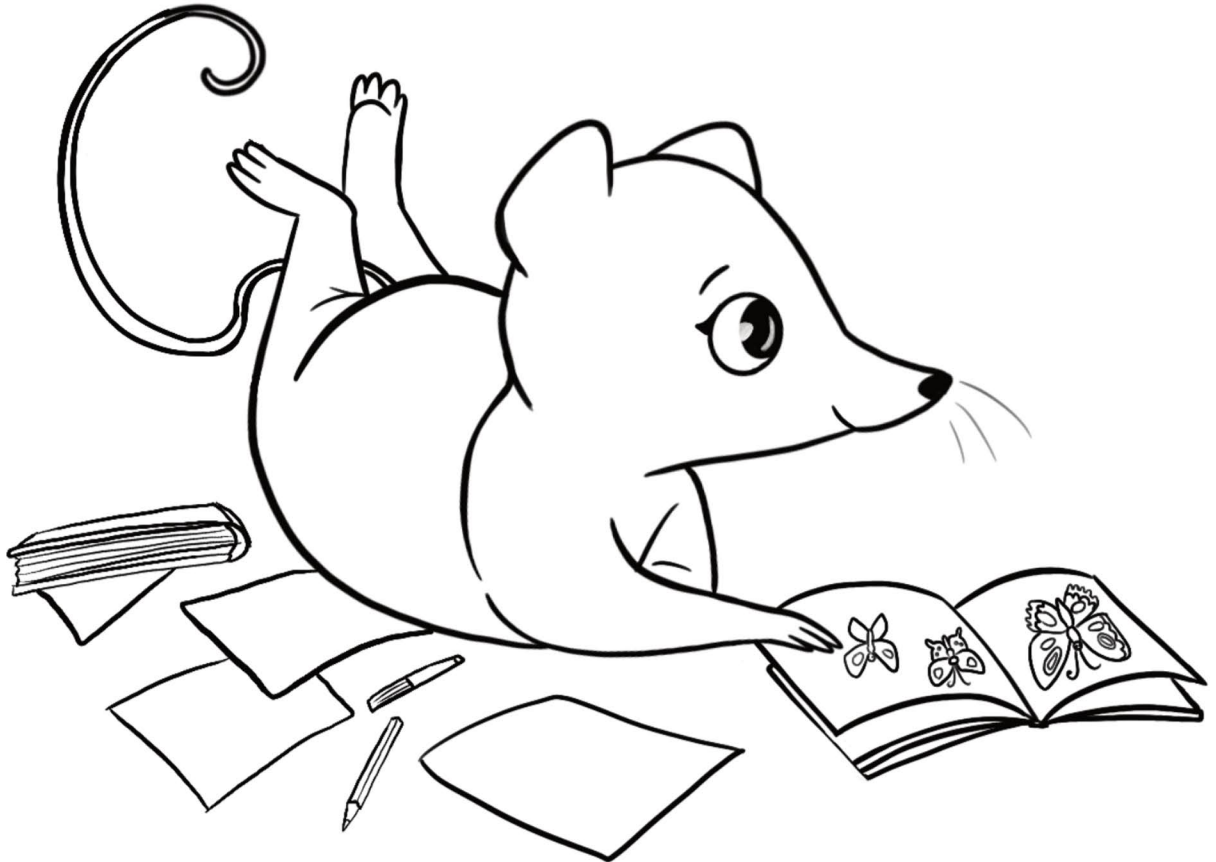
“Mum, Little Mouse is very brave since she managed to walk such a long way!” cried Little Shrew - “She’s a hero!”

“It's true,” said Mum. “They're both very brave. It must also be extremely difficult for her mother to live without her belongings, and in someone else's home.”

“And am I also brave?” - Little Shrew asked.

“Of course!” Mum kissed her on the nose. “Only brave shrews let others sleep in their bed and share their toys.”

Little Shrew was very proud of herself.



Little Shrew did not understand Little Mouse's language, but sometimes they were able to communicate without words. For example, they would sit next to each other and draw or look at books about butterflies together. There was no need to say anything then; a smile was enough to understand what they liked. Sometimes Little Mouse would sit and look into space, then Little Shrew tried not to disturb her. Maybe she was remembering her Dad or imagining her home?



“Mum, I preferred it when we lived alone. Now I have to share everything and I don't have my own room,” Little Shrew cried.

“I know, Honey,” Mum hugged her. Such a change must be difficult for you. But you know, that's what real heroes do: they accept change. Even the ones they don't like. They try to find something good in it or learn something from it.”

“I've already learned a few words in mouse language!” Shrew rejoiced. “Also, Little Mouse taught me how to draw leaves!” she continued, hugging Mum.





Little Shrew's parents often talked about what was happening in the forest that the mice escaped from. Little Shrew did not fully understand their conversations and sometimes it made her worry.

“Darling” Dad said one day, seeing his daughter felt frightened, “you can always ask us about what worries you, and we will always try to explain it to you.”

“Will you also have to leave us one day, like Little Mouse's father?” Little Shrew asked in a trembling voice.

Dad took her on his lap and hugged her tightly.

“I hope not,” he replied. “You can't be sure of anything in life you know, but it's not worth worrying about now. Instead, let's focus on what we can control.”

“I know!” Exclaimed the Little Shrew. “We'll teach mice to cook broth! When we eat broth, it always makes you feel warm, and you can't think about bad things!”

“Great idea!” - Dad smiled.

Little Mouse wanted to help, so Little Shrew showed Little Mouse how to peel carrots for broth. Together they peeled all the vegetables, and then Mum and Dad helped to cut them up. The house smelled like spices, and the bubbling of the hot soup sounded like beautiful music. And things got so much brighter right away.



“When it's all over, we'll help you rebuild the forest”
said Little Shrew. “We have a lot of seeds, they will
grow beautiful trees. They will sway in the wind again,
and the birds will build new nests for their chicks.”

