

### **A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed.**

Once upon a time there lived a lion in a forest. One day after a heavy meal. It was sleeping under a tree. After a while, there came a mouse and it started to play on the lion. Suddenly the lion got up with anger and looked for those who disturbed its nice sleep. Then it saw a small mouse standing trembling with fear. The lion jumped on it and started to kill it. The mouse requested the lion to forgive it. The lion felt pity and left it. The mouse ran away. On another day, the lion was caught in a net by a hunter. The mouse came there and cut the net. Thus it escaped. There after, the mouse and the lion became friends. They lived happily in the forest afterwards.

### **When The Truth Dawned**

Ryokan, the Zen teacher, was requested by his sister-in-law to come to her house and talk to her son.

"He does no work, squanders his father's money in wild parties and is neglecting the estate," she complained. "If he does not reform, we will be ruined."

Ryokan went to his brother's house and met his nephew who was genuinely pleased to see him. The two of them had spent many happy hours together before Ryokan had turned to Zen and entered the monastery.

The young man knew why his uncle had come and braced himself for the scolding he was sure he would receive. But Ryokan said not a word in rebuke, the whole day.

The next morning when it was time for him to go, he put on his garments and then said to his nephew: "Will you help me tie the thongs of my sandals? My hands shake and I cannot do it."

His nephew helped him willingly.

"Thank you," said Ryokan. "A man becomes older and feebler day by day. You remember how strong and robust I used to be?"

"I do," said his nephew, thoughtfully. "I do indeed remember how you used to be."

It was the moment of truth for him. He suddenly realized that his mother and all those who had looked after him had become old and that it was now his turn to look after them and to take on the responsibilities of the household and the community.

He gave up his dissolute life forever.

### **Making A Difference**

Ryokan was a Zen teacher of repute.

One day a fisherman saw him walking on the beach soon after a storm. The storm had washed up thousands of starfish on the shore, and they were beginning to dry up. Soon all of them would be dead. Ryokan was picking up starfish and throwing them into the sea.

The fisherman caught up with the teacher and said, "Surely, you cannot hope to throw all these starfish back into the sea? They will die in their thousands here. I've seen it happen before. Your effort will make no difference."

"It will to this one," said Ryokan, throwing back another starfish into the sea.