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# Why The Field Mouse Is Little

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Once upon a time, before there were any big folks, or any real houses in the world, the little First Man, and the little First Woman lived in a tiny lodge on the banks of a big river. They were the only people in the whole world, and they were very, very small, not any larger than your finger.

They ate wild gooseberries, and twin berries, and black caps. One berry made a very fine meal for them.

The little First Woman took very good care of the little First Man. She made him a beautiful green bow and arrow from a blade of grass, with which he could hunt crickets and grasshoppers. From the skin of a humming bird she made him a most beautiful hunting coat, all embroidered and jeweled with bits of gay shells and shining particles of sand.

One day the little First Man was out hunting and he grew very weary, wading through the deep grass, so he laid him down beneath a clover leaf and fell fast asleep. A storm came up, and the thunder roared and the lightning flashed, but it did not waken the little First Man. Then the sun shone, warm, as it does in hot countries, and the little First Man awoke. Alas, where was his gay little hunting coat? The rain had soaked it, and the sun had scorched it, and it had fallen to pieces, and dropped quite off the little First Man.

Then he was very angry and he shook his fist at the great sun. “It is all your fault,” he cried. “I will pull you down from the sky.”



He went home and told the little First Woman, who cried many tears when she thought of all the stitches she had put into the coat. And the little First Woman stamped her little foot at the sun, and she, too, said it should stay up in the sky no longer. The sun should be pulled down.

The next thing was to arrange how to do it. They were such small people, and the sun was so great and so far away. But they began plaiting a long rope of grass that should be long enough to catch the sun, and after they had worked for many moons, the rope was quite long.

Then they could not carry it, because it made such a heavy coil; so the little First Man tried to think of one of the beasts who could help him, and he decided that the Field Mouse would be the most willing.

In those far away days, the Field Mouse was much larger than he is now, as large as a buffalo. The little First Man found the Field Mouse asleep under a tree, and he had great trouble awaking him, but the Field Mouse was very obliging. He took the coil of rope upon his back, allowed the two little people to sit, one on each ear, and they started away to find the woods where the sun first drops down in the evening.

It was a journey of many moons, and most tiresome. There were many rivers to be forded, and at each one the Field Mouse was obliged to take one end of the rope in his mouth, and swim over with it. Then he would coil it up, and go back for the little First Man, and the little First Woman.

But at last they came to some deep, dark woods where the beasts, the elk, the hedgehog, and the others, assured them the great sun dropped down every night, last of all.

Then the little First Man climbed to the tops of the trees, making slip knots of the rope, and fastening it to the branches until he had made a huge net, larger than any fish net you ever saw. When it was done, they all hid to wait for evening, and to see what would happen.

Such a terrible thing happened! Lower, and lower, fell the sun toward the woods that he always touched the last thing at night. And before he could stop himself—down into the little First Man’s net he dropped, and he could not get out.

No one had ever thought what would happen if the sun were caught. Of course everything was set on fire. The trees smoked, and the grasses blazed. The little First Man and the little First Woman started running toward home as fast as ever they could, because of all the mischief they had done. The elk had his antlers scorched. The hedgehog was obliged to dance to keep his feet from burning, and the other beasts crowded around the Field Mouse.

“Good, kind Field Mouse,” they cried, “will you not set the sun free? Your teeth are sharp. Gnaw the rope, and loose him, we pray of you.”

So the Field Mouse, who was always most good natured, climbed to the top of a tree and gnawed the rope with his sharp teeth, although it was very hot and uncomfortable for him. Gnaw, gnaw, and at last the sun was loose. With a bound it jumped to the sky, and there it has stayed ever since.

But what do you think happened to the Field Mouse? The heat melted him down to the size he is now, and that is the reason the Field Mouse is so very little.

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