



The Apple





One day a hedgehog was tottering through the bushes. He would turn his curious little snout this way and that, constantly muttering, ‘What will I find? Now what will I find? Maybe ... a little pear? Maybe ... a mushroom? Maybe ... some plums? Who knows! Who knows!’

Thus was he muttering as he tottered up to an old apple tree that stood all by itself. Old apple trees usually have tiny apples that are sour and wormy, but these were beautiful apples – plump and round and red.





‘Oh, they must be delicious!’ The hedgehog quickened his step and, as fast as he could, loaded the biggest and most beautiful apple on his back. And off they went, hedgehog and apple, back to the hedgehog’s home.

‘Strange,’ the hedgehog said to himself along the way. ‘Strange, strange ... Such a big apple and yet so light ...’





The hedgehog did not know, of course, that the apple was hollow and there was a little grey mouse living inside. When he got home and tossed the apple on the ground, it split open at once, and he saw the frightened little mouse sitting in front of him.

‘Well, what have we here!’ the hedgehog frowned. ‘Don’t tell me that instead of a nice sweet apple I’ve been carrying this mouse all the way home!’

But the mouse was not listening to him. She covered her snout with her little paws and started moaning.

‘Oh, my house! ... My good, beautiful house! ... Poor me, I’m just an orphan... and now I have no home! ... Oh, what am I going to do? ...’





The hedgehog said nothing, but that didn't mean he wasn't thinking anything. Oh no, he was thinking quite a lot. He was thinking that it is really much worse to lose your entire house than to lose just one apple. So after a while he came a little closer to the mouse and said, in a friendly way:

'You know what, little mouse? You can stay with me if you want. It's warm here, and there is plenty of room, and you'll have your own place to sleep.'

Then he turned around and tottered off through the bushes.





This time he found a much smaller apple. But if you slice a little apple into little pieces, it can be big enough. Even for two. And so the hedgehog and the mouse sat down, sliced up the apple and shared it:

‘One piece for you, one piece for me, one for you, one for me ...’

And if my ears don’t deceive me, they are still smacking their lips.

