

Who Lived in the Skull?

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Russian

Easy
3 min read

Once upon a time a horse's skull lay on the open plain. It had been picked clean by the ants, and shone white in the sunlight.

Little Burrowing Mouse came along, twirling his whiskers and looking at the world. He saw the white skull, and thought it was as good as a palace. He stood up in front of it and called out,—

“Little house, little house! Who lives in the little house?”

No one answered, for there was no one inside.

“I will live there myself,” says little Burrowing Mouse, and in he went, and set up house in the horse's skull.

Croaking Frog came along, a jump, three long strides, and a jump again.

“Little house, little house! Who lives in the little house?”

“I am Burrowing Mouse; who are you?”

“I am Croaking Frog.”

“Come in and make yourself at home.”

So the frog went in, and they began to live, the two of them together.

Hare Hide-in-the-Hill came running by.

“Little house, little house! Who lives in the little house?”

“Burrowing Mouse and Croaking Frog. Who are you?”

“I am Hare Hide-in-the-Hill.”

“Come along in.”

So the hare put his ears down and went in, and they began to live, the three of them together.

Then the fox came running by.

“Little house, little house! Who lives in the little house?”

“Burrowing Mouse and Croaking Frog and Hare Hide-in-the-Hill. Who are you?”

“I am Fox Run-about-Everywhere.”

“Come along in; we’ve room for you.”

So the fox went in, and they began to live, the four of them together.

Then the wolf came prowling by, and saw the skull.

“Little house, little house! Who lives in the little house?”

“Burrowing Mouse, and Croaking Frog, and Hare Hide-in-the-Hill, and Fox Run-about-Everywhere. Who are you?”

“I am Wolf Leap-out-of-the-Bushes.”

“Come in then.”

So the wolf went in, and they began to live, the five of them together.

And then there came along the Bear. He was very slow and very heavy.

“Little house, little house! Who lives in the little house?”

“Burrowing Mouse, and Croaking Frog, and Hare Hide-in-the-Hill, and Fox Run-about-Everywhere, and Wolf Leap-out-of-the-Bushes. Who are you?”

“I am Bear Squash-the-Lot.”

And the Bear sat down on the horse’s skull, and squashed the whole lot of them.

The way to tell that story is to make one hand the skull, and the fingers and thumb of the other hand the animals that go in one by one. At least that was the way old Peter told it; and when it came to the end, and the Bear came along, why, the Bear was old Peter himself, who squashed both little hands, and Vanya or Maroosia, whichever it was, all together in one big hug.

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