

The Story of the Mice

**A Storyteller's Advice to his audience
(Extracted from Kalila Wa Dimna Vol.1 – Ramsay Wood)**

I must emphasize this point: my stories require, at this stage, no extra commentary, imaginings, or guesswork by you, me, or anyone else. The very worst would be that of moralizing away the effective substance. Thus the urge to tag tidy little rationalizations, persuasive formulas, intellectual summaries, symbolical labels, or any other convenient pigeon-holing device, must be steadfastly resisted. Mental encapsulation perverts the medicine, rendering it impotent. It amounts to a bypass around the story's true destination; to explain away is to forget. Thus, let the stories which you can remember do their own work by their very diversity. Familiarize yourself with them.

The Story of the Mice

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, a certain building was infested by mice. The people in charge decided to kill them. One night they put down mouse-killing poison. But the next morning the poison had been eaten.

"We shall change the type of poison," the people said, and they made another attempt. But this second lethal dose the mice also ate happily, and left signs that they were thriving on their new diet.

It was decided to use old-fashioned, spring-operated mousetraps. These were baited with succulent cheese to tempt the poison-proof mice.

But the mice refused to touch the cheese.

One of the mouse-catchers now had an inspiration. He thickly coated the cheese in the traps with poison. "Perhaps the mice have developed a liking for poison: it may even be doing them good," he reasoned.

The new plan was put into operation late one evening. The following morning the spring-traps were full of strong and healthy mice.

From the Foreword – Reflections - Idries Shah



From this story could be extracted all kinds of morals and teachings. But it is quoted here because it is absolutely true.*

Do you imagine that fables exist only to amuse or to instruct, and are based upon fiction? The best ones are delineation of what happens in real life, in the community and in the individual's mental processes.

*(*London Daily Mail, December 2, 1967, p. 9. col. 3.)*