

CHAPTER IX

Danny Meadow Mouse Is Caught at Last

“**T**IPPY-tippy-tippy-toe,
Play and frolic in the snow!
Now you see me! Now you don't!
Think you'll catch me, but you won't!
Tippy-tippy-tippy-toe,
Oh, such fun to play in snow!”

Danny Meadow Mouse sang this, or at least he tried to sing it, as he skipped about on the snow that covered the Green Meadows. But Danny Meadow Mouse has such a little voice, such a funny little squeaky voice, that had you been there you probably would never have guessed that he was singing. He thought he was, though, and was enjoying it just as much as if he had the most beautiful voice in the world. You know singing is nothing in the world but happiness in the heart making itself heard.

Oh, yes, Danny Meadow Mouse was happy! Why shouldn't he have been? Hadn't he proved himself

smarter than old Granny Fox? That is something to make anyone happy. Some folks may fool Granny Fox once; some may fool her twice; but there are very few who can keep right on fooling her until she gives up in disgust. That is just what Danny Meadow Mouse had done, and he felt very smart and of course he felt very happy.

So Danny sang his little song and skipped about in the moonlight, and dodged in and out of his little round doorways, and all the time kept his sharp little eyes open for any sign of Granny Fox or Reddy Fox. But with all his smartness, Danny forgot. Yes, sir, Danny forgot one thing. He forgot to watch up in the sky. He knew that of course old Roughleg the Hawk was asleep, so he had nothing to fear from him. But he never once thought of Hooty the Owl.

Dear me, dear me! Forgetting is a dreadful habit. If nobody ever forgot, there wouldn't be nearly so much trouble in the world. No, indeed, there wouldn't be nearly so much trouble. And Danny Meadow Mouse forgot. He skipped and sang and was happy as could be, and never once thought to watch up in the sky.

Over in the Green Forest Hooty the Owl had had poor hunting, and he was feeling cross. You see, Hooty was hungry, and hunger is apt to make one feel cross. The longer he hunted, the hungrier

and crosser he grew. Suddenly he thought of Danny Meadow Mouse.

“I suppose he is asleep somewhere safe and snug under the snow,” grumbled Hooty, “but he might be, he just *might* be out for a frolic in the moonlight. I believe I’ll go down on the meadows and see.”

Now Hooty the Owl can fly without making the teeniest, weeniest sound. It seems as if he just drifts along through the air like a great shadow. Now he spread his great wings and floated out over the meadows. You know Hooty can see as well at night as most folks can by day, and it was not long before he saw Danny Meadow Mouse skipping about on the snow and dodging in and out of his little round doorways. Hooty’s great eyes grew brighter and fiercer. Without a sound he floated through the moonlight until he was just over Danny Meadow Mouse.

Too late Danny looked up. His little song ended in a tiny squeak of fear, and he started for his nearest little round doorway. Hooty the Owl reached down with his long cruel claws and--Danny Meadow Mouse was caught at last!