



Translated extract from

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Atlantis-Verlag
Zürich 2006
ISBN 3-7152-0518-0

pp. 1-32

Lorenz Pauli / Kathrin Schärer (Illustration)
“How brave, how brave!”

Translated by Helena Ragg-Kirkby

How brave, how brave!



The mouse, the snail, the frog and the sparrow are sitting by the side of the pond. The mouse is there because she didn't know where else to go. The snail is there because the mouse is there. The frog has simply dropped in for a quick visit, and the sparrow wants to know what the others are doing.

“Ah well...”, says the snail, and the others all nod.
“What now?” asks the sparrow, and the others shake their heads. And all of them wonder “What now?”

After a while the frog has a brainwave:
“Let's have a competition to see who's bravest!”
“That's a good idea!” – “A very good idea!” – “A brilliant idea!”
The others clap their feet, their feelers and their feathers.

The mouse starts things off: “I'll swim underwater to the other bank and back without coming up for air!”
The frog is indignant: “You must be croaking. That's not brave, it's a piece of cake!”

The mouse is offended: "I'm no frog, for goodness' sake! For a mouse it's sheer madness!"

"Calm down, calm down!" says the sparrow. "Go on then, show us!"

The mouse gets ready, draws a deep breath, a very deep breath, leaps into the water, and is gone.

All the way there. All the way back. At last, panting and gasping, the mouse pops up again. The frog helps her out and pats her on the back: "How brave, how brave, what a wonderful diver you are!"

They all clap their feelers, their feet and their feathers.

Now it's the frog's turn. "Today I shall eat not a single measly midge, not a single fluttery fly" he says, "I shall eat a whole, big water lily!"

The snail is indignant: "That's not the least bit brave! I eat greens every day!"

"Calm down, calm down!" says the mouse. "Go on, frog, show us!"

The frog leaps into the pond, finds himself an enormous water lily and ...

... forces it down lock, stock and barrel.

After the last mouthful the snail nods admiringly: "How brave, how brave! That was really something special!"

They all clap their feathers, their feelers and their feet.

Now it's the snail's turn. She slimes and slides her way back and forth then clears her throat

and says "I shall come out of my shell and slither all the way around it and only then will I put it back on again."

The sparrow is indignant: "That's not the least bit brave! I got rid of mine on the very first day and I've never been back inside it again!"

The snail, offended, retreats into her shell.

"Calm down, calm down!" says the mouse. "Egg shells and snail shells are not the same. Come on, snail, off you go!"

The snail slithers out, all the way out, slithers around her shell, then slowly, very slowly, crams herself in again. The shell's a little bit crooked now.

The sparrow is thrilled: "How brave, how brave! The world has never beheld such a feat!"

They all clap their feet, their feelers and their feathers.

Now they all look eagerly at the sparrow. For each one of them knows that sparrows are cheeky and brave. And they're eager to know what the sparrow will do.

The sparrow hops and hops and hops. [Apportion direct speech to successive images:]

“Well...

Well actually...

Well actually I'm...

Well actually I'm not...

I'M NOT TAKING PART.”

The mouse is the first to understand. And then the frog. And finally the snail. They all whoop with joy: ‘Now that really IS brave!’

