



## LIBRARY LION

One day, a lion came to the library. He walked right past the circulation desk and up into the stacks.



Mr. McBee ran down the hall to the head librarian's office.

"Miss Merryweather", he called.

"No running", said Miss Merryweather, without looking up.



"But... there's a lion", said Mr. McBee, "in the library!"

"Humm... Is he breaking any rules?" said Miss Merryweather. She was very particular about rule breaking.

"Well... no", said Mr. McBee. "Not really."

"Then leave him be."

The lion wandered all around the library. He sniffed the card catalog. He rubbed his head against the new book collection. Then he padded over to the story corner and went to sleep.



No one was sure what to do. There weren't any rules about lions in the library. Soon, it was time for story hour. There weren't any rules about lions at story hour either. The story lady seemed a little nervous, but she read the first book's title in a good clear voice. The lion looked up. The story lady kept reading. The lion stayed for the next story. And the story after that. He waited for another story, but the children began to walk away.



"Story hour is over", a little girl told him, "it's time to go."

The lion looked at the children. He looked at the story lady. He looked at the closed books. And then he roared very loud.



Miss Merryweather came striding out of her office.

"Who's making that noise?" she demanded.

"It's the lion", said Mr. McBee.

Miss Merryweather marched over to the lion.

"If you cannot be quiet, you will have to leave" she said in a stern voice. "Those are the rules!"



The lion kept roaring. He sounded sad. A little girl tugged on Miss Merryweather's dress.

"If he promises to be quiet, can he come back for story hour tomorrow?" she asked.

The lion stopped roaring. He looked at Miss Merryweather. She looked back.



Then she said:

"Yes. A nice quiet lion would certainly be allowed to come back for story hour tomorrow."

"Hurray!" said the children.

The next day, the lion came back.

"You are early," said Miss Merryweather. "Story hour is not until three o'clock."



The lion did not budge.

"Very well," said Miss Merryweather. "You might as well make yourself useful."

She sent him off to dust the encyclopedias until it was time for story hour.



The next day, the lion came early again. This time, Miss Merryweather asked him to lick all the envelopes for the overdue notices.



Soon the lion began doing things without being asked. He dusted the encyclopedias. He licked the envelopes. He let small children stand on his back to reach books on the highest shelves.



Then he curled up in the story corner to wait for story hour to begin.



At first, the people in the library were nervous about the lion. But soon, they got used to having him around. In fact, he seemed very well suited for the library. His big feet were quiet on the library floor. He made a comfy backrest for the children at story hour. And he never roared in the library anymore.

"What a helpful lion," people said.



They padded his soft head as he walked by.

"How did we ever get along without him?"

Mr. McBee scolded when he heard that. They had always gotten along fine before. No lions were needed. Lions, he thought, could not understand rules. They did not belong in the library.

One day, after he dusted all the encyclopedias, and licked all the envelopes, and helped all the small children, the lion padded down the hall to Miss Merryweather's office to see what else there was to do. There was still some time left before story hour.

"Hello Lion," said Miss Merryweather. "I know something you could do."



"You could bring a book back into the stacks for me. Let me just get down from the shelf."

Miss Merryweather stepped up onto the stand stool. The book was just out of reach. Miss Merryweather stood on her toes. She stretched out her fingers.

"Almost...there..." she said.

Then, Miss Merryweather stretched a little too far.

"Ouch," said Miss Merryweather softly. She did not get up.



“Mr. McBee!” she called for a minute. “Mr. McBee!”

But Mr. McBee was at the circulation desk. He could not hear her calling.

“Lion,” said Miss Merryweather, “please go and get Mr. McBee.”

The lion ran down the hall.



“No running,” Miss Merryweather called after him.

The lion put his big front paws up on the circulation desk and looked at Mr. McBee.”

“Go away Lion,” said Mr. McBee.”I’m busy.”

The Lion whined. He pointed with his nose down the hall toward Miss Merryweather’s office.

Mr. McBee ignored him. Finally, the lion did the only thing that he could think of to do. He looked Mr. McBee right in the eye. Then he opened his mouth very wide. And he roared the loudest roar that he had ever roared in his life.



Mr. McBee gasped.

“You are not being quiet,” he said to the lion. “You are breaking the rules!”

Mr. McBee walked down the hall as fast as he could. The lion did not follow him. He had broken the rules. He knew what that meant. He hung his head and walked toward the doors. Mr. McBee did not notice.





“Miss Merryweather!” he called as he walked. “Miss Merryweather! The lion broke the rules! The lion broke the rules!”

He burst into Miss Merryweather’s office. She was not in her chair.



“Miss Merryweather?” he asked.

“Sometimes,” said Miss Merryweather from the floor behind her desk, “there is good reason to break the rules. Even in the library. Now, please, go call a doctor. I think I have broken my arm.”

Mr. McBee ran to call a doctor.

“No running,” said Miss Merryweather calling after him.

The next day things were back to normal. Almost.

Miss Merryweather’s left arm was in a cast. The doctor had told her not to work too hard.

“I will have my lion to help me,” Miss Merryweather thought.

But the lion did not come to the library that morning. At three o’clock, Miss Merryweather walked over to the story corner. The story lady was just beginning a story for the children. The lion was not there.



People in the library kept looking up from their books and computer screens hoping they would see a familiar furry face. But the lion did not come that day. The lion did not come the next day either, or the day after that.



One evening, Mr. McBee stopped by Miss Merryweather's office on his way out.

"Can I do anything for you before I go Miss Merryweather?" he asked her.

"No, thank you," said Miss Merryweather. She was looking out the window. Her voice was very quiet. Even for the library.



Mr. McBee frowned as he walked away. He thought there probably was something he could do for Miss Merryweather after all. Mr. McBee left the library but he did not go home. He walked around the neighborhood. He looked under cars. He looked behind bushes. He looked in backyards and trash cans and tree houses. Finally he circled all the way back to the library.



The lion was sitting outside, looking in, through the glass doors.

"Hello Lion," said Mr. McBee.

The lion did not turn around.

"I thought you might like to know," said Mr. McBee, "that there is a new rule at the library. No roaring allowed, unless you have a very good reason. Say... if you're trying to help a friend who's been hurt, for example."





The lion's ear's twitched. He turned around, but Mr. McBee was already walking away.

The next day, Mr. McBee walked down the hall to Miss Merryweather's office.

"What is it, Mr. McBee?" asked Miss Merryweather in her new sad quiet voice.

"I thought you might like to know," said Mr. McBee, "that there is a lion in the library."

Miss Merryweather jumped up from her chair and ran down the hall. Mr. McBee smiled.



"No running," he called after her.

Miss Merryweather didn't listen.

Sometimes there was a good reason to break the rules. Even in the library.

