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Lara and the mountain lion

Lara is my mother's best friend. She's a vet, that's a doctor who looks after sick pets and wild animals, too. I want to be a vet, as well. One day I asked her, 'Why did you decide to be a vet, Lara?'

'It's a strange story, George,' she answered.

'When I was your age, I was often alone and I had no-one – no

brothers or sisters to play with. So, for a few weeks each winter, I stayed with my three cousins. They lived high up in the mountains. They were tall and strong and could ski very fast. They were very good at snowboarding and climbing, too. But I couldn't ski, snowboard or climb. My legs weren't strong enough. I was often ill as well, so I had to carry different medicines with me all the time.

'One day, my cousins wanted to climb the mountain that was behind their house. They said, "You must come with us, Lara." They were unkind. They knew I wasn't well enough or brave enough.

'I tried to follow them up the path, but I soon got tired, so I had to stop and sit down. My cousins laughed at my red face. "See you later, then," they called and went on up the mountain without me.

'I started to feel better after a few minutes, but then I heard an animal behind me. I felt a big, warm, furry, soft face on my shoulder. It was a mountain lion.'

'Wow!' I said.

'I was very afraid, but I couldn't run away because my legs and knees still felt weak, so I just sat there. The lion opened its mouth ...





... and said, "I've got a terrible toothache." Well, I knew all about sore teeth because I often had a toothache, so I gave it some medicine that I kept in my jacket pocket.'

I laughed and said, 'I don't believe you, Lara!'

'Why not?' she asked. 'Strange things happen in the world all the time.'



'The lion and I sat and talked about X-rays and Saturdays and other things and after a few minutes, it said, "My tooth's feeling much better now, but I've got a very bad stomach-ache. I ate too much food after I woke up this morning."

'I often had a stomach-ache, so I had a bottle of stomach-ache medicine in my backpack. I put some on a little plastic spoon and gave it to the lion and then we sat and chatted about bandages and jam sandwiches and other things.

'After a few minutes, the lion said, "My stomach's feeling much better now, but I've got a horrible headache. I lay in the sun for hours yesterday."

'I knew about headaches, so I took a clean spotted handkerchief from another pocket and put it in the snow before I put it on the lion's furry head. "That's very cold but it feels fantastic!" the lion said. "Thank you so much."

'After that we sat and spoke about temperatures and school teachers and other things. But suddenly, the lion jumped up and said, "I'm feeling grrrrreat! How can I help you, now?"