

'I pointed at the mountain. My cousins were already high up above us. "Can you take me up to the top?" I asked.

"Sure!" it said. "No problem." So I jumped on its back and put both arms around its neck.

'The lion ran faster than the wind. It's really wonderful to ride on a lion's back. You must try it one day!'

I laughed.

'When we got to the top, we stood quietly together for a minute or two, then the mountain lion disappeared into a dark cave. Soon after that, my cousins arrived.

"The view's amazing, isn't it?" I said.

'My cousins were so surprised, they couldn't speak!'

'What happened next?' I asked.



'Well,' said Lara, 'they never laughed at me again. And every year, I went back to the same special place where I met the lion and it came to speak to me again. We always had wonderful conversations, the lion and I. Sometimes I took it more medicine and I often rode on its back in the snow. I always felt safe when we were together and we helped each other a lot. I knew then that I wanted to be a vet one day. So that's the answer to your question.'



Lara waited for a minute and then laughed.

'I'm sorry,' she said. 'It's just a story.'

But then she turned round and looked at a photo on her desk. It was of a young girl and a mountain lion. They were sitting on a rock in the snow and the lion had its big, soft, furry face on her shoulder.

Lara turned back and smiled at me. 'Now I must work,' she said, 'but would you like some strawberries or a honey cookie before you go?'