

The fox & The ant

By Fatima Najm

Farah the fox had been digging all day. She flicked her bushy, beautiful tail in frustration and said out loud: "I must finish enlarging this rabbit's burrow so I have a safe place to sleep." "Why are you taking over a rabbit's burrow? Don't you make your own home?" asked a squeaky voice.

Farah was startled. She had never noticed ants before, let alone realise that they can talk. "We foxes are smart. Rabbits dig burrows and abandon them. We take over," she replied. With that, Farah the fox went back to clawing at the ground. Abdul watched in silence. After a while, Farah collapsed in an exhausted heap.

"It's no use. No matter how hard I dig, I cannot enlarge the hole. I may as well give up." "Don't give up. Let's find another way. Perhaps I can help?"

"You?!" Farah the fox scoffed. "How can you help? You're weak and small."

The ant disappeared into the hole to investigate. His report surprised the fox.

"Farah, the hole is full of rocks and boulders, there is no soft soil for you to dig. Have you tried looking for other abandoned rabbit burrows?"

"No, I started digging out the first one I spotted. I never thought of checking for rocks or looking for other options."

"It can save us energy if we are patient and willing to use your time to explore options."

Abdul the ant activated his network of hundreds of ants, and in a matter of minutes, they had located a large hole for Farah the fox to sleep in.

"Because we ants are so small, we always work together. We don't get frustrated trying to achieve big things on our own, we know it is better and faster to work as a team."

"Ha, foxes work alone because we are strong and resourceful. We don't need any help."

"It is true that everyone is different. But there is no shame in asking for help or advice. You can always count on me, Farah." And with that Abdul the ant trudged off to work.

The next day Abdul the ant saw Farah the fox bashing her nose against the ground. Over and over again, she repeated the futile gesture. Abdul watched for a while. With each effort she looked more desperate and her movements became more aggressive.

"Farah, sorry to interrupt, but I think I can help."

"You again? Can't you see I am trying to catch those earthworms and beetles?"

The ant could see Farah was frazzled, irritable and angry but he summoned the strength to speak up.

"It is better to calm down, breathe deep, and count to ten. Wait for the earthworms to come out. We all work better when we are calm."

Farah was about to brush him off, but then she remembered how Abdul's advice had helped her find a home. She decided to try his method. To her surprise, she quickly caught three earthworms and four beetles.

"Abdul, you may be small and very different looking compared to anything I have ever befriended, but I can see I have a lot to learn from you. I like how you help others. I want to learn to be like that." Abdul smiled.

"People often underestimate or ignore those who are small in size. We have other qualities. And we are good at recognising our weaknesses. I know I am small and weak, but this means I am quick to seek help and collaborate with others. Once I am part of a team, I become strong and powerful. That way, the weakness becomes my strength and I am even able to help a clever fox like you."

Comprehension questions:

- Have you seen a fox? Where?
- How did Farah underestimate Abdul?
- Why does Farah want to be friends?
- How can your weakness become your strength?
- What is the Abdul the ant's real strength?
- What was the ant's advice to Farah?
- Why is it better to consider all your options before making a decision?



New vocabulary:

- Investigate
- Surprised
- Collapsed
- Exhausted
- Frazzled
- Irritated
- Summoned
- Weakness
- Strength
- Recognise