

Long ago, in a vast and fertile kingdom bordered by rivers and forests, there stood a small village surrounded by mango trees and open fields. Near this village lived three close friends: a crow named Megha, a mouse named Hiranya, and a tortoise named Mantha. Though they were very different in size and nature, they trusted one another deeply and lived in harmony.

Megha, the crow, was sharp-eyed and quick-thinking. He spent his days flying across the land, observing the ways of humans and animals alike. Hiranya, the mouse, was small but extremely intelligent, with strong teeth and a quicker mind. Mantha, the tortoise, was slow in movement but wise and patient, known for thinking carefully before speaking or acting.

Every evening, the three friends met near a quiet lake at the edge of the forest. They shared food, stories, and advice.

Each respected the strengths of the others, and their friendship grew stronger with time.

One summer, a terrible drought struck the land. The lake began to dry, crops failed, and food became scarce. Animals wandered far from their homes in search of water. The friends realized that difficult times were approaching.

One evening, Megha flew in from afar looking worried. He said, "Friends, I have seen hunters setting traps near the forest. They are taking advantage of the drought. We must be careful."

Mantha nodded slowly. "Hard times test true friendship. We must remain united."

A few days later, a graceful deer named Chitranga came to the lake to drink water. He looked exhausted and frightened. Megha spoke kindly to him and invited him to join their group. Soon,

Chitranga became part of their circle, and the four lived together peacefully.

One morning, while Chitranga went to graze, he unknowingly stepped into a hunter's net hidden beneath dry grass. He struggled and cried out in fear. Hearing his cries, Megha flew up into the sky and quickly saw the danger.

Megha rushed back to the lake and told Hiranya and Mantha what had happened. Hiranya said, "Do not worry. My teeth are sharp. If we act quickly, we can save him."

Mantha added calmly, "But we must be clever. The hunter may return at any moment."

Megha flew back to Chitranga and whispered, "Do not panic. Pretend you are dead. Lie still."

Then Megha flew high and began circling

the sky, cawing loudly. The noise caught the attention of the hunter, who soon arrived to check his net. When he saw the deer lying motionless, he thought, “The animal is already dead. I will return later to collect it.”

As soon as the hunter left, Hiranya rushed in and began gnawing at the ropes of the net. His teeth worked swiftly, and soon the net was cut open.

But before Chitranga could escape, Mantha, who had come slowly behind, was spotted by the hunter returning unexpectedly. The hunter caught the tortoise and tied him up.

Chitranga was filled with guilt and fear. “This happened because of me,” he cried.

Megha said firmly, “Now it is our turn to save Mantha. Listen carefully.”

They formed a plan. Chitranga ran toward

the path, pretending to limp badly. Megha flew low, acting as if he were injured. Seeing this, the hunter thought, "If I follow them, I can catch even more animals."

The hunter dropped Mantha by the side of the path and ran after the deer and the crow. As soon as he was far away, Hiranya hurried to Mantha and gnawed through the ropes binding him.

Once free, Mantha slowly crawled into the bushes. Meanwhile, Chitranga and Megha escaped into the forest. The hunter, realizing he had been tricked, returned angrily but found nothing.

That evening, the four friends reunited at the lake. They were tired but grateful. Mantha spoke gently, "Today we have learned that intelligence, patience, speed, and unity together can overcome even great danger."

Hiranya added, "Each of us alone would have failed, but together we succeeded."

Chitranga bowed his head and said, "I will never forget this kindness. True friendship is life itself."

Megha looked at the setting sun and said, "As long as we trust one another and act wisely, no enemy can defeat us."

From that day on, the friends lived cautiously but happily, always helping one another in times of trouble.

Moral: True friendship, guided by wisdom and cooperation, can overcome even the greatest dangers.