**The Lion and the Beetle**

Lion was very proud and very vain.  He loved to stomp around the savannah, roaring and growling whenever he saw his animal subjects - Giraffe or Hyena or Elephant or Gazelle or Ape - to show what a mighty Lion he was.

"I am a Very Mighty King!" he roared.  And his subjects all bowed low before him.

One day, Lion looked into the mirror-like waters of the lake.  He was struck by his own greatness.  What a beautiful and noble creature I am, he thought.

"I am a Very Mighty King!" he roared.  "I am a Very Mighty King!"

Lion preened and posed and pranced in front of the glassy lake for hours, admiring his greatness.  Finally, Lion said:  "I will show my devoted subjects that their leader is every inch a King."

Lion put on his fancy robes, his jeweled crown, and all his gold and silver medals.  His clothes were very heavy, but they made him look mighty and grand.

"I am a Very Mighty King!" he roared in delight. "I am a Very Mighty King!"

Lion sent out a message to all his animal subjects - to Giraffe and Hyena and Elephant and Gazelle and Ape.  He sent messages to all the animals living on the savannah or in the junge, inviting them to a meeting on the parade grounds in front of his palace, where they could admire him in his finery.

And so the animals came to see Lion; the Giraffe and the Hyena and the Elephant and the Gazelle and the Ape.  And many more animals came as well; from the stately Zebra in his black-and-white coat to the teeny, tiny Beetle, who was so little that he had to walk on the side fo the road so the bigger anmals would not step on him by accidents.

"I am small.  I am little.  People look down and can't see me," sang the Beetle as he scurried through the tall grass beside the road. "I am small.  I am little.  But inside, I'm tall as a tree!"

When the animals were assembled on the parade ground, there came a mighty trumpet blast from Elephant, and Lion came forth in all his grandeur.

"I am a Very Mighty King!" he roared. "I am a Very Mighty King!"

Lion strutted and preened and pranced before his animal subjects.  The animals were awed by his splendor and bowed before him.  Lion stomped through the rows of Elephants and Giraffes and Hyenas and Gazelles, roaring and growling to show how mighty he was.

"I am a Very Mighty King!" he roared. "I am a Very Mighty King!"

Then Lion saw the teeny tiny Beetle, standing alone by the side of the road.  The Beetle was singing to himself as he watched the Lion.  "I am small. I am little. People look down and can't see me," sang the Beetle as Lion strutted before his subjects. "I am small. I am little. But inside, I'm tall as a tree!"

Lion said to the Beetle:  "You, Beetle, bow before me!"

Beetle said:  "Your Royal Majesty, I know that I am small, but if you look at me closely, you will see that I *am* making a bow!"

Lion replied:  "Beetle, you are hard to see down there!  I am not sure that you are bowing to me."

Beetle said:  "Look at me closely.  I assure you that I am bowing."

Lion leaned over, peering down at the teeny tiny Beetle.  His splendid robes, his jeweled crown and his many medals made him so top-heavy that Lion wobbled and swayed as he loomed over the teeny tiny Beetle.  Then Lion lost his balance and fell onto his head!  His royal crown went flying off, and Lion rolled over and over, down the steep hill, and plopped into a ditch filled with muddy water.

All the animals laughed and laughed when they saw the muddy Lion sprawled in the ditch.  Frightened, the teeny tiny Beetle scurried away.  And the bedraggled Lion scurried away too.  He was*not* so very mighty, after all.