

## The Lioness and the Bear

by Jean de La Fontaine

The lioness had lost her young;  
A hunter stole it from the vale;  
The forests and the mountains rung  
Responsive to her hideous wail.  
Nor night, nor charms of sweet repose,  
Could still the loud lament that rose  
From that grim forest queen.  
No animal, as you might think,  
With such a noise could sleep a wink.  
A bear presumed to intervene.  
"One word, sweet friend," quoth she,  
"And that is all, from me.  
The young that through your teeth have pass'd,  
In file unbroken by a fast,  
Had they nor dam nor sire?"  
"They had them both." "Then I desire,  
Since all their deaths caused no such grievous riot,  
While mothers died of grief beneath your fiat,  
To know why you yourself cannot be quiet?"  
"I quiet!--I!--a wretch bereaved!  
My only son!--such anguish be relieved!  
No, never! All for me below  
Is but a life of tears and woe!"--  
"But say, why doom yourself to sorrow so?"--  
"Alas! 'tis Destiny that is my foe."

*Such language, since the mortal fall,  
Has fallen from the lips of all.  
Ye human wretches, give your heed;  
For your complaints there's little need.  
Let him who thinks his own the hardest case,  
Some widowed, childless Hecuba behold,  
Herself to toil and shame of slavery sold,  
And he will own the wealth of heavenly grace.*