

# A Lion in the Bedroom

by ReadWorks



When James woke up, he found a lion sleeping on the floor next to his bed. Because he was five years old, he thought this was awesome.

"Hello, lion!" he yelled.

The lion, a female with a patchy coat, opened one eye and stared at him lazily. Then she turned over and fell back asleep.

James considered petting the lion or scratching its belly - Trixie, his old cat, loved belly scratches - but he was proud enough of his new pet that he wanted to tell his parents first. So, he jumped out of bed and walked into the kitchen. His father was eating breakfast.

"Do you want me to strip the bathroom moldings this weekend?" his father asked his mother. "Or can it wait a week?"

"It can wait," she said, frowning. "But you should really *want* to strip the moldings."

"I got a lion!" yelled James.

"That's nice, dear," said his mother.

"Well played, son," said his father. "Most five-year-olds go with something showier, like an ocelot or a puma. But you've gone the classic route."

"I'm naming it Trixie II: Return of Trixie," said James. "I want to ride her to school."

"Sure," his father said, "everyone wants to ride their lion to school. But where will you park it?"

"Bill," his mother said. "We've talked about your sarcasm."

"It's not sarcasm," his father. "I'm being fu-"

James's father didn't get to finish his sentence. It was interrupted by an ear-splitting roar, coming from James's bedroom.

For a few seconds, neither one of his parents said anything.

"Maybe I'll name her Tiger," said James. "To confuse people."

"James," said his father quietly. "What was that?"

"That was Trixie II."

"Oh dear me," said his mother, crossing herself.

James's father craned his head to peer down the hall towards James's bedroom. After a moment, he knelt down in front of his son and put his hands on his shoulders.

"James," he said. "I need you to be completely, 100% honest with me. No make-believe, no story-time? Can you do that?"

James nodded. "Sure I can." He noticed a droplet of sweat dripping down his father's forehead.

"OK, great," said his father, in a strange, small voice. "James. Is there a lion...a real lion...in your bedroom?"

"Dad," said James, patiently. "We've been over this."

His father stared at him.

James sighed. "Of course there is, dad."

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!" his mother screamed. "Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

"Helen, stop it!" snapped his father. His father stood up. "This is ridiculous. I don't know what that noise was, but there is not a lion in your bedroom."

James's father walked angrily to the broom closet. He opened the door, pulled out a mop with a long wooden handle and began marching towards the hallway.

"For gosh sake, Bill," his mother said, grabbing him by the shoulder. "Let's just get out of here and call the police. Or animal control. Or someone. *Please*."

"And tell them what?" His father wheeled around to face her. "What? That we have a *lion* in the house? Oh, I'm sure they'll send a car right out."

"Tell them her name is Trixie II," said James. "Someone might have met her before."

"Bill..."

"I'm not calling *anyone*," his father said. With that, he turned and stomped down the hallway. James and his mother looked down after him.

"Do you think dad and Trixie II will get along?" James asked his mother. "Dad is so moody these days and Trixie II is just kind of...mellow."

"Quiet," his mother hissed.

They watched his father approach the door. He reached for the handle and, holding the mop high in his other hand, gently swung the door open and poked his head around the corner.

James barely had time to be curious about his father's reaction before his father turned on his heels, slammed the door shut and went sprinting down the hallway towards James and his mother.

"*Get out of the house right now!*" his father hollered as he ran. "*Go! Run! Now! Move! Move! Move!*"

His father practically shoved James and his mother through the living room and out the front door. When they were outside, his father doubled over, panting for breath.

"Where in the world did you get a *lion*?" he yelled at James.

"You mean it's *real*?" his mother screamed, her eyes bugging. "Ahhhhhhhhhh!"

"They come from Africa, right?" said James.

By this time, neighbors had heard the commotion and begun gathering. Their next-door neighbors were the Horowitzes. Mr. Horowitz walked up to James's father.

"Bill, is something the matter?"

James's father turned and stared at Mr. Horowitz. "There's a lion in my son's bedroom."

Mr. Horowitz threw a quick, worried glance at his wife, who was standing on their front lawn. His wife shrugged.

"O.K.," said Mr. Horowitz, slowly. "Do you want us to call somebody?"

"Her name is Trixie II," explained James. "Or maybe Ms. Botticelli. I like how that name sounds."

"Call somebody!" his father yelled. "Call anybody! There's a lion in my son's bedroom."

"Helen," said Mr. Horowitz quietly. "Should we call somebody?"

"I don't even know," said James's mother, breaking down in sobs. "I never know."

By this time a dozen neighbors had gathered in front of James's house. All of them were yelling at each other, trying to figure out what had happened, when suddenly everyone froze. There, at the front door of James house, was a massive African lion. Everyone stared at it, completely silent.

For a few moments, the lion stared back. Finally, she let out a long sigh.

"Guys," the lion said, "I know I'm a guest and I don't mean to be a pain, but I had a really late night last night and I have a client meeting at 10, so I was really hoping to sleep in. Do you think you guys could keep it down just a little bit? Thanks."

And with that, the lion turned and walked back in the house.

"What about Rambo?" said James. "That's a cool name. *Rambo*. Yeah, I like that."

# The Wishing Tree

by Kyria Abrahams



Deep in the woods is a secret tree. Only one boy knows about it. It's a wishing tree.

One day, the boy followed his dog into the woods. They stopped at the tree.

"I wish I could climb this tree!" the boy said.

POOF! His wish was granted. He was in the tree!

The leaves began to giggle.

"Hello!" they said. "Pleased to meet you!"

"My name is Noah," the boy said. "What's yours?"

All the leaves started to talk at once.

"We are the Wishing Tree," the leaves said. "We see good children and give them gifts.

"I wish I had one million dollars!" said Noah. But nothing happened.

"I *said* I wish I had a million dollars!" Noah said, louder.

"We heard you the first time," said the leaves.

"What good are you, anyway?"

"Very good," said the leaves. "This is a very good tree."

"Then give me money!" Noah demanded.

"We can only give you good things. Things that will make you a better person."

Well, that didn't sound like much fun. He thought of a new wish.

"I wish I could fight a dragon!" he said.

"Do you honestly think we would conjure a dragon?" asked the leaves.

"I guess not," said Noah. "Well, then, I wish I were brave enough to fight a dragon!"

Suddenly, Noah was standing at the bottom of the tree.

"Wish granted!" said the leaves.

"Arooo!" said Peanuts the dog.

"Let's go!" said Noah. He and Peanuts ran out of the woods. But Noah didn't feel very brave.

"Some wishing tree that was! No money! No dragons! What a waste!"

*Crack!* Suddenly, something hit him in the back of his head.

"Hey, No-Brains!" someone was shouting.

"Oh no!" Noah said to Peanuts. "It's Mitch the bully!"

Mitch was throwing peanuts at Noah.

"Here are some peanuts for your dumb dog!" Mitch said.

That was the last straw! Noah couldn't take it any more.

"Go away, bully!" he yelled. "You never hurt dogs!"

"Aroo!" howled Peanuts the dog.

"Whatever!" said Mitch. "You're not worth my time."

Mitch left.

"Yay! He left!" Noah said. "Thank you, wishing tree!"

Noah had never told Mitch to go away before. But on that day, he was very brave. Being brave was just like fighting a dragon. Being brave was better than having a million dollars.

You see, Noah thought his bravery came from the wishing tree. But the truth is, the tree didn't grant any wishes. Noah did it all himself. Being brave came from inside.

If you could make a wish like Noah, what would you wish for?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Use the article "The Wishing Tree" to answer questions 1 to 2.**

1. What does Noah yell at Mitch?

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2. Noah is brave.

Support this statement with evidence from the story.

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**Use the article "A Lion in the Bedroom" to answer questions 3 to 4.**

3. What does James think when he finds a lion next to his bed?

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4. Is James brave? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

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**Use the articles "A Lion in the Bedroom" and "The Wishing Tree" to answer questions 5 to 7.**

5. Compare Noah and James.

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6. Contrast Noah and James.

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7. Who is braver, Noah or James? Support your answer with evidence from both stories.

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