

The Banyan Tree

I. Grandfather's House

The boy lived with his grandfather in Dehra Dun. There was a grand old banyan tree in the garden of that house. He enjoyed sitting in that tree. From there he used to spy on the world below. Since the grandfather could not climb the tree, it belonged only to the boy.

II. The Friend Squirrel

There was a squirrel. It became his friend only when it became certain that the boy had no catapult or airgun. Later when the boy started to bring him pieces of cake and biscuit, the squirrel was soon taking morsels from his hand. In the spring, all kinds of birds flocked into its branches and the tree became the noisiest place in the garden. The boy had built a crude platform on the tree where he spent the afternoons when it was not too hot. Sitting there, he had read many books. Thus the banyan tree served the boy as a reading room.

III. Mongoose and Cobra

When he did not feel like reading, he looked at the world below. On one such afternoon, he saw the famous fight between a mongoose and a cobra.

Part II

IV. The Encounter

It was a very hot afternoon. The narrator saw a big black cobra coming out of a cactus. At the same time, a mongoose emerged from th went straight for the cobra. In a clearing beneath the banyan tree, they stood face to face. Clearly, there was to be a battle of Champions.

V. Preparing for the Battle

The cobra was about six feet long and the mongoose about three feet. The cobra spread his broad hood and the mongoose bushed his tail. Besides the boy narrator, there was a myna and a crow looking at the battle.

VI. The Battle Begins

Mongoose made a pretended move to one side. The cobra struck. However, before it could touch him, the mongoose had jumped to one side. While doing so, he also bit the snake on the back. A few drops of blood glistened on the cobra's

back. There were many such rounds and every time the mongoose was the victor. During one such round, the crow came in between and became a victim of the snake bite.

VII. Cobra is killed

The Cobra was gradually weakening. Ultimately raising himself on his short legs, the mongoose had the big snake by the snout. The snake made its last attempt to fight but in vain. When it had ceased to struggle, the mongoose gripped it round the hood, and dragged it into the bushes.