

**Fiction Excerpt 1: Androcles and the Lion****Use with Chapter 12**

*The ancient Romans thought it great sport to watch men fight wild animals to the death. This fight has a surprise ending.*

Androcles (/an\*druh\*clees/) was a Roman slave who escaped his master and ran away. He was happy to be free. But he was not sure how he could make it on his own. As night fell, he found a cave carved naturally out of the hillside. He crept into the cool darkness, lay down, and fell asleep.

Suddenly, he awoke, hearing the loud roar of a lion nearby. It was no dream. It was a real lion, looking straight into the cave. Androcles shrank back, fearful for his life, watching the lion's every move.

Then he noticed that the lion was suffering. It was roaring in pain. The great beast limped into the cave and flopped down. It lifted its right front paw and licked it.

Androcles took a step toward the lion. The big cat gave him a sad look, as if asking for help. Androcles crouched next to the lion. He saw a thorn stuck in the middle of its paw. Gently, he pulled the thorn out. The lion looked him in the eye again and purred.

That was the beginning of a warm friendship between "Androcles and the lion". They lived together in the cave. The two slept side by side, keeping each other warm. But one day Roman soldiers found Androcles. The law of Rome said that runaway slaves must be punished. So Androcles was captured and shut into a prison cell in the city of Rome.

For ten days, Androcles sat alone in prison. He was fed nothing but water and crusts of stale bread. Then a soldier told him that he was to meet his death in the Colosseum.

Androcles knew what that meant. Runaway slaves were often made to fight vicious lions before crowds of Roman citizens. As he walked the path from the prison to the Colosseum, he knew he would soon die.

The crowd cheered as Androcles stepped into the arena. They cheered even more loudly as the lion appeared on the other side. Androcles walked into the ring and bravely faced his death.

Then he and the lion recognized each other. To the amazement of the crowd, instead of attacking, the lion began licking the slave's face! The slave began stroking the lion!

The crowd cheered even more. "Free the slave! Free the lion!" they were yelling. The emperor agreed. "Androcles and the lion" lived a long life together in the city of Rome.