August Heat

Education Value
Strength and will power

Moral of the story
Small daily renunciations are what develop strength and will power

Story
August Heat was a little city mouse who lived peacefully in a big house. The house had all the comforts any mouse could ever dream of; there was always warm water to bathe in, hot food, plenty of clothes and whatever else.

A rather unusual kind of mouse lived with August. His name was Percy Veering, and despite all those comforts, every day he would give something up. He could quite easily wash in cold water as if it were warm, or chew leeks as though they were lumps of cheese. The worst was when he tried to convince August that acting in this way would be for his own good.

"Come on, man, you'll make yourself stronger. You're becoming a real softy!", Percy would say to him.

And poor August would turn away, snuggle into his blanket, and read a good book, wondering how there could be such stupid people around.

Misfortune would have it that, one night, so much snow fell on the city that our two friends' little mouse-house was completely snowed in and cut off from the outside world. They tried to get out, but the cold was intense, and they didn't think they could dig a tunnel through so much snow. They decided to wait it out.

The days went by, and still the snow remained; now there was no food left. Percy endured it quite well, but August - deprived of his hot baths, his food, and his warm shelter, was on the verge of losing control. He was a cultured kind of a mouse, who had studied widely; he knew that he wouldn't be able to stand more than three days without food. This was the same amount of time they had worked out they would need to dig a tunnel through the snow. They now had no choice but to get digging.

But as soon as he touched that cold snow, August turned away. He couldn't do it. Not with something so terribly cold, not even as hungry as he was, not even knowing that he would soon die!

Percy, though, managed it quite well, and started digging, all the time encouraging his friend to do the same. But August was paralysed; he just could not stand such terrible conditions. He couldn't even think straight. Then he looked at Percy, 'that idiot', and understood that that mouse was a lot wiser than he looked. Unlike himself, Percy had trained himself to do things because he really wanted to do them, and not just because they were the most appealing things to do at any given moment. He could order his legs to dig regardless of whether they were purple with cold - something which was impossible for August, no matter how much he wanted to do it. And with those thoughts, and a tear of helplessness, he lay down upon the mountain of feathers that was his bed, ready to let himself die.

When he opened his eyes, he thought he was in heaven; the face of an angel was smiling at him. But then with great joy he realised that it was just a nurse. She told him they had been treating him for days, ever since a very brave mouse had arrived at the hospital, his four legs frozen, and given instructions on where to find August. Then the brave mouse had passed out.
When August ran to thank Percy for all his help, he found him standing up, having greatly recovered. Percy had lost several fingers, and an ear, but he looked cheerful enough. August felt very guilty since he hadn't lost a thing.

Percy told him, "Don't worry, if it hadn't been for those fingers and that ear, I wouldn't be here either. What better use could they have had?!"

Of course, they continued to be great friends, but August no longer thought of Percy as an idiot. By Percy's side he set about regaining control over his own pampered and demanding little body, each day giving up one of those unnecessary comforts of modern mouse life.

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