

Adventures of Birds and Bugs

And things with wings

Bees and bugs and things

That fly with feathers and wings

Adventures of Birds and Bugs

--Part 1--

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Chapter 1—Honey Snack

Buzzy and Bee-Fly loved to take trips to the Meadow of New Stars. It was a special place where song birds sang in the grass covered places, and a multitude of bugs and flying creatures swarmed, crawled, hopped and flew. At night the stars shone atop like a diamond-covered tent. Here is where the children also loved to play. There was no end of new discoveries.

Sometimes the creatures of this meadow liked to play hide and seek games when the children came. They’d flutter here and then hide over there, or crawl under a plant or tall tuft of grass. Here is where children could learn about innumerable things. The soil on the ground was made of particles of dirt so small that if they were added up with all the rest that lined the floor of this meadow, would truly be more than anyone could count.

If the children were here with their families at night when an unclouded sky covered them snugly, the stars were more than they could count before falling sleep. The bugs and bees and hopping critters were too many to count, and even if they could be counted, they could not all be seen at once, for creatures had a way of keeping on the move, doing what they were designed to do. Flutter here, land over there, wiggle under this, crawl up that, hide in here, hop over there, zoom past that, and land ever so suddenly on an unsuspecting visitor, or on another yet larger creature of the land.

When the sun sparkled its golden shine on a dew-covered area, touching the shiny emerald grass and lighting up the bright yellow and multi-coloured flowers, it looked like a scene from some other heavenly realm. In the warmth of the sunshine the bees and bugs abundantly rejoiced and made a day of play and of work as well, for while they played they also tended to their little, humble, buggy tasks.

Then on cloudy days, with small puddles from the falling rain--presently descending, or having recently fallen--there was new bug activity. This was the time when other types of creatures would grow and grow, and when ready,

would then take to the air and fly with the others. This was the time when the plants and grass, trees and flowers and all manner of growth in the area were given a new burst of refreshment, enabling them to grow bigger and better.

Every day couldn't be sunny or the plants would not last long. Nor could all days be wet and cold, or many little creatures could not do the jobs that they needed sunshine in order to do.

Today was such a day as this. A happy, laughing type of sunny-bright, a go-to-the-meadow-and-fly-freely day.

Today Buzzy and Bee-Fly were here, on the job, or at their play. It was both for them.

"I'll race you to the next flower," Bee-Fly said, getting up a bit of strength to do just that.

In reality, Bee-Fly was actually feeling rather sleepy. She needed a boost of energy. But that would only come if she found some nice nectar. Just settling down on the welcoming and warm grass right where she was, wouldn't provide her with all that she needed. So a bit more effort was needed to get her to where she could both rest and be fed.

"Okay," Buzzy replied, "But I'm sure you will get there before I do. I'm feeling so tired."

"Me too," said Bee-Fly, "and that is why I want to get there right now. I need it. Come on, let's go!"

And so they did, and made it safely to a spray of flowers, filled with nectar and pollen.

"Umm! These do smell so good!" Bee-Fly exclaimed, very glad she had put forth the effort to get there.

"Yummy!" Buzzy replied, fully occupied with this delightful treat.

"Now back to base," Bee-Fly reminded Buzzy, after they had done their job and were well stocked up with what they came to do.

"Did you have a good morning out?" Bellafrill, a friendly worker bee asked when she saw Buzzy and his companion make it back safely.

Buzzy nodded and did what he was meant to do upon arrival.

It was then that he heard the news.

"They are spraying the area to clear away bugs and such. It's going to be a tough time for us bees too; if we survive that is."

News was making its way around the hive. Other bee scouts had seen and smelled what some farmers were up to.

"I guess we can move if we must, but I'd sure miss going to the Meadow of New Stars," Bee-Fly commented when she was taking a break. "Perhaps we could return again some time later. Of course, the best thing would be for the spraying to stop."

Another worker bee joined in, "I bet it's the mosquitos, isn't it? They are more abundant this year than ever. I hear they make humans very sickly."

"But our honey has so many healing properties, that it would do them good to keep making the place easy for us to live in and thrive," a different bee added to the conversation.

"Have you heard the nightly concert lately? The frog songs that fill the meadow, at least the part beside the pond?" Buzzy asked.

"I don't go too close to that area, if I can help it, but I know what you mean. There are sure plenty of them," Bee-Fly responded.

Buzzy continued his train of thought, “You see, the conditions that make the mosquitos thrive, are perfect for the frogs as well. And frogs help to keep down the amount of those pesky biters, somewhat.”

One bee commented, “And the birds too, they can help with the bugs and flying creatures that are bothersome.”

“Yes,” another added. “Though I like to keep out of their way just in case I’m considered lunch, or thought to be trespassing.”

They all chuckled.

It was an interesting realm, the realm of the bugs. Their means of survival and even their time of living was varied. But they all did have one thing in common: They were to keep busy and active nearly all the time. Life for most of them was much shorter than a human’s life span. That is unless you were one of those special creatures that stayed under the ground for many years before making your appearance.

So many types, so many shapes, so many jobs.

“Time for a honey snack!” one bee said to another, and they all agreed. “This stuff is great! And we all needed each other to make it possible. None of us could have created it on our own.”

They all agreed.

Chapter 2—Shining Wings

The Meadow of New Stars was part of a very large farm. Sometimes families or travellers would stop and camp in it for the night. This week there was a family staying in a large tent. The purpose of their trip was special. They were there to record all the bird calls they could, and to do some very quiet bird watching, and photo taking as well.

And to end each day, apart from looking at some of the pictures they’d taken, and writing in their logs about the bird activity they’d seen that day, they always had a snug time of story. And this week all the stories were of course about birds. Most of the stories were imaginary stories, but some were true story accounts, telling of things some birds had actually done.

Kyran and Kayla loved this time of day—or rather of night. They’d hear the distant frogs croaking their songs, as well as some feathered singers making their music at the start of the evening. They’d tuck into their sleeping bags and rest on a soft pillow, after having just had a tasty but simple meal.

Mother would ask what book they’d like to select for the evening, and whatever chapter or story in it was about birds, that is what she would read.

Tonight was Kyran’s turn to choose. He looked at the books his mother had brought and said his choice:

“A Prince from Another Realm”. And so Mother read from Chapter 11 and part of 12.

(Story from “A Prince from Another Realm” book:)

A lovely bird with shining wings flitted around, just up ahead of Prince Wilbert and Frank. It seemed to nearly be beckoning them. The men looked at each other, making the decision to see where this bird was calling.

As they followed it for several meters they saw, with great delight, a wonderfully filled bush of eddible berries.

Knowing better than to just eat whatever they came across, the adventurers paused for prayer and confirmation from the Guide of their life.

After more careful inspection, Prince Wilbert noticed something wasn’t quite right with the berries and the bush. To the unobservant passer-by it would look just like an ordinary bush full of berries. However, as the men prayerfully looked more closely, they could see it was entangled with another sort of bush—the kind with

poisonous leaves. It would be nearly impossible to pick and eat the berries without getting harmed from the bad leaves that were growing up and winding their way throughout.

The bird, that had looked rather lovely, now squawked an ugly sound and flew away. The shine seemed to have vanished. Its true nature was revealed by the Master of all.

“That was a close one!” Frank said as the men turned away, leaving the bush untouched.

Prince Wilbert added, “We can’t do things that seem nice and right, without staying in constant communication with our Protector. I see it’s not just the big bears that present a danger to us, but things that appear in disguise to be attractive that can get us seriously off course and delayed, and cause harm.”

Sobered and more determined than ever to walk in step with the One who was leading them, they continued on their journey.

After walking for quite awhile, they noticed something curious

“Are you sure we are heading in the right direction?” Frank asked. “I thought I saw that area about an hour ago.” He pointed out ahead of them. “I certainly don’t want to be going in circles.”

Prince Wilbert paused. “I don’t think we have repeated any steps, but you’re right, I do recognize something about that: The ivy going up the trunk of that tree, and beside it the old and rotten stump. Hmm. Let’s pray.”

“Dear Lord,” Prince Wilbert prayed, “We seek You for Your guidance. We don’t want to waste time or get lost. We don’t know where to go or what to do, unless you show us. We believe it was Your will for us to travel through the forest, and You have kept us safe through all the challenges of the day. Please show now what to do and where we are to go. Have we just walked in a circle in this last hour or so?”

The men then paused to listen.

“Tweet-tweet” came the reply, in a form of a bird, small and cheery.

The last bird that led them wasn’t helpful at all, and endangered their wellbeing. But this time, the cheery call came with the words in their heart, “You’ve missed something. Find what it is. You’ve retraced your steps because there is something I know you don’t want to miss.”

What had looked to these men like a big mistake and waste of time, was in actuality, going to save them more time in the future.

“Follow the bird!” came the clear message to Prince Wilbert’s mind from God their guide.

“I think it’s safe to follow this messenger,” Prince Wilbert said, and Frank who was at first hesitant, paused until he too received peace that it was right to do so.

First the bird landed on an overhanging branch and sang a lovely melody. When it was through, it was joined by its mate, and together they sang the song they were created to sing. Together they flew and circled back, as if making sure the adventurous team was following in the direction they were taking.

Then another bird, and another, joined in. It seemed they had all been waiting for this moment to lead in a parade of sorts, or procession. The further the men walked, the more little birds joined the team. Sometimes all the little birds landed in a tree to sing, and then when they were sure the men were walking in the right direction, they would carry on.

This seemed to go on for about ten minutes or more. Then when the birds were sure they had led the team of travellers to the right location, they all dispersed and flew this way and that way, leaving the men standing there, wondering, waiting, and watching.

“There’s a tunnel, look!” exclaimed Frank with excitement.

“Let’s go have a look,” replied Prince Wilbert, then paused.

Both men knew better by now than to walk into the next situation without caution and prayer.

As they paused for confirmation from Above, their hearts whispering, “Lord, is this where you want us to go next?” all of a sudden the team of cheery birds that had lead them there came back. All the birds started chattering and flying low and swooping around the entrance to the tunnel that led down into the ground.

The men smiled, their hearts told them this was their answer, and so with confidence they made their next move.

(End of story selection.)

Chapter 3—A Green-and-blue Suited Beetle

A shiny green-and-blue suited beetle strode smartly along the winding pathway that led to his underground home. He had had some good finds today, and most of all nothing and no one had stopped him, or caught him. He always did have to be on the lookout for bug catching critters.

As nice as his shiny coat was, sometimes it posed a threat whenever it reflected a bit of sunlight. It would make it harder to be hidden. But today was a good day. After all, he was bigger today than he was sometime before. Any day that brought him growth and new adventure was a good day for sure.

He paused to let a team of ants pass by first. He didn’t relish getting into a debate with them. He might be mistaken for a meal by some of them.

As Mr. Beetle sat in his hole, he mused about the things he had learned recently.

One time he was crawling around under a log, doing a bit of this and that, when he heard the most unpleasant sound. Though he didn’t know exactly what was being said by the couple of hiking humans angrily talking nearby, he did get the feelings they were expressing.

“Why do you always do it? I can’t stand it when you do!”

“I don’t always do it, like you think. In fact, it’s been months since I have. I’m sorry you are so sensitive.”

“Well, if you can’t manage to keep track of what you say and do, maybe you need to...”

That was all he heard said, as the humans walked on past.

Mr. Beetle felt very sad indeed.

“Didn’t they realise?” he thought. “Why, they should just be glad they CAN still talk and see and hear and move, and even be allowed to be around each other. Why, if they were a bug, living only a short time, maybe they would enjoy life a bit more. But they seem to think things will always go on and on. But they don’t. I should know. Signs of life coming to a close happen all around. I see it in all parts of nature.”

After awhile, a new sound was heard. Walking past his hideout was a child—a laughing and eager-to-learn child.

“Oh, Mama! Look! I think I see a beetle hiding in there. He’s so cute! Can I pick him up and take him home?” she said, and began to reach for him.

“Oh, dear!” Mr. Beetle thought and tried to wiggle more deeply in the ground.

“Oh, I can’t see him so well any more, Mama,” she said.

“Well, that’s okay, sweetheart. I bet he wants to just stay right where he is. That’s his home. But you can have this if you like!” her mother said, picking a cute little wildflower.

The girl walked happily away.

“Phew! That was a close one!” Mr. Beetle thought. “But I am glad that I heard and saw some people enjoying being out in nature, and enjoying being with each other. How truly pleasant.”

Another memory came to Mr. Beetle: The bird. The large and frightful bird who nearly picked him up yesterday. But thankfully, there was right beside him what he had been nibbling on—a piece of bread, dropped by a team of picnickers. He was just checking it out. But when there was the choice of giving himself up to the bird or giving up what he had, he chose to give up what he had. That was a better option. So the bird pecked up the bread and was on its way.

There would be more things to explore and nibble on and check out later. And that he couldn’t do if he didn’t have a *him* left to do it.

Every day was filled with choices, and each day he had to decide what to do and what not to do. Everything had an affect and changed things in some way.

“The birds are fine to be singing in the trees, or catching OTHER bugs, or helping to spread the seeds of nature so that the world looks good. But I don’t really want to have my own free ride to one of their nests. No, thank you.”

Just then an ant was sniffing around. These creatures, though much smaller than he was, did pose a threat at times. He hoped something better and more tasty would grab the attention of the ant and his team. Just then he remembered something.

Mr. Beetle dashed out of his comfortable place, grabbed a bite of some apple core he’d discovered earlier, and brought it over to the ant.

“Yes, yes! Thank you very much. This will be perfect!” the ant and his partner would have said, if they could have spoken “Beetlese”. “And where did you say it was from?”

Seeing these ants were delighted with his gift, Mr. Beetle walked over to the rest of the apple core and showed them the way. He knew it wouldn’t be long before many more were at the job taking it all away, one bite at a time. Sure enough, the crew from the closest opening to the colony was alerted. Out they came to clear away the food scraps and stock it up for their colony.

“They sure don’t waste time,” Mr. Beetle commented. “No sooner has one found a treasure than many are alerted. So soon after being told about the food, they take action and work hard in unity to take what they need.”

Chapter 4—Singing and Squawking

On the second night of their birdwatching camping trip, it was Kayla’s turn to choose the book for the night story. Since hearing so many birds singing that morning—which was their first morning of actually waking up at the camp—she had been in a song-and-poem mood all day. In her log book that evening she started to write one about the trip so far. It started off with:

“Under the stars

Under the sky

Away from the cars

The birds like to fly”

She’d add more to it on other days.

“Time for a Rhyme” Kayla suggested for the book to read from that night. Mother saw there where two poems related to the topic, and so began to read. Meanwhile, Daddy was whittling on some wood. He was trying to make a few little whistles, and had brought a few thises and thats to make them while on their trip.

Singing Geese

“Aaaah, aaah, ...uuff!”

“To sing is just so tough

We’ve sung at night and in the sun

And when we walk and fly and run!”

The geese friends were trying

But then they started sighing,

Said Miss Goosey in dismay

Before she went and “hit the hay”

“I can’t seem to make a song

Sound just like a songbird,

But I’m sure it won’t be long

‘Til from me a song is heard.”

She fell asleep and dreamed that

Wishing to be more than a cat

The farmer’s kitten tried to be

A lion, roaring fearlessly.

It looked so funny

And Goosey said “Honey,

The farmer wants a cat

He likes you just like that

Soft, gentle, and fluffy,

A pet, and not a toughie.”

“Okay” said Cat “I’ll ‘Meow’,

I won’t moo like a cow

I won’t bark like a dog

I won’t leap like a frog

I won’t graze like a lamb

I’ll just be who I am.”

Then Goosey awoke
And to the others spoke,
“I had a dream and I’m guessin’
That it was for a lesson.
The farmer wants me.
Not a songbird in a tree
Or a colourful parrot
Or rabbit with a carrot
Not a big brown moose
He just wants a goose!”

Although she couldn’t sing
She gladly flapped her wings.
She could really fly
A long way in the sky!

And before the winter weather
Brought the snow all white,
They flew so happy together
‘Cause God made them just right.

Walking and Squawking

There once was a kid named Azar
Who had a toy guitar
He’d grab that thing
When he wanted to sing
And played it like a star.

He had a brother called Stede
Who was a friend indeed

Whatever the day
They liked to play,
Or draw or run or read.

One day on a walk
They heard a loud bird "Squawk!"
They looked to see
There were twenty-three,
In the cockatoo's flock.

With ease, it seemed they flew
Through the sky so big and blue
"Wish I could fly!"
"So do I!"
They wanted to join them too.

"But we can do things you know,
Though we are here below,
Without a wing
We still can sing
Joyful wherever we go."

Though the birds could fly
The brothers wouldn't sigh.
Laughing and singing
Cheering and bringing
Smiles to others nearby.

Dad then put out the fire all the way by pouring some water he'd brought from the pond earlier, then tucked into bed. He decided to sing a song of his own. First, he pulled out his harmonica to play the tune, then sung the song, and ended once again with the sound of the harmonica.

The children smiled. They were glad to be having so much time out in nature, as well as time with their fun-loving parents. In some ways the time was going by slowly, but every bit had something special or unusual about it

Kyran remembered that today he'd almost been swooped by a bird whose nest was in the tree. He had seen it and wanted to take a picture up as close as he could. But the mother bird didn't take too kindly to him being there and was trying to scare him away.

“Oh, well,” he said when leaving the spot. “I guess somethings are just to be enjoyed with the eyes. I can’t take a good photo of everything. At least I’ll remember what it looked like. Maybe I can draw it.”

And so Kyran, who was working on his art skills, did just that. In his notebook, that night, he sketched it as best as he could. “That’s very nice,” his father had said.

Of course it wasn’t the funnest part of the day, being chased away, but now with a nice picture drawn, as well as the pleasant song his father had sung, called, “Under His Wings”, he was feeling alright; more than alright.

Chapter 5—Miss Beetle’s Dream

Mr. Beetle decided to shut his eyes for a little rest. He was in a safe place and it was the right time of day.

But when he awoke, he realised that he’d been dreaming. “Am I really right back in my nook?”

In his dream he’d been crawling up a boy’s leg pants, not really thinking what he was doing. But before too long the boy walked away and got in a car. Oh dear! He was being taken to a far away place. There was little chance getting back to his usual home again.

The boy and his dad reached the river and got out of the car. They were going fishing.

The boy took his fishing rod to the river’s edge, sat on a rock and began to toss his hook and line out into the water. As he sat there for a long while hoping to catch a fish, Mr. Beetle began to crawl down and away and back to the dirt.

“Maybe I can begin living here,” Mr. Beetle said, trying to make the best of it.

“Oh, hello...” a friendly friend came up to Mr. Beetle in his dream.

It was a Miss Beetle, that looked just like he did. And off they walked through the grass having some beetle talk.

“So, how did you get here?” said the pretty and friendly beetle.

“Well, I guess I got in the car and drove here...” Mr. Beetle said with a laugh. “Though I didn’t intend to do that at all. I was just climbing up something that turned out to be that boy over there. When he got in the car, I was stuck. But I am glad to be here now, and here today, as I was able to meet you.”

Miss Beetle smiled shyly then said, “I do hope you’ll stay around for a little while at least.”

Mr. Beetle couldn’t think of anything better to do right then, and so on they walked and talked. That is until Mr. Beetle woke up and realised it had only been a dream. Maybe it had been only a dream, but maybe it could become reality.

“Huh?” Mr. Beetle thought as it seemed a shadow had blocked the afternoon sunshine for a moment. He looked up and saw a boy was just walking past to get into a nearby car. He was on his way to go fishing and had come to collect some worms.

“Should I venture it? Yes, I will!” Mr. Beetle decided.

The boy stopped, walked back to pick up his hat that the wind had blown off suddenly, then reached down to tie his shoe.

That was all the time Mr. Beetle needed. Up, up and up he crawled onto the boy, and away in the car he soon was, driving to the fishing spot.

“I wonder if my dream will actually come true?” Mr. Beetle wondered.

“Well, at least I didn’t miss the chance when it came. Sometimes you’ve just got to act when the time presents itself. It’s not every day a chance like this occurs. And even if my dream doesn’t happen just like I would like it too, it’s better than sitting here wishing I had taken action, and wondering why I was so slow to make a move.”

When the car stooped, Mr. Beetle felt sure this must be the river, and was attempting to crawl out of the car. But to his dismay it was only a house. The boy's father had forgotten to bring the drinking water and some other supplies. Both the boy and the father had thought that the other one had packed it.

Their house wasn't so far from the river anyway.

"Oh no!" Mr. Beetle said, when he realised too late that he was now on the ground near the house, and the car door was closed again and off they drove.

"Maybe I made a mistake after all," Mr. Beetle thought to himself, trying to walk over to a tree as quickly as he could. He didn't know the area and what dangers there might be. But if he could make it over near the roots of the tree, he could burrow in a bit and find shelter.

But just as he was burrowing into the soil, he looked up at saw just who he had set out to hopefully find.

"Maybe chasing a dream wasn't so silly after all," Mr. Beetle thought.

"Oh!" said a Miss Beetle. "You are just like the beetle friend I saw in my dream. Only, in my dream we met by the river."

This really intrigued Mr. Beetle. He was eager to talk, and asked, "You also had a dream about meeting me beside the river?"

"Yes," Miss Beetle nodded.

"But why are you here?" Mr. Beetle asked. "Do you live here?"

"Yes, I live here, and I've never been to a river side. But how did you get here?" she asked.

Feeling like being humorous, yet in a way it really was what happened, he said, "I guess I just dropped by your place to say hello." Then he paused before saying what he thought might sound too amazing to be true.

He told of his dream, and told of it coming true, at least the first part of it—catching a ride on the boy and in their car. He then added,

"I guess I'm glad that I never did make it all the way to the river. It was here that I was meant to be. I guess some dreams are only meant to happen part of the way, or are to get us going in one direction."

Miss Beetle smiled. She was glad for company.

Meanwhile at the river, the boy and his dad were having a great time.

Chapter 6—Flying and Riding

It took a few hours, but by supper time the team of "fishermen"—a boy and his dad—had something good to bring home. "Mom will love these!" the boys said, putting the bucket of ice with the newly caught fish into the back of the car.

Father smiled. More than the fish he was just glad for the time to do something relaxing and enjoyable with his son. The year had been rather stressful. First his own mother—the boy's grandmother—had been in ill health. Though she was better now, it had taken its toll on them, while they were unsure what would happen to her.

Next his business stopped working well. Then, his shop had to close temporarily due to lack of supplies needed. Then there was the fire. Their house had been at risk. Though only partly damaged, it still was in need of repair.

This time at the river, and regular trips to it, seemed to make things feel so much better.

The father smiled as they got in and drove to the house.

"Oh! I forgot my hat!" the boy said as they got out of the car.

It was only a short distance back to the river, and so they decided to nip back there and get it.

Mr. Beetle and Miss Beetle could hardly believe their ears. Was this team going again, right now, to the river?

“Let’s go!” Mr. Beetle said to Miss Beetle. But they’d need to move quickly. And so they took to their wings and both flew into the window of the car and settled on the seat, under a crumpled jacket.

When they were sure they were unnoticed, as soon as the car stopped, they again flew out and landed on a low tree branch.

“Wow! This has been fun!” Miss Beetle said to Mr. Beetle, who was hanging upside down on the thin branch.

“Sure has been!” he replied, and made his way down to the ground, together with Miss Beetle. “Let’s go check out the water’s edge. I wonder who lives here?”

“I guess we’ll find out somewhat,” Miss Beetle responded.

“Ribbit. Ribbit. Ribbit,” came the familiar sound.

Then a butterfly flew past them as they crept across the patch of grass near the water.

“Lovely. Oh, so pretty!” Miss Beetle exclaimed. “I’ve got wings too, but also a very earth-dwelling body. But this one with delicate wings loves to spend most of her time in the air here and there. She loves fluttering in the wind, and moving from one bit of beauty to the next. She loves light. I bet that’s how and why she stays clean and free of mud. She just keeps moving and letting the wind and the sun embrace her and be on her, plenty.”

Mr. Beetle added a thought, “And she doesn’t like to roll in the mud, for if she did, it might tear her wings and keep her earth-bound. She’d have a very hard time freely flying. She chooses the light and clean places, and stays clear of the soiling places.”

Just then the butterfly landed good and close by and opened up her wings all the way, laying them flat as she sunned on a flower.

“Why does she do that?” Miss Beetle asked Mr. Beetle.

“Maybe it has something to do with keep her wings in good shape and getting all dry and warm. I think she can then fly better. She wants to ensure that she can always flutter in the wind, moving swiftly, with nothing holding her back or down.”

“I, too, feel like taking a flight!” Miss Beetle expressed, and so they did. Up they flew, as much as their wings could lift their heavier selves, before landing again to crawl on the ground.

“Maybe we’ll get stronger if we fly more often,” Miss Beetle thought.

“Maybe we will. We’ll just have to try,” said Mr. Beetle.

Chapter 7—Little Bird Stories

Using a camping lantern beside the campfire, Mother read the story for the night to the rest of this camping, bird-watching team. She let Daddy choose what it was going to be.

“I want to hear some true stories,” he’d said.

Mother had several shorter true bird stories selected in a file that she’d printed out. So while he was roasting some food for their evening meal, Mother read five little true stories she’d compiled:

1.) The Little Bird

Some children lived near a forest. In the spring, the flowers were blooming. They liked to pick the flowers.

One day they walked into the forest to pick flowers. But the children went too far. They didn’t know how to get back home. What should they do? The older sister remembered what their mother had told them, “If you ever need help, just ask Jesus and He will help you!”

So the children knelt down and prayed for Jesus to help them find their way home.

After they had prayed, a little bird hopped down on the ground nearby. One of the boys wanted to hold it and reached out to pick it up. The bird seemed so friendly. But the bird kept hopping forward!

The children began to follow it. It was a fun game. After a while, the children looked up and saw they were out of the forest. They could see their house! Jesus had sent the bird to lead them home.

2.) The Last Apple

We have an apple tree in our yard and it's mostly a bird feeder, really, as the apples that grow on it are filled with bugs and worms. It has been this way every year. However, something special happened this last year.

All the apples were gone—eaten by the cockatoos as usual. But there was one last apple left on the tree. It grew and grew, and no birds ate it. It was fully ripe, and growing in a low spot where we could pick it.

So one day we picked it and cut it open. To our surprise, it was a very good apple with no bugs at all. That was the only apple that had fully ripened without the birds eating it, and it was without bugs. That was Jesus' special apple treat for us!

3.) A Bird and a Frog

When Liam was two years old, his daddy wasn't able to be there for his birthday. He had been gone for a while on a trip. Then Jesus did something to encourage Liam. For the first time ever, a little bird flew into our dining area. We lived in an eight-story apartment building and the bird just flew in—a cute little bird. Liam really liked it. Eventually it was able to fly out again. It was just a special thing to have happen on his birthday.

Later that day, when someone was with him outside they found a frog in the garden. The garden was more like a courtyard. It was just a cement area with some plants growing in the corner of it. They found this frog and brought it upstairs to show us.

Liam was so happy with this little frog that was found. We let the frog go later on, but it was fun that it happened on his birthday. The Lord brought some nature to him in a place where it wasn't really possible to enjoy much nature.

4.) The Piggy and the Magpie

Once my younger brother had left something in the yard that was very special to him—a little, cloth finger puppet "piggy". Because this was the time of season that magpies build their nests, one magpie was looking for a soft thing to put in his nest. That little soft toy was the perfect thing! So he picked it up and began flying.

Thankfully, I saw him. We ran in and told our mother. She came out with us to the front yard where the bird had proudly gotten a very good nest softener. He was on the ground trying to get the strength to carry this soft toy across the road to his nest.

My mother knelt on the ground near him and looked at him. He prayed for the Lord to help the bird not fly away with it, and then pleaded with the magpie, "Please, please, give it back." Then, in answer to prayer and pleading, the bird set down the soft toy and flew off. That got me wondering, maybe baby magpies enjoy soft toys, ha! My brother sure does, and was very happy that day to get his tiny soft toy back again.

5.) God Cares for Elijah

The Lord can do some amazing things to take care of those who love Him. One time there was a famine in the country and no rain fell, as a result of a bad king and queen's ungodly ways. The people in the land weren't obeying God's Words either. It was a difficult consequence of their bad behaviour.

Prophet Elijah told the king that the rain wouldn't fall to water the crops until God knew it was the right time and people were ready to change and do the right thing. It was to be three and a half years until it rained again.

Prophet Elijah had food and water and all that he needed during that time of famine, because he obeyed the Lord. The Lord told him to go and live beside the brook Cherith for awhile, where he had water to drink.

The Lord then told some ravens to fly and bring him meat and bread twice each day.

When at last the water of the brook dried up, Elijah was told where to go and what to do next.

Elijah obeyed and went to a place called Zarephath, as the Lord wanted a woman there to feed and care for him. Prophet Elijah asked her for food and water and she gave him all that she could.

The food she shared with him was to be her last bit of bread, but because she gave it to God's prophet, God did a miracle for her. The woman's barrel of flour and her jar of oil never ran empty—for years!

Every day she baked bread for her son and herself and for Prophet Elijah, and there was always enough in the containers for them to use.

It was a miracle! She had to obey and have faith at first to share the only food she had, but because God asked her to, she did it. And not just on that first day, but she shared her miracle food with Elijah every day, for three years; and because she did, she and her son never lacked the food they needed.

One day the woman's child got very sick. It seemed like his life had ended. The mother took her son to Prophet Elijah to pray for him. After the prophet prayed desperately for the boy's healing, the boy opened his eyes and was alive and well. Everyone was so happy!

(End of story selections.)

"Goodnight" Mother said, to each one in her family, ensuring they were tucked in snug for the night.

"Goodnight" they replied.

And it seemed, so did the chorus of pond dwellers, as the frogs croaked their evening tunes.

Chapter 8-- Bee-Fly, Buzzy and Bellafrill

Bee-Fly, Buzzy and Bellafrill were enjoying a delicious snack of honey. After all, they'd worked so very hard, day after day, to produce it. And it wasn't just honey that their large team of bees made, but wax as well.

If there was something they weren't, it was lazy. And certainly not lonely either. Well, sometimes they worked alone in their flying missions, but they always knew that they were a part of a team working to make some things that were very useful and needed.

"Can you come here for a second please?" the voice was well known. For these bees in the hives of the farmer knew the voice of the farmer's wife well. She often came to check on them, and saw how they were getting on.

She was calling her husband to help her lift some new honey extracting equipment they had purchased.

Of course the bees had no idea what it was for, and they started to speculate.

Bee-Fly, Buzzy and Bellafrill peered out of the hive to see, and discussion began.

Bee-Fly said, "I think it's for collecting new bugs, sort of capturing them you know—like flies and mosquitos, maybe even snails. I think it's to cut down the bad bugs, so their farm can be a nice place."

"Yes," added Bellafrill, "Then others won't need to spray poison around to get the bugs. And we'll be fine and healthy."

"Maybe," commented Buzzy. "But maybe it's a dog food making machine. Like it takes the scraps and bits of foods and mixes them all up, dries them, and out pops the dry food bits that dogs like to eat."

Bee-Fly nodded. That was a new idea, and it was mechanical enough to look like it could do the job.

Bellafrill thought of an altogether new idea. “I wonder if it’s a new music making machine. It might make the sounds of nature—like the birds and the bugs and bees too, and the wind blowing in the trees. Then they wouldn’t miss these things when they are in their house or workshop. It would be like they are still outside! Maybe it even has a fan to blow fresh air, and perhaps something that puts out the smell of grass and fresh spring flowers!”

They were having a great time coming up with the “what is it?” ideas.

It was a week or so later when the three of them discovered that it actually was something completely different—and something that involved them, or at least their hive’s honey.

The door of the workshop was open and the new machine could be seen from the hive, if you really looked carefully.

When the farmer’s wife began bringing into the workshop something that was taken out of another hive, this made Bee-Fly, Buzzy and Bellafrill all the more curious.

But when it came time for her to remove something from their hive, a part that contained lots of stored honey to share, these three decided to catch a ride on it into the workshop. And so they did.

“Oh, what are you still doing here?” said the farmer’s wife, when she noticed the three bees still sitting on a removeable part of their hive.

Off they flew quickly, but only to get another view of this machine.

“Seems she’s putting the honey into that machine,” Buzzy described what the others could see already.

“Now it is spinning around so fast! I am glad that we got off when we did,” said Bellafrill.

“Oh, and look at that spout!” Bee-Fly exclaimed, drawing attention to where some honey was pouring out into a large container.

“So that’s what it’s for!” the now wiser bees commented.

Now that they had seen it for themselves, it was time to be leaving, and off they flew.

They knew that their hard work was being well appreciated, and well kept.

These farmers like to do things in the way that preserved the goodness of all that was provided through nature and the active, helpful creatures.

As they left, the farmer’s wife was sampling a little taste of it, and giving a bit to her little girl as well.

“Mmmm!” they both said.

“Just the way it is, is just great! No heat, just eat!” was their motto.

As the bees flew out the partially opened workshop window, right over the most colourful garden of flowers you’ve ever seen, a pair of playful butterflies were dancing in the sunlight. They showed with their winged joyful moves, that they were just happy to be alive. First they flew here, and then fluttered there, and at last landed on some flowers to bathe in the sunshine for a few quiet and still moments.

Ah! It was good to be alive, and to be a bee, as well.

As soon as they got back to their hive, a truck of some sort was just pulling up to the house. This curious team, though usually working hard, thought it wise to take time to enjoy a few moments of relaxation, as well as exploration. After all, it was their farm, and they wanted to know what was going on.

If they had known how to read the human’s language they would have read the truck’s sign that said:

“Pest removal services”.

Not ever creature trying to take advantage of the farmer’s property and home was welcome here. Some creatures worked hard to help out—like the bees. They were more than welcome. But others were not. --Those of the rat sort, and those of the roach kind as well.

So every now and then the farmers got some help to remove or clean out the very unwelcome guests, that were more like thieves, than helpers.

“We share our honey and we do work hard, and we try to stay out of the human’s houses,” Buzzy said, trying to encourage the others that they had nothing to worry about. They were to keep their place right where they were, and keep doing the good they were doing—pollenating the plants, and producing the sweet and powerful honey that only they knew how to make.

Chapter 9—A Starry Picnic

Tonight the camping family did something different for their evening mealtime and story. They spread a large picnic blanket on the ground, and bundled up with several more blankets on top of them. A few pillows and cushions were ready for tired heads to rest on. After singing some songs under the stars, and eating a warm bowl of supper, everyone settled down to look up at the stars.

Mother had a little camping light right beside her, so she should see the book and read the story. It was her turn to choose the story for the night. During story time, Daddy, while lying down, was able to softly pluck on his guitar some nice, gentle background music.

Mother had selected a couple of booklets from the series called “Story time with the Master”. Since one story was about a little girl, and another about a little boy, it seemed just right. They listened while lying snuggly in between their parents, and kept a watchful eye for any zooming stars in the sky above. Mother began to read:

A little bird sat on a window sill, waiting for the daily crumbs that were put out. But on this day the window remained shut. The little hungry bird, after waiting for what seemed a very long time, then hopped to the ground to begin looking for food; perhaps something had dropped down from the day before, and he could eat it today.

Ah, there was a tiny little crumb, but beside it was something far better! A bug to eat, and oh! Over there was a bush with berries that were just starting to come out. Umm! So much goodness was discovered, even more than the bird would have gotten if it had just been fed at the window with a few crumbs that had been collected off the table.

Sometimes something we are hoping for, and even depending on, doesn’t work out in the way we want it to. This makes us have to look around and find something else. Through doing this looking and finding, we discover more and better possibilities that would have been missed if our focus was only on that one thing we thought we needed to be happy and make it through our day.

Now the birdy had more options. The next day when the window was open, and the crumbs were there, the birdy saw the little girl sitting up in her bed. She tweeted to the bird, glad to see that it still came back again, and that just because there were more berries and bugs around, it didn’t stop coming to eat the few humble crumbs that were put out. It cheered her up to see this one, and to hear the happy melody it sang.

At first the bird had needed the girl to provide for it, and now the bird realised the girl needed its song of cheer and daily visits. So even though there were more luscious places to feed, the bird made sure to return each day to give back, in gratitude, a song of cheer and nibble the humble gift that the girl could share.

One day the bird even brought a small twig with a ripe berry on it and placed it on the window sill, then sang and flew off. The girl knew it was a gift from birdy to her. The next day she placed on the window a few seeds she had saved from her meal the night before, as a little thank you to the bird for his friendship and gifts. There is a time to give and a time to receive. A time to love and a time to be loved. A time to leave and a time to return. A time to share, and a time to be shared with.

(End of the first story. Beginning of the next.)

A little boy sat at the water's edge and tossed in a few rocks. He was thinking about some things lately. This seemed to help him pass the time while his mind was troubled. Just like the pebbles that he tossed in, and saw that they vanished from sight, so had other things in his life gone. Or at least he couldn't see them anymore.

He tossed in another rock and then got up to walk away. Just then a bird in the tree began a new song. He stopped to listen. There was something special about this song. As he listened it seems new thoughts were forming in his mind. It was a song waking up something that had been slumbering deep inside him—joy. Joy was awakened, as a child awakes in the morning. The bird's joy flittered on the air of that song and made its way into the boy's heart. Then something else followed too, as he started down the path again—peace.

He no longer wished to figure out all the questions that were bothering him, but just wanted to relax in the knowledge that the God who made the sparrow, would also bring a new song to his own heart. This bird's own little ones had grown and flown away from their nest to start new lives, and it was probable that this bird rarely saw those ones again, but still it sang as it did every day, for each new day could bring new joys if it looked.

So the boy with now more of a hint of a smile on his face started to sing a song of cheer, and by the time the song was through, new hope had stirred his soul. Though lost things might remain out of sight, still there was much he could enjoy, and didn't want to miss it. Each time he again started to miss what was no longer part of his life, he remembered the cheerful bird, singing near the water's edge, and he too stirred himself to sing again until joy, peace and hope sprang up and kissed him.

(End of story.)

Chapter 10—The Brush Turkey and the Bower Bird

It was Kyran's turn to pick the story for the night, and he was choosing from between two booklets. In the series "Creatures with Character" there were two that were about birds. Finally, Kalya said that whatever one he didn't choose tonight, she would ask to be read for her turn on the following night.

While in their tent, drawing some pictures of things they had seen that day, Daddy read the story for the evening.

Liam and Tony heard some rustling in the bushy area where their family had stopped for a picnic.

"Come, Patrick," they invited their youngest brother to peek between the trees and see what was going on.

"I think it's a brush turkey," said Liam, who had seen something like this before.

They didn't want to disturb the creature who was obviously very busy at work. Indeed he had a very challenging task—some would say, a nearly impossible one.

Mother came to squat down as well and look on with the boys.

Mother whispered,

"How the brush turkeys manage to create a place down under the ground with leaves and all that they use, is a work of art!

"And the truly amazing thing is that they are able to set up their nest in such a way that it is just the perfect temperature for the eggs.

"These types of birds know how to keep their nest at that very specific temperature, no matter what the weather is doing."

The boys were amazed.

Liam said, "I wish our house had that kind of a special 'temperature control' feature, that without the use of electricity or machines, it would never be too hot or cold!"

These birds had a good understanding of nature and science—knowing at least what was needed for their

particular task.

“What is also just as fascinating,” Father added, “Is that when the chicks hatch, deep down in that pile of leaves and dirt, they know what they are supposed to do.

“The baby birds know that they are meant to suddenly dig their way out—and to even know where up and out is!

“Just think about it: When they are grown, they also know how to do the very same thing that their parents did for them—how to create a nest and maintain the perfect temperature for their eggs.”

Mother thought of her boys, and how they enjoyed learning about things, and added,

“Yet, those little ones didn’t get to watch or have a class with their parents on how to dig and fill and create the perfect place for the eggs.

“It was a knowledge that was imparted to them. It was built into them, and would be passed on amazingly to their little babies—without teaching them.”

Tony thought, “Like getting a computer that already has programs on it?”

“Perhaps something like that,” Father commented. But even beyond that.

Liam added,

“Like getting a computer that has programs on it and can print out a whole new computer that also has those programs on it and that can then print out yet another whole computer... and so on.”

Every one laughed. But that is a bit what it was like.

Patrick then added to the discussion—“And a computer that has a program that makes it grow feathers, the right size and colour and type, at just the right time.”

The family smiled as they watched the brush turkey working on his family building project, then decided it was time to walk over and have their picnic.

Patrick was thinking more about the birds, their nest, and the eggs, and asked,

“But why does it need to be just right for the eggs—not too hot and not too cold?”

Father replied,

“It’s a bit like the seeds we planted in the garden last year. We had to plant them when the weather and ground were the right temperature.

“Eggs of birds need to be warm also in order to grow, or the bird inside will never develop and hatch.”

Mother added,

“And if I cook some seeds, like lentils, or put them in water that is too hot, they will never sprout either.

“Bird eggs are designed the same way—if they get too hot, they won’t start to grow and hatch. So we don’t have to worry that the boiled chicken eggs in the fridge will start cracking and have a chick hopping out!”

The boys laughed at that.

After eating, the boys and their father went exploring around a bit more, while Mother packed up the picnic.

There was an empty bottle of water, and its blue lid was on the picnic mat beside it. When Mother took some things and put them in the car, however, something mysterious happened, or so it seemed.

When she came back to the picnic mat to clear the rest of the items, the lid to the bottle was nowhere around.

“That’s odd, I thought I just saw it right there.”

She cleared everything and shook it out, and still there was no sign of the blue bottle cap.

Then another thing was missing. There had been a little scrap of blue cloth, a label that was taken off an old shirt. It wasn't comfortable with it on, so she removed it.

She didn't need it, but was aware that it had been beside the door of the car. It had fallen out and she was going to go around and pick up any scraps of trash, so as to keep the natural area looking nice.

"Hmmm," she thought.

She had no explanation for this, since only birds and ants had been seen around there while she tidied and packed up.

When the boys and their father came back they told of a wonderful discovery.

"Guess what we saw?" Liam started out.

"A bower bird making its bower!" announced Tony.

"He likes to collect little blue things," Patrick told his mother.

"Yes," Father added, "It seemed to have quite a good stash of its favourite things—blue things."

Mother asked, "Like what kinds of things?"

"A piece of plastic ribbon, like from a present someone must have opened here at a party in the woods," Tony answered.

"There were a few blue bottle caps," Liam remembered.

"And a little blue piece of cloth was in the bird's beak as it flew back when we were watching it," Patrick remembered.

Mother smiled. That explained the missing blue items.

This bird could tell the difference between colours, and knew what it liked. It could tell the difference between blue and other colours like purple or green, yellow or red. Perhaps it wanted just the right things to decorate its house. Not just anything would do.

As the family got in the car to continue on their trip they listed all the birds they'd seen so far. There were so many.

Yet when they thought about each type of bird, they realised that besides feathers and eggs, there was also something similar to each of them.

All of them had to do things just a certain way to bring the right result. They had to choose some things, and not choose others. They had to want one thing, and not want the other.

Like the brush turkey had to know and choose the right temperature. If it didn't, they would never have any new little baby chicks.

Other birds that were meant to eat certain things needed to choose those and not eat other things that weren't right for them. —That way all the parts of nature were cared for.

Not all birds needed fish, or bugs, or berries. Not all birds had to crawl up from a deep pile of leaves and vegetation when they hatched, nor did all have to balance on a branch of a tree waiting to learn to fly.

Each type of bird had something different it was to do, to eat, to create, and a way to communicate. They each had to be happy to do what they were meant to do—and not try to do what another bird type was created to do.

"Choices fill our days too," said Father. "We each have to decide what is right for us, what will help us to make this world the best. We have to choose some things, and say no to others.

"We have to like some things—like the bower bird likes the blue; and not like other things—like the brush turkey female won't be happy if the nest isn't built just right. If it isn't right and best for the babies, they have to try again and make it right."

(End of story.)

Adventures of Birds and Bugs

--Part 2--

Chapter 1—Little Baby Buggie

Chapter 2—Peggy the Penguin

Chapter 3—Living Underground

Chapter 4—Joy Up in the Tree

Chapter 5—Thunder and Boots

Chapter 6—A Big Boat and a Bird

Chapter 7—Still Raining, and Mr. Bizzare (Part 1)

Chapter 8—Breakfast in the Car, and Mr. Bizzare (Part 2)

Chapter 9—The Trip Home, and Mr. Bizzare (Part 3)

Chapter 10—Sunshine, and Mr. Bizzare (Part 4)

Chapter 1—Little Baby Buggie

Little Baby Buggie was crawling eagerly up to the top of a long, ever so long, blade of grass.

“At last! I made it!”

Little Baby Buggie liked challenging himself, seeing how high he could crawl on strands of grass and tall flower stems, as they waved in the wind. He’d have to hold on real tight and just keep on going.

Of course, Little Baby Buggie could also fly. He didn’t only have to crawl, though most of the time he did. If he flew, though it was easier and faster to get up to this or that place, he would miss all the many details that could be seen while crawling on the plants.

He couldn’t eat or drink while flying. But as he took the patient way of taking one step at a time, he’d get little treats along the way.

Little Baby Buggie wasn’t really a baby at all, but still so cute. That is why he had this name.

Actually, it was the farmer’s daughter, Melline who named him this. She was stopping to look at a flower, when all of a sudden up and on to her landed this little ladybug.

There were bigger beetles and bugs in the garden. This ladybug seemed like a baby in comparison.

“Hi little baby buggie,” she said, and then off he flew. And that was his name from then on.

Today he was crawling on the furthest side of the garden, right near the flower pots. The farmer’s wife had a lot, and I mean oodles, of potted plants and flowers and plants sprouting. There were endless places for Little Baby Buggie to explore.

Sometimes he came here just to play chase or hide-and-seek with other bugs.

The farmer's wife didn't mind a few bugs and beetles, or butterflies visiting her plants, but there was one creature that she certainly did mind and wished would never come to trouble her growing and sprouting plants.

A certain creature who carried around its own mini house. A slimy creature that always was very hungry.

Snails!

They'd leave a trail of slime up the side of a plant pot, and there would be several missing leaves after it left.

Sometimes Melline and her younger brother Ted and their father would be on snail search. Before going to bed they'd take a look all around the tender plants to find these slimy, slow moving munchers and take them away. They'd look just after dark when these sneaky snails like to snatch snacks while the humans were slumbering. But if the team of careful children caught these creepers, then there would be a lot less bites taken in the night. And more plants meant more food for the family to feast on.

"Why is it," Little Baby Buggie wondered, "that some of us bugs are considered a pest, while others are helpful and allowed to be around?"

Just then a very hungry moth caterpillar crept up and took a large bite of the plant that Little Baby Buggie was crawling beside. This helped to answer his question.

"I guess it has to do with our diets and what we feast on, that make us unpleasant or desired to have around. If bugs or critters eat up the work and take away the growth that the farmers are needing, then it has taken away from their progress. But some, like the bees and butterflies and others help to pollinate the plants, and this helps good growth to occur."

So Little Baby Buggie assumed in his thoughts that a diet that took away from plant growth is what made a bug unpleasant to have around in a human's garden. But those that helped the crops and plants to grow and produce seeds were good to have around.

"Oh look! There he is! My little pet ladybug! Dear Little Baby Buggie, come here," Melline said, offering her hand to the tiny cute creature.

On her finger he crawled, then on to her shirt sleeve, up to her shoulder and then took flight again into the air, to then land on a flower bush nearby.

"Where did you go? Oh, there you are," she said, offering him another ride on her hand. He stayed a bit longer this time as she helped him crawl from one hand to the next and back again.

"Time to eat!" her mother called out.

"Oh, I gotta go now. But I'll come back later, just in case you are around again," Melline said as she helped him crawl on to a blade of grass.

On her way into the house Melline didn't realise that Little Baby Buggie had flown up from the grass, just as she turned to go, and had landed on her hat.

When she came into the kitchen her mother said, "What a lovely little decoration you have on your hat!"

Melline gave a questioning look. Perhaps she'd placed flowers in her hat but had forgotten? She went to the mirror to see.

"My oh my!" she said, "Look at you! Come now, let's go back outside. That's where you'll have what you need," Melline said, taking her hat off and setting it outside on the front porch. She'd let her little friend choose when to crawl or fly off. She didn't need her hat on now, for it was mealtime.

The meal was spread on the large dining table. With freshly washed hands Melline began to serve her plate, choosing this and that from the food set out. There were freshly dug up boiled potatoes. There was a salad with fresh herbs sprinkled on it, with oil and vinegar to dress it. Some baked pumpkin with onions and garlic, and some pea soup.

She was hungry and all this good, home-grown food was great.

After thanking God for the food He'd provided them with, the family began to eat and to talk.

"Mother," Melline started out asking, "Can we go to the seaside some time? I'd really like to try out my little boat.—The one I made out of sticks. I guess it's more like a raft. But I want to see if it holds me up."

"That sounds like a lot of fun. What does Father have to say?" Mother said looking over to her husband, Melline's dad.

"I couldn't think of a funner way to spend next weekend," he said in positive tones.

"And we could go camping!" Ted added in. Always one to spend as much time outdoors as possible.

"We could do just that. Sounds like a great plan. You kids are the best idea folks around when it comes to how to have fun and spend a day," their father encouraged.

"Maybe Aunt Tilma will come and watch over the farm and house and feed the animals, so I can come along too," suggested Mother.

"Yea!" they all cheered. They had something really great to look forward to.

The story ended, and Kyran and Kayla were glad that they were already doing something those children in story wished to be doing--camping. They were glad to have a family that liked having fun outdoors.

Chapter 2—Peggy the Penguin

The camping team was waking. Mother began cooking some pancakes to serve with fresh cut up fruit they had picked from the farm the day before.

"Could we read the other 'Creatures with Character' story, while waiting for breakfast?" the children asked their mother.

Mother realised that she still had plenty of stories to read, and thought that was a great idea.

The children took turns reading the booklet:

Peggy the Penguin

Sally the scientist was showing pictures of one of her trips to Antarctica, to Darling Debbie her granddaughter.

"Grandma, can you please tell me about the funny birds that can't fly, but can swim in icy water?" Darling Debbie prodded for another story before bedtime.

The picture showed Granny, when she was much younger, taking notes on a very cold day in a very cold place, while looking at the penguins she had gone there to check on.

"Alright," said Grandma Sally.

"When you are all snug in your warm bed, I'll tell you a story about an imaginary little penguin chick called Peggyie.

"You will get a bit of an idea what it is like for a penguin family, living in a far away cold land called Antarctica."

Darling Debbie curled up in bed and listened as she closed her eyes, imagining everything as the story was told.

Peggie was a little Penguin chick, who had recently popped out of her egg. She had been kept so warm and snug, even though it was icy cold where her family lived. Peggie looked up to see her very big father towering over her. It felt warm being near him. She knew she had always been cared for.

Papa penguin looked down with a smile at his little fluffy baby. He was glad that he had been there day after day, keeping the egg warm for the long time it took until his little chick was ready to come out.

Now here she was! His patience was rewarded. They were a family now—papa and mama and chick. Although she didn't see her mama yet, her mama was coming home just then with a surprise.

"Where is my mama?" the chick wondered, and looked around. There were so many other penguins nearby huddled together for warmth, and she wondered if her mama knew that she had hatched.

Papa was patient, and did his job of guarding and keeping the egg warm. But there was something he couldn't do right then: provide food for his little one. Papa penguin was sure his little chick was getting quite hungry. In fact, he was rather hungry too.

When Peggie was still in her eggshell, her Papa was so careful to keep the little egg warm that he didn't leave it even for a moment. He had not gone off to the sea to find food, because his little Peggie needed him to be there always with her to keep her warm.

Papa explained this to little Peggie, that they just had to wait a short while and Mama would return with just what they needed—food she had gathered from the sea. Papa knew that Mama would be there right on time.

Mama had worked hard swimming and fishing, while Papa had guarded their little egg. She caught fish and swam in very icy water. She would scoot along the ice, or waddle over the edge of an iceberg and then leap down into the freezing water.

When she caught the sea food, she had a specially designed body that would safely keep whatever she swallowed that was meant to be shared with her baby chick. It was like putting it away in storage for later.

Without seeing or hearing her family, that were somewhere huddled in the large group of many other penguins, Mama penguin knew just when to go back to her family, and right where to find them.

"There's Mama!" Papa penguin exclaimed.

Peggie looked around to see a lovely penguin waddling over to them.

Papa penguin said,

"I am amazed to see how you knew just the right time to be here, right when our little chick has hatched. How you found us in this big crowd was very clever!"

Mama responded,

"I know you are depending on me, and it's important to me that I arrive right on time. You must be so hungry. Here, I've got lots of food stored up for you."

Mama then shared with her little chick the food she brought home. Then it was Papa's turn to get to swim and go fishing, at last. Before he left, Papa penguin said to Peggie, "When you are a bit bigger, then you can come learn to swim, too. It will be lots of fun!"

Mama penguin added,

"And I'll teach you how to be a good mother to your little chick, when you are grown up, and how it is important to be there at the right time to provide what your family needs, even if you are having fun doing something else—like swimming."

Peggie had seen her parents do what was most important to do, to have a happy family. She chatted with her mama about what she had noticed.

Peggie said,

“I think good parents care well for the little ones, even if it means not getting what the parents want right away. They are patient and do their job, and don’t give up even if it’s not always exciting. And even if they are gone from home sometimes, they are always thinking about their family and doing something that helps them. They don’t stay away too long, but try to come back home at the right time.”

Mama penguin said, “We need to be punctual—that means we arrive somewhere, or do something at the time expected; at the time we promised to be there, or to do something. When you are a bit older you’ll get to play with friends your own age and be watched by someone else for a while, and I’ll go swimming to get some food. But I’ll always come back again on time to be with you and give you food.”

Mama penguin then asked Peggie, “And what about a little penguin chick? What can you do that helps our family to be happy?”

Peggie thought for a moment. She knew that besides pecking out of her shell, she hadn’t done any other work. But then she realised, “I just stay close to Papa and you, so I won’t get lost or too cold.”

Mama penguin smiled, “Yes, very good! I’m so glad you do.”

Peggie snuggled up warmly to her mama. She needed to now be patient until she was bigger before she could venture to the sea and learn to swim to find seafood on her own. But now she felt rather drowsy, and curled up for a nice nap.

When the story ended, Darling Debbie said, “Thank you, Grandma, for that nice story!”

“Your welcome,” Grandma Sally replied, and gave her granddaughter a goodnight hug.

“Tomorrow I’ll tell you some interesting things I learned about penguins.”

(End of story booklet)

When Kyran and Kayla were finished reading about Peggy the Penguin, so was their meal ready for eating. After a prayer for their day, and a chapter of the Bible read, they were ready for a new day.

The children felt like they could go on and on camping, but the story helped them realise that sometimes they had to stop doing one thing, in order to be punctual to do other things.

Besides, the clouds were rolling in. Would the rain fall heavy on their last day? It seemed quite likely.

Chapter 3—Living Underground

Somewhere deep under the soil, down some newly dug tunnels, a team of worms was working away. They didn’t labour hard in the sun, like a farmer hoeing a field and loosening things up for planting. They couldn’t manage the sunlight, or more like the sun’s heat, for they were fashioned to endure the cold, dark and wet, hard-earth conditions of under the surface. Yet, their job was quite the same. The earthworms were created to loosen up the soil and make it easy for the roots of plants to reach down for moisture and for nourishment.

These garden helpers were very lowly, indeed always under where people walked, children biked, and men drove tractors. The dirt was their home and their work. As they moved, as they ate, as they excreted, they were doing what they were meant to do. One inch at a time, as they dug their tunnels through the soil, they were making it possible for others to live on the surface and enjoy the sunshine, having their bellies filled with good food that grew well.

Rumble! Rumble! The ground tremored as the tractor drove along.

Said one earthworm to the other,

“Sounds like Nelly the Farmer is gearing up to turn up the soil on this new plot of land, preparing it for planting. It’s been a good season of growth so far, I think. By the looks of the roots that reached down over yonder, the abundance of them, I do think crops so far have been a success.”

The other replied with a story of what happened just the day before.

“Let me tell you, I wouldn’t even be here today speaking to you if good old farmer Nelly hadn’t done what he did. First of all I was working my way around the few potatoes over there, when all of a sudden, thump goes the shovel. You gotta watch out for it, right? Anyway, the farmer was digging some up for his supper I imagine. Before I knew it, I was suddenly out in the open air. My! That has gotta be one of the scariest sensations ever. All exposed to the heat and air, and most of all... yep, you guessed it, the birds!”

“Carry on! What happened next?” his worm friend asked.

“Well, as the birds do, they were moving in to see the newly turned up soil. There always is a feast and fun for them when soil is turned. But I really didn’t want it to be my turn to be on their dinner menu. Just then I felt some fingers snatch me up before the bird even had a chance. It was Nelly the farmer. He took a look and said, ‘My aren’t you a big one. I think I’d like you to keep doing what you do best. I need good guys like you.’ Then he dropped me into a hollow and covered me with the soil so the hungry winged creatures couldn’t get me, and I’d be snug and safe.”

The worm finished his story of adventure. The other one responded,

“Glad to still have you. You know I didn’t always used to work the field. I used to work in a much, much smaller environment. Up at the house where the potting plants are kept, in a small greenhouse is where I was born and grew.”

“Then how did you get all the way here? I don’t imagine you burrowed through a pot and crawled all the way here? Or did you?” the other worm asked.

“Well, it happened rather suddenly, from one day to the next, or rather one moment to the next. The pot I was in was growing a plant that was definitely outgrowing it. I felt the pot being carried, and then the soil and roots and all were tipped out and placed in a hole in the ground right on the edge of the field. I stayed for a while until the roots were all spread out and the plant was doing well. But then I moved on out to help in new areas, such as here, where we met.”

The worm finished his story and kept on burrowing through the soil, until he met up with another old friend and greeted him.

“Been awhile since I’ve come across you, old pal, what’s it like out there where you’ve come from?”

“Oh, just dirt and loads of it. But it’s good to be in the soil I tell you. Another one of us didn’t get on so well when the rain hit. He’d decided to ‘go up for air’ as he put it. Just wanted to look around at the forbidden surface, the danger zone. ‘I’ll be fine, you’ll see,’ he said. But he wasn’t. That is when he was met with the strong rain. We knew it was raining, and raining hard, as the soil near the top was getting mighty easy to get through, all slimy and mud like, you know? But rather than going down to soil that wasn’t quite as wet, he wanted to know and feel the rain in all its wetness.”

The two worms listening to their friend asked him to go on, “So, what happened then?”

“Well,” he continued, “I was pushing my way through the muck, when I heard a sorrowful moan and mourn; more like a lament that was saying, ‘Why, oh why did I come up here? I’m too water logged now to move. I’ll be a goner for sure.’

“It seemed he got stuck in a puddle of water, and was drowning.”

“Did he make it or is he alright?” the eager listening friends asked.

“I don’t know just how he’s doing now, but I tried to burrow a hole up there to drain some of the water out. That was a difficult job indeed and got me mighty wet, you know. I called for some others and they did the same. With all the easy-to-crawl-down holes, he had an easy way out. But he’s still in recovery. I don’t think he’ll be up to the surface again, at least not for a long time. Now he knows it’s best to stick to the spot we are to work and not go hankering after somewhere else.”

The listening worms nodded and with new vigour got working their plot of land.

“Better do what we can while it’s still so warm, and the ground is not frozen,” one worm encouraged, and on they worked.

Chapter 4—Joy Up in the Tree

Kayla was taking a rest under a tree, while Mother was beside her, doing some drawing. Father and Kyran had gone to the farmer’s house to get some needed items, just in case it rained hard that night and the following day.

The ants were busy at work nibbling some of the crumbs that had been tossed off the picnic blanket from their lunch earlier. Bugs and butterflies were busy flying and crawling around, as they did in this Meadow of New Stars.

For some reason, Kayla just felt like shutting her eyes and sleeping for awhile, and so she did.

When she awoke, she had a large smile on her face.

“Did you have a nice rest? Or did a butterfly just tickle your nose?” her mother asked.

“Yes—I mean, both! But I’m actually smiling because I had such a nice dream. I feel I want to write it down.”

So Mother pulled out her notebook and took notes while Kayla told of the dream.

“We can put this in our book series, ‘Laughing with Jesus’” Mother said, happy for a new chapter to add.

“Yes! And can we read it also tonight for story time with Daddy and Kyran?” Kayla asked.

So that night Mother’s first story for the night was called, “Tea in the Tree”. Later on, when home again, Mother would type it up and include it in the book series.

Tea in the Tree

“Peek a boo! Ha, ha!” Jesus was peeking out from behind a tree, playing with a few laughing young children. They would run to Him, and He would pick them up and not only swing them around, but whirl with them through the air. Their mother was smiling. It was always special and fun to have Jesus playing with them. She fixed a snack and waved.

Jesus held the children’s hands and came run-flying through the air over to mommy. They climbed up into their favourite tree house for a fun tea party. The little girl, Mellina, helped to pour the drink into each of their little cups. And Antonis, the boy, helped to pass out the snack bowls.

“Thank you” said Jesus, as He received His snack. “Would you like Me to help you build more onto the tree house after the snack?” Jesus asked. “Perhaps I could put a slide on it, or a pole to zoom down. Maybe a bird feeder—and you can see so many new and amazing birds coming to visit you so close.”

“Yay!” Said Mellina and Antonis. “Can we also have a rope ladder that goes up to the top of the tree?”

“Sure thing! Let’s get started!” Jesus said, as they began to collect the needed items. In Heaven things weren’t dangerous, just fun and safe. They could go to the top of the tree if they wanted to—falling wasn’t a problem, since they could just float down if they wanted to.

They watched Jesus tying this rope, putting that piece of wood there, fixing up that, and so forth. The children eagerly helped whenever there was something they could do. At last it was all done.

“Now for a special touch—I’m going to put magical paint on it. The tree house can now change to any colour that you want it to be, whenever you are playing! Just think what you’d like it to be, and to you it will look like that!”

“But what if we both want different colours?” Asked Antonis

“Whatever colour you want, that’s how it will look to you. If your sister wants to see it painted something else, then to her, at that moment, it will look like that! Now that’s magic paint!” Jesus explained.

The children thought for a moment and said aloud their colour preferences. Mellina said, “Pink and purple, with golden edges.”

Antonis said, “Green and blue, with silver stars on the roof”.

And so it was. And lots of fun was had there that day.

“Look!” called Antonis to his sister. “Look at that bird!” Mellina saw it too. It was as big as a peacock, but had different coloured feathers, and other wings too, so it could fly.

“Wow! It’s soooo pretty!”

“Thank You, Jesus!” they said. “We’re having so much fun!”

After reading that dream story, Mother made it her story choice to then read from a book series called, “Learning with Jesus”. The story talked about sparrows—cute little birds.

The Sparrow in the Tree

Esther was a cute little girl, with curly dark brown hair. She had a smile ready to share with those who passed her way. She couldn’t get around like others. She had to sit or be carried around from place to place. She couldn’t walk. But that didn’t steal away the happiness that seemed to be in her soul as a bubbling stream, sparkling in the sun’s rays.

One day she told her friend. “Do you know why I’m content, even though I can’t walk and get around as you do?”

Dilliah her friend had often wondered this. “You always seem to find your smile, even on the hottest days, or when folks around you seem too busy to even notice you are there. What keeps you content, and filled with praise to God, even though things aren’t easy for you?”

“Look up in this tree!” Esther said to Dilliah, who’d come to spend some time with her now, under the shade of the tree. It was the hottest time of the day, and the relief from the sun was a welcoming thought.

“See that little bird on that branch, way up high?” Esther continued.

Dilliah looked hard, and then at last spotted it, “Ah, yes, there it is! How cute!”

“Well, one day when I was sitting here, watching everyone moving here and there. I saw how they were able to walk and get whatever they needed, without having to wait for others to assist them. On that day, Jesus came to visit me. He has the friendliest nature, and such a kind heart.

“I think He must have sensed that I was starting to feel sad about my situation. We sat here under this very tree and looked up. That day there were 10 sparrows to be seen. We played a game of finding and counting them all, as well as watching them fly here and there to gather food. And Jesus reminded me about how special we all are to God. He knows each one of us. We can’t fly like the birds—that’s their job. It’s what suits them. I can’t walk, but I can be content with how I have been made. I can do what God has made me to do.”

“And what is that?” Dilliah asked. “What has God made you for, and how can your being crippled help you to do it?”

“Jesus told me that there isn’t a single person on this world that doesn’t need prayer, or a kind word, or a look of cheer. And most people are too busy going here and there, and doing this and that, in their busy lives, to remember to help each other in these important ways. But He said, I could do just that! If I pray for each person I see; if I smile at each one that looks my way; if my words are filled with hope and kindness when talking with those who stop by, then it will give them joy, strength, and courage to carry on.

“This town will be filled with laughter instead of tears. Instead of struggling with the heavy load of work, they will do it with joy, knowing that God sees and cares for them. I can talk to the children. I can tell them about God’s love and care. Oh, Dilliah, don’t you see there is so much that I can do, and that needs to be done. I may be the only one

today that has the time to do these things. See, we each have our place, and each can do a big and important job for God.”

“So every time you see a sparrow, it reminds you of what Jesus told you?” Dilliah asked.

“Yes, it helps me to smile, to sing a song of praise, and to cheerfully do what I can do—and it does make a difference. Did you notice the neighbour over there, the one who used to always be angry about something? He now has a smile as he whistles about his work. God blessed his crops, and his family, and those around him are also starting to cheer up more. I am helping! And it feels wonderful. So that’s why I can smile. God made me to be just what I am, and I am glad He can use me to help others.”

“Thanks for talking to me,” Dilliah said. “You’ve helped me too,” she said, wiping a few tears from her eyes. You’ve warmed my heart and reminded me of God’s special love and care for me too.”

Esther gave her a hug, and waved as Dilliah ran off, helping to fill her place as well, with more joy than before. Esther smiled. It felt good to encourage a friend, just as Jesus had encouraged her too.

Chapter 5—Thunder and Boots

A rumbling sound shook the stillness.

It had been raining most of the night, and on through much of the day. There was a break in the watery fall in the afternoon, and the children at the farm ran out to play.

The camping team had spent much of the day in their large tent. They had brought many books on birds and bugs and farming. It was a good time to catch up on reading these. Something their father had gotten the day before from the farmer, was a very large covering to place over the tent, to protect it further from leaking. He’d brought also some food that didn’t need cooking on a fire, so it was easy to nibble in the tent.

In the afternoon, when the rain stopped briefly, and the farmer’s children were outdoors playing, Kyran and Kayla were invited to join them. But it wasn’t long before...

“Thunder!” a team of worms under the ground all chorused.

Suddenly a “thump” feeling left them feeling very squished. They heard a child squealing and clomping with boots in the field just above them. Due to the rain and the soft mud, the feet of a person would sink down faster and further than usual.

“Ah they do have fun in the mud, those young ones!” said one worm, trying to straighten himself out again. He knew the feeling and effect of boots above him, and knew it wasn’t something to worry about. Just a slight discomfort but they’d be all on their way again soon enough.

“Oh, look! There’s a worm!” said a running girl with boots.

She knew he wasn’t feeling like staying out in the exposed air and weather. She took a stick and made a deep hole. Then picking up the very wet worm, placed him into the soil. She got a bit wet herself, but felt happy to have helped something that helped their farm.

When she got into the house, and was sitting to dry off beside the fire, she was thinking about the Meadow of New Stars. She wondered how the bugs there were getting on. She wasn’t sure just where the butterflies took refuge, if it was raining just as hard there as it was here.

“I’m glad I have a nice warm house to be in now,” she said aloud.

Mother handed her and her brother each a warm mug of soup to drink, and said, “Me too. And I’m glad I have you and our whole family to share this cosy home with.”

Father sat down with his boots removed. His feet were set to get warm by the fire. His socks had more than one hole to be spotted.

“What happened to your socks, Daddy?” the girl asked.

Her farmer father felt like having a laugh—which was better to do than to complain about things that weren't perfect, and he said,

"Hmmm. Look at that! I wonder if the earthworms worked their way through them when I wasn't looking?"

Everyone chuckled.

Then to his delight, his wife handed him a small package that had been sent to them just that day.

"This was sent for you, I think it's from your mother," she said.

"Daddy open it! What is it?" Melline and Ted, the children, started to say. Unopened packages were always something fun.

"Well, look at that!" he said, pulling out a newly made pair of woollen socks.

"These sure came at a good time!"

"Put them on! Put them on!" his boy Ted was happily urging.

So off the worn and threadbare socks went, and on went the warm and nice new ones.

"Mommy, I want to learn to knit!" the girl suddenly said. It seemed a helpful skill to have. One day she might have her own family that would need her skills to help them stay comfortably clothed.

"I think that would be a great idea. Did you know Grandmother will be visiting us this next month, and will stay for several weeks. She misses you and wants to get to know you better. Wouldn't that be a great time to learn how to knit? She 's so skilled in it."

The girl smiled. That was something enjoyable to look forward to. There was so much to learn, and it was great when members of her family took time to teach her things she wanted to know.

"Can Grandma teach me how to make potato pancakes? Her special kind?" Ted asked.

"That will be a great thing to learn, with all the potatoes we'll have soon," Father replied. "I'm sure she can,"

Chapter 6—A Big Boat and a Bird

Tonight was their last night at the camp. It was Daddy's turn to pick the story to read.

"I think with such a watery night and day, I'll choose a well-known story from our "Story Time with Jesus" books. Can you guess what this true story is about?" he asked.

"Noah and the flood!" Kyran guessed.

"Oh, I was going to guess Elijah and the time it finally rained," said Kayla.

"That would have been a nice one too," replied their father. "But this time it is the story of the worldwide flood—which I am glad we are not having. We can go to sleep now listening to this true Bible story, as told by Jesus, while we also listen to the rain begin to fall again. If you listen carefully you'll notice what special job some birds had—something only they could do"

So their father began to read:

A Good Man for a Great Job

Noah was one of the few people on Earth who had chosen to follow God's way, and he made God glad. So he was chosen out of everyone on the Earth to do a very important job.

Have you ever cried a lot, I mean a whole lot? So much that you felt you could hardly stop, and your face was all wet with tears, your nose was running, and you were sobbing, thinking there was nothing that could cheer you up?

Perhaps you lost something or someone that was really special to you? Or something that you'd worked so hard on got totally ruined? Or something that you'd been looking forward to and planning for a long while didn't work out, and your hopes and dreams were smashed?

Well, that was a bit how God felt when things on Earth started to go so wrong. The people He had lovingly created now made Him feel so sad with their poor choices and bad behaviour. The world that He made wasn't the happy, thriving, beautiful, loving place that He had made it to be.

After all He'd put into it, it was now ruined and soiled with the wrongs that people were doing. He cried and cried, and the whole world was going to be washed and cleansed with the water that He'd send.

Maybe that's how many tears He felt He had. The old things were washed away, and He could start again. He chose Noah to help Him during this time, to salvage what good was still left in the Earth.

Noah had learned to hear and obey God's voice. And he had learned to hate the terrible things that were going on in the world. He didn't want anything to do with evil. He just wanted to live God's way. God was able to speak clearly with him. Noah was eager to do things God's way, even if they had never been done before.

If God told him, "Cut down trees and build a floating vehicle, fill it with animals and food, and go in it with your family," then Noah would do it—and he did, because that is what God said.

There was a lot of work to be done, and it took over a hundred years to do it! It all had to be done right, so that the ship would be safe and sturdy, and would last—staying strong and stable until the washed new world was dry again. It needed to be built well so it would shelter, house, keep, and save Noah's family and the land animals.

After this "ark" was built, it was time to fill it with the creatures that were to be on it. Every type of animal was put in the ark—a male and female of each kind.

There were only two of most animals on the ark, but 14 of those animals that mankind would need plenty of in the new clean world. For example, there needed to be lots of sheep for wool for clothing, and cows to give milk and pull ploughs, and so forth.

The task was enormous, and there weren't many people to do it. It's one thing to want to do a job, to be willing to do what God calls you to do.—But then to stick with it until it's done, and to do the hard work, day after day until it's completed, that takes determination and vision. Those are two things that Noah and his family had to have.

They also needed to have unity and teamwork, and to be willing to help each other, and to work very hard. They needed each other. They had to talk together, listen to each other, work things out together, encourage each other, pray and get the right ideas from God in order to make it all just right, to do things in the best way.

It took years and years of working towards a goal and not giving up, and not giving in to those who were trying to stop them and make things difficult. Their minds had to be on the job and their hearts set on God's ways.

Finally they did it! They won! The ark was built, the animals were safely inside, and all the things they'd need for their long voyage were packed and ready! Their destination was a new clean world.

Imagine the excitement, the anticipation they must have felt, with the job all done and everyone and everything that was meant to be in the ark safely there.

God shut the door tight, and then they just had to wait. For seven days and nights they waited inside the ark, for the promised flood to come.

Rain and a Rainbow

It was time for the world to be washed, and the ark was finished and ready to float. It wasn't a frantic time, however, with rain pouring down and Noah's family trying to shove animals in and get into the ark themselves. No. They brought the animals into the ark when God told them to, and then they waited, safe and dry within the ark for a whole week before any rain started.

Can you imagine what they must have felt? "Father, when did you say the rain would come?" his sons may have asked Noah. "God said the rain would come. We must be patient, and tend carefully to the animals. They need very good care," Noah may have said to his family.

Sure enough, it not only rained, but poured down huge amounts from the sky, and water gushed from fountains deep under the ground. The world had never been so wet.

When the ark started to float, it must have been an unforgettable experience. They had never felt anything like that before. They were rocking, floating, bobbing, swaying and bumping. They had to have a lot of faith, as well as try to keep their animals calm and well cared for.

With so much to do, that family must have been extremely busy. They certainly weren't on a fancy cruise ship, sitting around with lots of time on their hands, expecting to be waited on.

Noah and his family were grateful and in awe at the miracle of God's love, and how He loved them so much. And God was also thankful for their love for Him, so He gave them the privilege of being the only ones from the old world to cross over into the new.

God could have just started it all over again and remade everything from scratch, but in His love and mercy He gave mankind one more chance, and let good Noah and his family enter the new unspoiled world.

The journey was tiring and long, and not easy in the least. It probably didn't smell very nice most of the time, with so many animals all in one place. Imagine being on a stinky boat for a very long time, without being able to run and play outside—because there was no grass to go on.

They worked very hard together as a team to keep the animals fed and well, and to care for themselves. At last they made it through that time, and with great joy they entered a fresh, new, clean world.

The ark first landed on a rocky mountain. A while later, Noah sent a raven and a dove to fly around and see how things were going in the watery world outside. When the dove returned with an olive leaf in her mouth, this was a clue for them that the waters had gone down a great deal.

It gave them hope and patience to wait until the land would be dry enough and safe to walk on. When the time was right, God released the door He'd shut tight, and the family could make their great exit.

Ahh!—Air, light, land, and nature! It was cause for a celebration and time of worship. Noah called his family together to praise and thank God for bringing them safely through.

A beautiful rainbow painted the sky, as God's promise that this difficult event, so sad, so hard to live through, would never happen again. They didn't have to worry the next time it rained that they would have to dash back to the ark. Rain was just a part of watering the world, and God wouldn't create a worldwide flood again.

People's life spans also changed. Instead of living for several hundred years, God changed things on Earth and the average age became much shorter. Because of people's choices, often to go the wrong and unkind way, God made things be such a way that they were not permitted to live as long as before.

The choices are the same for everyone around the world: What will you do today? Will you use your time and strength to make the world and your surroundings a happy and loving place to be, or will you choose what's wrong? The choice is as much yours today as it was for those people of old.

What will you do with your life while you are on Earth, for however long or short your life might be? What you do may affect more people than you realise. God knows if you love, obey and respect Him. He knows not only what you do, but your heart and thoughts as well. And He will bless, protect, and give privileges to those who want to do the things that make Him glad, just as He did for Noah.

(End of story.)

Chapter 7—Still Raining, and Mr. Bizzare (Part 1)

In some ways, the fact that it was still raining the next morning at the camp, did make it easier to leave. Otherwise, if it was a really pleasant sunny day, it might be more compelling to stay. However, it did make it a bit more challenging to pack up the camping gear.

"We'll just have to dry it out later on at home, when the sun shines again. It's bound to shine one of these days," Father said.

He had on his raincoat and was loading whatever was ready to pack, into the car. The children, after cleaning everything up from inside the tent, stayed inside.

"Here's a book that I saved to give you, for the trip home—something you can read a bit of now, and during the trip, as well as when we are at home too," Mother said, handing it to the children.

It was called: "Mr. Bizzare and his two String Guitar"

It looked funny. So they started reading, as long as they could before the tent needed to be packed up.

Mr. Bizzare and his two String Guitar

It's important to note that whenever Mr. Bizzare was at work in his studio, he always wore some kind of hat.

"Ya neber do know when dem birds will come. Don't want no turds messing with my words."

He'd say, when he donned the most fitting hat for the day, if he ever was questioned.

To match with his purple and grey suit, a suitable and worthy bright blue hat was chosen, complete with a beacon of sorts. This was for transmitting thoughts to his friends who lived on the other side of the "great deep" as Mr. Bizzare called it--that is to say, the large sea.

Both strings on his old guitar were completely out of tune, and so he set to work on perfecting their tone.

When the strings were out of tune he had names for them. One string he called, "Rebel" for it was seldom in tune whenever he set out to play. The other he called, "revenge" as it seemed to "get back at" the first odd sounding notes of the first string, with a far worse sound than ever.

"I gotta get dem two strings out of their tune and into the right tune."

At first it was hard, that is, when Mr. Bizzare had on headphones listening to Miss Mollymuckup's latest album, "The Hit Dog's Howling Hey Day", while at the same time yelling outside for the cars to stop driving past, as this made it hard to hear right.

But Mr. Bizzare knew his bizarre ways were just that--a bit too bizarre on some days, so he had rigged up a contraption to snap him back to a more sensible way of being. A button could be pushed and a recording of his voice repeating his father's wise sayings would boom through the air zone, "Take off the headphones; sit still and be quiet." By this it meant stop listening to the wrong sounds--such as the headphones were sounding out.

He had a habit of making sure that he promptly followed through when the instructions rang out. He was always glad when he did.

So he sat down, removed the headphones and turned off the odd music, stopped his own talking to others out the window, and set to work on getting "dem strings" ringing out soundly.

He used a tuning fork part of the time, and an electronic device called a "upper note sound-a-fyre" that his father gave him.

When at last these strings were ringing aright again, he called them,

"Right" and "rest" for it was then that he could get right to work, and rest assured that the sounds he would play would be right, while he worked on the rest of his recording.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 8—Breakfast in the Car, and Mr. Bizzare (Part 2)

The tent now needed to get packed up, and while Mother and Father were doing that, the children sat in the car, making themselves a bowl of breakfast—with some of the food that dad had gotten from the farmer's wife.

They appreciated their parents who were cheerfully out in the rain.

"I'm glad it didn't rain before," Kyran said, trying to be cheerful as well. After all, he had a pretty nice trip, and even now was still having a fun time--eating yummy food, staying dry, and getting to read a new book.

"I'm glad it's raining, too," said Kayla, thinking about all the crops that the farmer's around the area were trying to grow. "It will make it nice for us later on, when we get to eat the food that is grown, partly because it did rain now."

"And I'm glad that it's raining on the day we are leaving, and not on the first day we came. We did have a very nice time," Kyran added to the positive discussion.

"Also," Kayla remembered, "if it hadn't rained yesterday, we wouldn't have gone to visit and play with the farmer's children. It was nice having some games with them at their house, and then running outside with boots on in the mud."

Kyran nodded as he finished his last bite of breakfast, and then continued to read, aloud, from the new story book, "Mr. Bizzare and his two String Guitar".

It was one dark night, as all nights were, but during one particular night, a dream came to him. In this dream Mr. Bizzare was walking and whistling along to the park, as he usually did while he walked, when a most displeasing sound was heard.

At first Mr. Bizzare thought his mouth caught a fly or something in it, for it seemed as if the whistling tune had taken a very bad turn. He spit and coughed and cleared his throat; he rinsed his mouth and gargled with water from the park's drinking fountain.

But as he kept walking around, whistling, there was the added unwelcome notes.

It was then that he noticed a strange and hateful looking bird flying around, just out of sight mostly, due to the tall trees, but his squawk was heard, and it was made to be as if it was coming from Mr. Bizzare's own mouth, as he

whistled along.

“Fitly the Evil bird of hate! I always heard you were a troublesome pest! You be going before I sling rather than sing. --You beast of deception on top of all the troubles you cause! Why it had nothing to do with my merry song after all. I want none of this from this moment on!”

Mr. Bizzare stood his ground and called out for the Bird of Hate to depart. And only when he saw the mangy, broken, weak-feathered angry looking fowl depart, did he continue his walk and whistle.

That is when the dream ended.

When Mr. Bizzare sat up in bed on that night, he knew that was the answer to his question--what makes the strings on his guitar sound in such a way. They must be sensitive to any sounds around and try to get in tune with other means of so called "music".

And it was true, for the dream revealed a great mystery: whenever Fitly the evil and foul Bird of Hate flew around, the strings got out of tune. It was a troublesome thing, but a string is a string, and all he could do for the time being was to keep at work to make them right, for awhile at least.

Early one morning, soon after Mr. Bizzare had just finished recording his latest album called, "The Storm is just starting--and So am I" he looked out the window to the distant mountain peaks. There seemed to be snow on them. But as he looked on, it seemed as if a bit of the snow was flying off of the mountain and over to where he was. Something of white was coming closer and closer.

Mr. Bizzare rubbed his eyes first.

“Perhaps something is on my eyelash...” he wondered.

That task done, and yet the white something was still coming closer, he took out his telescopic device that not only showed him what was far, but played a large moving picture of it on a screen for him to see.

“Aha! So you're not snow, just white as snow! A lovely one you are!”

This he said of the dove that he saw flying, "Love Dove" is precisely what was flying his way.

“I don't mind you comin' round. 'Could use some of that niceness and all that ya bring!”

Mr. Bizzare half mumbled, half thought. He'd noticed that whenever this lovely feathered thing flapped its wings over his way, that a good day was to be had.

Somehow on those days both strings on his Bizzare-guitar kept their proper ring for a lot longer than they normally did. He had less tuning work to do--and more work got done, and more fun was had.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 9—The Trip Home, and Mr. Bizzare (Part 3)

When the traveling team of campers stopped for lunch, the sun was already beginning to peek out from behind some clouds. They were able to stretch their legs and enjoy a picnic.

Dad needed to study the map a bit, as he needed to take a new route home. The usual road had been flooded. While Mother packed things up again, Kyran and Kalya took some time to keep reading from Mr. Bizzare and his two String Guitar.

He'd heard about Fitly the foul feathered fallen Bird of Hate from a colour comic book long ago. Thinking it was just a myth he seldom gave it much thought. But though seldom seen with the eye, the effects could be clearly seen, so

now Mr. Bizzare believed that bird was something to watch out for.

One day when talking with his father, he learned a tip—that a hat keeps the hate bird's squawk from echoing through his brain and sounding out his own mouth. That is when he got to work gathering a whole chest filled with hats—hats of every shade and colour, with all kinds of built-in features and flares. He could wear a new one, or nearly new one, every day for some time! Then he could start all over again, working through the hats from the beginning—unless someone gave him new hats to add to his chest.

Sorting through the hats and selecting the one that would be right for him each day was always a fun way to start the day. Sometimes he made the choice according to what clothing he had on, other times, he would choose the clothes to match the hat he wished to don. Other times, he didn't worry about matching this and that, but just wore what felt comfortable, or that made him feel like singing, or that made his little brother laugh. There were many reasons for choosing this or that hat, but always wearing one each day proved to help.

Love Dove seemed to visit him more often, ever since he started wearing the special hats from his chest; and Fitly the Bird of Hate had a hard time getting his sounds to ring out anywhere around Mr. Bizzare's studio.

(To be continued.)

The return camping family was then off driving before too long, though the route did take them longer than usual to return home.

That night Mother said, "I did have one more story to read, from the collection of bird stories."

And so they curled up in bed, the first time to be in their regular bed in a week, and enjoyed one more story. They closed their eyes and imagined that they were still in the tent.

"This story is from the book, 'What would Jesus do?', it's called: 'Always'", Mother said and began to read.

Always

The rainbow was spectacular. It had been a long time since Melanie had seen one. She stood there looking at it for as long as possible. Soon it faded away, and she skipped happily off to play with her two younger twin brothers. They were pretending to build a fort, with anything they could find around the yard.

Melanie was to be the cook for the building team. She had collected all sorts of things for their "meal". Every type of leaf she could find was used, as well as a few dandelions, grass, and a bit of sand. Each was representing a type of food in their make-belief game.

"Jesus," she said, praying aloud. "It was so nice of you to stop the rain so we could play outdoors—and it was very special to get to see that rainbow. For some reason, I'm still a little sad. Even though I have brothers to be with, and we are playing a fun game, I just still miss my Auntie. She always had new and great ideas. Mummy is busy in the house, and Daddy isn't here right now. I'm trying to think of fun things to keep us busy and happy, but it just doesn't feel as nice as it was before, when she lived with us."

Melanie was stirring her pot of pretend food, and she thought she heard a whisper. Was it just the leaves rustling in the tree?

"Hi, Melanie!" said a voice in a friendly way.

She looked up.

"Mind if I join you?" the older boy said.

She was about to ask, "Who are you?" but just one look at His face told her the answer. She knew it was Jesus dropping by, just when she really needed some encouragement.

"I know you miss your Auntie, and I came to bring you something to cheer you up. Every time you see this, I want you to remember how I'd like to be a friend to you, and that you can talk to Me anytime. —Just like you did today. You won't always be able to see Me, but here's something you can see," the very youthful looking Jesus said.

He held on His finger a little brown bird. It was so cute. Melanie hadn't seen a bird up that close before, unless it was in a cage as a pet.

"I'll send this little bird to fly into your garden every now and then. It will be a special reminder that I am there with you. And just like your Auntie had to fly away for now, you can still know that you are very special to her, and she loves you very much! I'm taking care of her too," Jesus told her.

Melanie smiled.

In the months that followed she would often see her special little bird come into the garden. It cheered her every time. She imagined it sitting on Jesus' finger, and remembered that He was really there with her too—not just when the bird was around, but all the time. She called the bird "Always", like the words of Jesus that said, "I am with you always." (Matthew 28:20)

(End of story.)

Chapter 10—Sunshine, and Mr. Bizzare (Part 4)

"Well, the good news is, the sun is shining good and bright!" Father said the next morning at breakfast. "Which means...."

He left a pause to let the children guess what it meant.

"That we need to help unpack the tent so it can get dry?" Kyran guessed correctly.

"That's right. Perhaps the 'men' of the team—Kyran and I can do that," Father said.

And Mother added to Kayla, "And us ladies can unpack and wash up the dishes, and put the other things away."

"But before we get to work, let's have our family time of prayer, and Bible reading," Father said.

"And can we finish reading the 'Mr. Bizzare and his two String Guitar' story?" Kayla asked.

Dad agreed.

And so they ended their morning breakfast time with the rest of the book.

Daddy read, starting with the last paragraph from before, just to make sure he knew what was being said:

Love Dove seemed to visit him more often, ever since he started wearing the special hats from his chest; and Fitly the Bird of Hate had a hard time getting his sounds to ring out anywhere around Mr. Bizzare's studio.

The next thing that happened was that Mr. Bizzare began noticing behavioral change in others--and he could detect whether Fitly or Love Dove was allowed around them.

Someone would be walking along, pushing their baby's stroller, for example, smiling at a butterfly who had just landed on a dandelion, when all of a sudden a dog would come up and strangely start barking grumpily at the little one. That would cause the baby to cry. This caused the mother to be most upset and begin to yell. This caused the baby to cry all the harder. When the owner of the dog caught up with it, you can be sure no smile or "good day" was passed on from the mother who was holding her little one to calm him.

The owner of the dog didn't seemed to notice anyway, for the scowl on his face showed he was much too upset, all of a sudden, because someone had stepped on his shoelace and caused him to have to retie it--and that was the cause of his dog running away to bark wherever he pleased. And he barked whenever the man he walked with got grumpy over some happening. As the man ran briskly past the mother holding the baby, trying to catch up with the dog, his bag knocked the stroller, causing the baby's water bottle to fall out. This did nothing but further upset the mother. She thought she'd at least hear a "sorry" half mumbled, but her ears heard no such thing. What a pity.

Now, if Love Dove had been called for--and this could easily be done by simply cooing a note that Love Dove likes to hear--things would have been so much different.

Even if the man's shoe lace was still stepped on, if the man cooed out the sound and called for Love Dove to fly overhead or perhaps even rest on his shoulders as he walked, he would have remained calm. He would have said, "No problem--it gives me a chance to inspect the details of the pavement, which I would have surely missed..." or something charitable of that sort.

His dog wouldn't have ran away, in an eager attempt to escape hearing foul words, and carrying on the same notes in his bark. Instead the dog would have patiently sat down, smiling as best as dogs can, while the man retied his shoe. Then on for their walk they could have gone.

The lady, if instead of getting upset at a barking dog, could have likewise cooed and let the Love Dove change her inner reactions. She would have held her baby right away, and not let him cry, nor yelled out. The dog would have stopped his barking anyway and most likely wandered back to the man. Everyone would have been happy then.

When the man then passed by with a calm and happy dog, and said hello to the mother and her baby, this would have made for happy interaction that could have cheered them on for the next part of their day. --Especially when they were neighbours after all, and neighbours that are friendly make for a happy living place, with each one adding to the joy of each other.

Perhaps the mother would have gotten the idea to invite the man and his wife over for a meal with her family that night--and the stories they could tell, while in a happy mood, would have caused the room to echo with peals of laughter.

In situations like these, Mr. Bizzare knew whether and when the Bird of Hate or Love Dove was allowed around and called for.

The difference is that the Bird of Hate was a rather rude creature, and never waited to see if or when he would be invited to join a person's thoughts and actions and words, but pushed his ugliness around wherever he could get away with it, never caring to notice the harm done. In fact the more troublesome the activity the better; that's all it cared to do.

However, it was different with Love Dove, she would gently visit all who called for her. She never missed a call, even the tiniest whisper of a young child calling and cooing for her. With fast yet graceful wings she was there to bring a pleasantness to wherever she was invited. Her goal was to bring peaceful beauty, in any way she could.

Mr. Bizzare had learned, and was continuing to learn, the way to have the best day.

The story ended, and their father said:

"So let's get on our 'cheerful working' hats and all help each other."

Mother started off a round of hugs, and the team of returned campers began the clean-up part of the trip.

"Oh, and by the way," their father said,

"I heard of this great camping place in the mountains by a very tall waterfall. I wonder if you'd like to go there next? But it's pretty wild there. Occasionally even bears have been spotted there."

The children smiled. They would be glad for more adventures to look forward to.