

## **Animal Days—In the Land of Paradise**

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### **Chapter 1—Bigsbie and Tilly**

Bigsbie and Tilly were best of friends. They just had to take their walk down by the small lake each day to stay caught up on all that was going on. It was to be a time of big, earthshaking changes, and all the animals that lived in this special place called “The Land of Paradise” wanted to be ready.

As Tilly the short trunked elephant calf, touched her toes in the water, she let out a squeal of delight.

“Oh, Bigsbie! Guess who I just saw, swimming by?”

Bigsbie, the real fast Rhino calf came bundling up to the water’s edge to see what was going on.

“Who’s come to visit us this morning?”

The shy swimming fish, at the sight of that many sets of toes, retreated again to the deeper part of the lake.

It was so rare to see Selly the shiny shell covered fish.

One couldn’t really tell just what covered this fish, for only glimpses of it had been seen. It was a rare event.

Large as it was, its speed was incredible. Zoom it would go here, then like a flash it could be seen at another place in the water. It almost was like it had wings rather than fins.

“Oh!” exclaimed Tilly, when a splash of water hit her. “Selly left a gift!”

The splash was the result of a very large shell being tossed over to the water’s edge, right where Tilly and Bigsbie were standing. And what a beautiful, shiny and colourful shell it was.

“Well, look at that!” Bigsbie said, examining it, as Tilly held it up with the lips on the tip of her trunk.

“That is a special gift.”

“Caw! Caw!” and “Fwapp, fwupp” went the sounds of the largest bird that lived around here. He couldn’t sing, but his call was always heard, and his wings would make a gentle breeze be felt if you were standing nearby.

Tilly waved her trunk, with a little branch in it, that she picked up to be a flag to get attention.

Smarty, the sleek and special bird knew this sign.

Before too long the “Fwapp, fwupp” of the wings, and the “Caw, caw—I’m caw-ming over to see you” sounds were heard, up close.

Smarty stood on tree branch just overhead. His feathers were so colourful, and his tail hung way down. If Tilly had reached up with the little branch in her trunk, she could have tickled the tip of Smarty’s tail. But, since that was not necessary, as Smarty was already giving them his full attention, she just looked up and gave a wave.

Bigsbie began,

“We have a little question for you, or rather a request.”

Smarty replied, “I’m listening. How can I help you today?”

Tilly then picked up the large and colourful, shiny shell that Selly had thrown over to them in the water as a gift, and said.

“We want you to help store this for us in your ‘Nest of treasures’, the place you keep all kinds of interesting things.”

Smarty flew down then on to the ground to inspect the unique specimen.

“Ah, now that is a beauty. A very rare thing in deed. I would love to have it to look at and to be kept in my ‘nest of treasures’. I bet with that trunk of yours, you could even reach right up and place it in,” Smarty expressed.

And so over to Smarty the sleek and special bird’s large tree, the three of them went. Smarty flew, while the others did a bit of a wobbly run.

Inside a hollow part of the very wide tree, way up, was a hole. This hole was padded with hay and bits of grasses and leaves.

Smarty directed them.

“First place your shell down on the ground while you use your trunk to clear away that top layer of plant matter.”

Tilly did so with her trunk.

“Now,” continued Smarty in directing them, “You’ll find a knob of sorts. Pull on that. That is the lid to the ‘Nest of Treasures’. Open it up.”

Again, Tilly did so. It opened easily. With the lid removed and placed on the ground, she then picked up the special shell.

However, just before she put it away in this special place for safe-keeping, Bigsbie brought a large soft leaf for it to be wrapped in.

Smarty was clever with his beak, and swooped down to pluck up some long strands of strong grass. With his feet and hands he used these items to wrap the special shell. It looked quite like a present, all wrapped up.

Tilly waited and watched as the shell was being prepared to be stored away in this special place. When it was at last ready, she picked it up with her trunk and placed it up and into the “Nest of Treasures.”

“Thank you!” both Bigsbie and Tilly said to Smarty, who was closing up the opening to the “Nest of Treasures.”

As they walked back down to the water’s edge, Bigsbie said to Tilly, “It would seem easy for someone to get into it and take whatever they wanted from it, don’t you think?”

Tilly thought for a moment, and then commented. “But I think the soft next part on top of the place where the treasures are stored is for Smarty or some other of his companions to rest or sit and to guard it, when it’s needed. I think permission is needed to access it, and no one is just allowed to get into to whenever they want.”

Bigsbie nodded. He hadn’t thought of that.

Though creatures might know where the treasures are, they’d have to face a winged creature guarding it well, and need permission to access something in it.

Bigsbie and Tilly’s names and the information of what they stored, was scratched on a tree somewhere, by Smarty. He kept good records. No one knew where the records were written, but he always remembered. He had a very good memory.

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## **Chapter 2—Selly the Shiny Fish**

Meanwhile, at the bottom of the lake, where beams of light were still visible, a certain Selly, the shiny shell covered fish was busy setting things up for her family’s celebration. Her twins, a pair of fish that looked quite like her, although a miniature version of her of course, were settling down for some rest. They were told by their mother Selly that they’d need to get some rest first, because a party was coming next that might last for quite a while. They’d be glad they’d have the strength for the fun later on.

“I’d like my pink fluffy scarf to wrap around me while I rest, please,” little Celine asked her mother.

Selly wrapped Celine up with this in a snug sort of way, and tucked her into one very large shell bed. Overhead were some decorative and dangling shells waving in the water. She placed her head on a sponge like water plant and soon was asleep.

Her twin brother, Auldy, had a blue shiny cloth lining his shell bed and he had lots of little figures of various water creatures set on the rock beside him. These had been made out of soft, chalky stones and coral; that were plentiful in this sea-like lake. There were some hollowed out tubular designs and shells of various sorts that made lovely music as the water pushed in and around and through them. To the tune of his water playing orchestra, young Auldy fell asleep.

Meanwhile, Selly was busy putting up decoration of all sorts. Today, later on today, was going to be the celebration of “The Joyful World of Water”. Everyone that lived in this part of the lake that wanted to come was invited and welcome.

At last the finishing touches were placed on the “Cake of Surprises”! This was no ordinary cake. For just as its name indicated, it was filled with surprises of all sorts. This wasn’t a cake, really, as it wasn’t to be

eaten. It was more like a large, a very large, sea-sponge with all sorts of pocket and places in it for surprises to be tucked away and hidden in. Children loved exploring this and finding special treasures in it.

When the guests started arriving, the two little Shiny shell covered fish were ready to wake up. Just in time! They swam over and helped to welcome each one coming to join in the Celebration.

However, though they knew most of the guests who were visiting, it wasn't always so noticeable right away who they were. Most came dressed in new styles and with new additions to their costume then they usually were seen swimming around with. –In fact some of the guests came in disguise and were camouflaged so that they blended right in with the surroundings. Their presence wasn't even known or seen for quite some time, until they popped out of their hiding and said hello!

There were lots of laughs that day, and plenty of waterplay games.

The twin's favourite game was called "Catch the flower." This was played with a number of young ones. Flowers that fell off the overhanging flowering tree, near the water's edge, had been gathered from floating on the surface of the water. These were kept in a jar of sorts, by Selly.

When it was time to play games, she would pull some of these out. Then she'd start up a big propeller, made of bits of wood, rocks, and large leaves. This would be turned manually, and get the water stirred up and really moving around. The flowers would then be floating around and moving around in the water, and the young ones would try to swim to catch them. They'd do all sorts of swimming manoeuvres and flips in the water, underwater summersaults, and swim leaping over each other, to try to get the flowers.

What made it even more challenging, was that as they swam, in whatever way they chose to, they stirred up the water even more. This would make the flowers move in a new direction—right over to where someone else might be able to easily get it. But then maybe someone else's swim and splash to get a floating flower might instead move it over to someone else.

It was a fun game.

Snacks were served on shells, and stories were told about all the latest happenings. Then they all settled down for a musical performance—all played with water musical instruments.

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Meanwhile, a team of birds, some certainly very large and very long tailed, and quite clever birds with colourful feathers were enjoying their afternoon flying skills training.

It wasn't just for Smarty and his family, but for any birds in the area.

"One, two, three, go!" called out one bird, who sat perched on a branch and acted for this round as the "caller".

When the call came, the other birds who were lined up on the branches of that tree, took off flying. They were to complete a sort of obstacle course through the air, and around and through trees. Through the air they were to do some flips and twirls. Through the trees they were to hop through them from branch to branch until they made it out to the others side. Some of the course included then landing on the ground and walking to find and pick up a special item that was hidden in the sand.

Once found, this item was then picked up in their beak and carried as they flew back to the starting point and sat on the branch. Then a new bird took the place of being the "Caller and Scratcher", that is, they called out when to start, and scratch the timing it took for each one to complete the course.

By nightfall, Smarty and his family, were certainly ready for sleep. All that flying exercise and fun prepared them for a good night's sleep. So they settled for rest in a very big nest, built with all sorts of sticks and thin green branches that could bend and wrap around, joining the more brittle types of sticks into a large round nest.

Smarty and his family fluffed up his feathers, spreading them out. This would make the nest even softer for the others coming to sleep. They liked to use their feathers as bedding in their nest, keeping each other warm and snug.

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### **Chapter 3—Smarty**

Of course, not every bird in this Land of Paradise would sleep at night. There were those who liked to sleep in the bright sunny day time and keep watch in the night. They loved looking at the stars, and loved to watch and listen to all the other night-time creatures who played or scurried about.

"Some like it hot, and some like it quiet" an owl who lived deep in the forest on the other edge of the lake would say. "I like to enjoy the quiet. I can think better then."

Just what this owl called, "Old Manly" would do each night, wasn't something Smarty really knew. He was asleep then. But he was glad that someone was awake and around watching over things. If he had heard any odd or unusual noises in the night, he could always speak with Old Manly about them, and this owl would most likely know what or who it was.

As Smarty settled for rest, he chatted and told stories or talked about events of the day.

"Did you know Selly, the shiny shell fish cast a shell today?" Smarty said, to the one snuggly curled up under his wing.

"Oh really? I thought she only did that on special occasions, or right before something unusual was about to happen to alert those of us living in air-dwelling places," the snug bird responded.

Smarty continued, "I was able to mark the date of its arrival, as those she gave it to brought it to me for safe keeping."

"Who knows what will happen, or has already happened," commented a bird on the other side of Smarty.

"I guess we'll probably find out," Smarty responded. "Or perhaps we are meant to find out. After all, that is one of our main jobs, to fly around and check things out and keep a watch on things."

The birds nodded. They agreed that when morning came, they would fly to a distant place in the Land of Paradise, and check out nooks and crannies all around, to see if there were any unusual happenings occurring. Then they drifted off into a deep and fluffy sleep.

But just because they were sleeping didn't mean they couldn't learn things. For dreaming is what Smarty and his friends did well. No wink of sleep was lost, really, for the dreams they enjoyed or learned from could be just as engaging and interactive as their daytime life.

"Smarty! Smarty!" a dreamtime voice called.

Smarty looked around and saw the nest was empty, and took off flying in the direction of the voice. Up and up he felt compelled to fly. Just how high he didn't know. But as long as the voice was calling, he was going to keep on going.

There was a tree that seemed it had no top at all, or the top could not be seen. As Smarty flew so very high, up to the clouds, he saw at last the top of this dream-time tree. It poked out of a cloud, way up high. At last Smarty sat to rest on the tip of this very tall tree that went up and beyond some clouds.

“Who called me?” Smarty wondered in his dream.

Then he saw a very large pheasant, of shiny feathers with a golden shine, fly and land near to him.

“I’m glad you could come,” said the pleasant pheasant, carrying a twig with some grapes on it.

“Here, we can share these.”

So together, atop the very tall tree, the two large and shiny birds, though of different designs, nibbled some grapes and had a meaningful discussion.

What they talked about was a secret indeed. So secret that even Smarty himself didn’t remember much from it when he awoke. But somehow he felt wiser in the morning; and like something really important had taken place.

“When you were sleeping,” said one of the birds by his side, “you were munching, but you didn’t have real food you were eating. But still you were nibbling and chewing. What did you dream about?”

Smarty smiled, as it caused him to remember the grape snack, and with it the flight up to the tallest tree, and even the colouring and friendliness of the dream-time pheasant.

“Yes, I was eating a snack in my dream,” Smarty replied. “And how about you? Did you have any dreams you recall?”

That got the other bird thinking.

“Ah, yes! I remember now. I was swimming under water! I think I even looked like a fish in the dream.”

“Oh,” replied Smarty, “now that was an unusual dream to be sure.”

“Yes, and I got to see what Selly’s home looked like. I saw that she had two little twin fish, and heard them talking about the celebration day they’d had yesterday,” the bird told the others in the nest.

“Well, it’s just a dream, but who knows? Maybe it really did happen—the celebration part. Maybe some of these things in our dreams might just be real,” Smarty replied.

They all nodded. There wasn’t a way for them to prove or disprove if it was a real event, but they might as well think so, as it seemed so real.

“Maybe one day we can talk with the ducks that swim out in that deeper area and who sometimes go down into the water. They might have some clues on Selly’s family and area activities,” the other bird suggested.

Smarty nodded. This seemed like a wise plan.

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#### **Chapter 4—Celebrations**

About midday later on, when ducks were happily gliding and bobbing on the water, Smarty flew over to where a log now happened to be floating on the lake nearby.

“Hello” he said, to some rather surprised ducks who just came up for some air.

“Well, Hello to you too!” came the reply.

“Mind if we chat for a bit? I’m so glad this floating couch came right here, right at this time! I had some questions to ask, or rather a favour to ask.”

The ducks knew that Smarty didn’t get his name for no reason. He liked to be well-informed and to have accurate information, and would only be chatting if there was something to be discovered. The ducks felt important. Perhaps there was something they knew that Smarty hadn’t yet learned about.

And that is how Smarty learned—by asking others he could trust, to tell him truthfully the facts he wished to find out. Pretending that he already knew everything wasn’t how to get wise.

“Tell me, if you can,” Smarty asked the ducks, “are you well acquainted with Selly and her family and friends? Or do you have any idea about what happened down at the bottom of the lake yesterday, right where you are now swimming and bobbing about?”

“I think there was some sort of celebration or festivity going on yesterday,” replied one duck. “There was a lot of visitors to this area. I know that much. But just what went on, I don’t know, as I can’t go down for too long or too deep.”

“So there was a celebration!” Smarty said, “just as a friend of mine dreamt there was. How very interesting.”

Since that was all the information the ducks could provide, and plenty indeed, Smarty was about to fly off. However, a certain creature began to be seen coming closer and closer to the surface.

“Selly!” all the birds called out.

Selly then filled her mouth with water and sprayed up and out, like a little fountain on the surface of the lake. She then disappeared again back down in to the seldom explored area.

The ducks looked at each other and then at Smarty. Suddenly they understood. She was answering their question. She had demonstrated to them just what the celebration had been about—water! Somehow they all knew this was right. And it was.

Happy with his information find, Smarty took off with a caw and wave good-bye, and was off to return to his family and friends who were just as eager to find out what he had.

That night the bird who had taken the trip down in to the lake, returned there again in dream land. This time new information was discovered. And this time, when he told his dream in the morning, all the others believed that it just might also be true.

In his dream, Selly the shiny shell covered fish, explained to him all about their “Water Celebration”.

She’d said:

“We can get so used to water, as we live in it. Sometimes we might even resent that we have to stay in it. But really we should be appreciating all its neat features. So it’s good to stop and take a long time to just be glad for what we have—even the most ordinary and common thing such as the water that surrounds us. Maybe we can’t fly like you can,” Selly said to the bird visiting in dream land, “but there are many neat places down here that you will never get to explore, like we can. So we can be happy for where we are, even if it’s different than for the land and air dwellers.”

When the bird awoke the following morning and told about this dream-time message from Selly, it seemed very good advice—to be glad for what you have, even if it’s something you have to have, or is very ordinary. It’s funner that way. And not everyone can have the chance to enjoy it, like you can.

“Maybe we could have a ‘Celebration of Feathers’” Smarty suggested.

“And of flight!” another bird added.

“Or perhaps of trees!” the bird who had the dream spoke again.

There were lots of ideas of things to be glad about.

“Maybe all of them!” Smarty suggested. There was lots to be glad for that made it possible for birds to keep doing what birds needed to do and liked to do.

And so it was planned that in one week’s time, “The Feather and Flight and Fur tree Festival” was to take place. They had a week to prepare and come up with all the fun they could, that involved showing their gratitude for these and other things.

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Scurrying around the top of a coconut palm, were two little lemurs. These monkey like creatures loved to play and leap, climb, and just hang around in funny ways. They were so agile and capable of doing all sorts of antics. But what they couldn’t do was fly, actually fly. Their leaps from one place to another did give them a sense of flight at times. But of course they couldn’t go up higher and higher like the birds.

Said one scamperous lemur to the other:

“Say, if you had wings on ya right now, where would ya go?”

His friend replied, after giving it some thought:

“I dunno. I was going to say, ‘Up to the toppa that tree’ but then again, I can do that without wings. I can just climb up. But maybe what I’d like ta do is kinda float in the air, hovering above the lake, to see what I can see.”

“Yea,” the lemur friend replied. “We know the land, but what is in the water, or what is way up above, out in space with the clouds and the sun, and the stars, we don’t know. I guess we don’t really need to know. We have what we need. But exploring can be fun.”

The other one replied, “But maybe we could thoroughly explore all there ever was, on the land, in the water and in the air, then there wouldn’t be all these mysteries. And perhaps mysteries are part of the fun, actually.”

The lemurs thought about that. Maybe it was good they didn’t have wings and fins, and all the apparatus needed to explore everything. Maybe it was fun being able to wonder about some things.

With that thought, one friendly lemur said to the other:

“For example, I wonder which one of us is going to get over to that tree first? On your marks. Get set. Go!”

With a laugh, they both took off for a race.

“The winner eats the most fruit!” called out the lemur that was in the lead.

The one coming in second yelled with a laugh, “The winner picks the most fruit to share with others!”

“In that case,” said the one nearly at the tree, “You first!” and he paused just before reaching the tree, so that the one coming behind him could reach the tree first.



“You win!” said the one who let him do so. “And I’ll sit here for a bit to catch my breath, while waiting to be served a nice fruit snack!”

“Happy to help,” said the lemur who felt glad to finally have been the first in a race. “Winners are servants. The first helps the last.”

Then they sat to munch on the tropical juicy fruit.

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## **Chapter 5—Wump One and Wump Two**

In a little cave, near the beach, on the beach side of the Land of Paradise, two very fuzzy and soft creatures sat ready for a meal. Wump One and Wump Two were their names. Wump One liked looking at the soft glowing fire they sat beside. Wump Two liked looking up out the opening to see the stars, though still glad for the fire, for it was a cold night.

Who was going to bring them food? A large and care-taking bird would scout around for the best tasting wump fruits she could find. They grew on vines on the trees on the beaches. These fruits tasted best when warmed on a stick near a fire.

The bird that looked after wumps was called, “Paradactil”. She had a way of “wump spotting” and would help to feed as many as she could, when it began to be dark. She knew all the best places wumps liked to rest and get cozy. It was hard for them to go out at night and search for food, because, as they’d say:

“Evenings are for rest. And I can’t rest if I’m climbing around and through bushy areas trying to search for food.”

So the wumps would have just gone hungry if it were for kind hearted paradactils who would bring food to them. Of course they could look for food in the day time, but they would enjoy their nights so much better with freshly warmed wump fruit and nuts to nibble on.

“Thank you so much!” Wump One said, taking the wump fruit he was just handed by Paradactil. He placed it on a stick and warmed it over the fire.

“Oh! Yea!” said Wump Two, who did the same.

They waved then as Paradactil flew off, to bring more wump fruit and some nuts to other tucked-in bed wumps.

Wump One said to Wump Two:

“Do you think we could ever be strong enough to go out into the dark and search for night snacks? I find it so hard to even think of doing it.”

Wump Two replied:

“Me too. I think it’s good to need others to care for us some times. But maybe there is a way we can thank Paradactil for her care. What do you think?”

Wump One thought about it, then spoke,

“I think Paradactil has a little baby chick who also needs lots of food, but they eat in the day time. Maybe if we find some tasty berry treats, rather than eating all of them, we could share some with Paradactil’s chick.”

Wump Two agreed and said, “I think that is a great idea. That will give Paradactil a bit of time to preen her feathers and get a drink of water. Then she can fly better.”

And so they made this plan, that during the hottest part of the day, when they didn’t mind moving around in the sun and had lot of energy, that they would seek out some yummy berries and take them to the tree where Paradactil’s chick was in its nest.

And their plan worked, for it was at that time when Paradactil was feeling rather tired and her feathers did need some cleaning and straightening out.

Right when she was about to go fly to find a snack for little Ibby, her baby chick, she saw to her surprise—and a pleasant surprise indeed—that two wumps had gotten the gumption to not just visit her and her little one, but to bring along something tasty.

Wump One said: This is for Ibby the chick.

Wump Two said: Now you can have time to get a drink of water and to care for your needs too.

Paradactil nearly didn’t know what to say, but she did remember to say thank you; although she wished there was a bigger word to say it, as she really was very very glad. So she just repeated it two times. That seemed right anyway, as there were two wumps who had helped her and little Ibby.

“Thank you! Thank you!” she said looking at each one in turn.

Then she took the berries up to Ibby in the nest, and afterwards sat by the little pond of fresh water to take a drink and do some feather preening. But her ears perked up. “Singing?” she thought.

Yep! There was singing. For not only did the visiting wumps bring a snack for her little Ibby, but they also were doing their best to bring him some entertainment. They were doing funny things and singing friendly songs.

The next sound, that naturally would be following the sound of the singing, was laughter, little Ibby sounding laughter. It wasn’t a big hearty, booming kind of laugh like you’d hear from a bear in a cave, laughing and playing with its cub. But it was a very cheery sound indeed, a laugh like only a baby paradactil could do.

When Paradactil returned to the next, she felt just great. And as the wumps waved good by, she called out:

“I’ll see you in your cave tonight! I found a new kind of nut that grows on a tree trunk. I’ll bring you some to roast and sample.”

The wumps would look forward to this, and off they went for a time of romping around in the bush. They might find things to nibble on here and there, but those special nuts were found way high up on a certain tree, and only at a certain season. So they really did appreciate Paradactil’s help to gather some and bring them to the cave.

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## **Chapter 6—Cuddly-Bugs**

Adina and her friend Alyssa were two little cuddly-bugs who also lived in the Land of Paradise. They would seldom be seen apart from each other. Cuddly-bugs were rainbow striped, and always had a golden glow shining about them. That is unless they were left alone. That is when both their colours and their glow would fade. If one was alone without a friend for too long they would just look brown and

colourless. They really needed each other to keep their shiny and colourful look to them. It's just the way they were.

So, they always did things together. And it was good they did, because then they could get more done. Since they weren't big and tall like the giraffe or some other of the Land dwellers, it would take them quite a bit of time to do simple things like harvesting leaves from the top of the Euella trees. These trees only had leaves at the top, and the most tasty ones too. If they worked together, the cuddly-bugs could gather twice as much in a shorter amount of time. And best of all, they could then eat together and share each other's companionship.

The stems of these leaves, that is the center spine of them, the part the cuddly-bugs didn't eat, would be used in building their little leaf-stem houses. These were cute little box shaped dwelling places, all woven out of leaf stems. Cuddly-bugs were clever with their hands and feet and could make all sorts of things—not only for their houses, but things that other creatures enjoyed as well. They could gather some of the strands of water-growing plants and dry them. These could be woven into blankets for the Cockella chicks to snuggle up with. Cockella chicks—the babies of the Cockella, a type of land-dwelling bird—always needed a blanket of warmth until they were old enough to have their own set of feathers to keep them warm.

And it wouldn't be uncommon to see a pair of cuddly-bugs snuggled up together with a cockella chick in the nest, under the blanket they had woven. This was a warm place indeed to rest. But most of the time, the cuddly-bugs would sleep in their own little houses made just right for them.

Once their little box shaped woven houses were made, they would be carried up into a tree and attached to a branch with a strand of wool from the woolite bush. The wool-like produce from this bush was great for tying things together. It was strong and a bit stretchy. So it worked well.

To bring one of their finished woven houses up to a tree branch—for that is where they were safest from being accidentally stepped on—they would often enlist the help of a mature cockella. This bird would grab it with its beak, fly up to a branch, and then hold it in place with its claws while the cuddly-bugs would work on securing it with woolite strands.

The first thing a cuddly-bug wanted to do when its new house was secure, was to take a good long sleep—together with one or two others who had helped to build it. It didn't really matter what house they slept in. They shared these little houses with each other. When it was time to rest, just whatever little woven, hanging house was empty, then they and whoever their partner was for that day's activities would curl up in that. Or if none were unoccupied, they would crawl in to sleep with the others who would welcome them in. But then the next day, cuddly-bugs would get to work to make a few new houses, so things wouldn't be too crammed for too many nights.

Sometimes cuddly-bugs would go on big adventures—adventures for them. They'd set off to sail on the sea! Or really, they would travel on a floating log or large branch that was floating on the lake. This had to be done, of course, with an additional animal to help them reach the other side of the lake. They could catch a ride for a short while, holding on to some of the feathers of a cockella, who could bring them to a floating branch. But then they needed the water dwelling creatures to help move them along.

The cockella had a special sound, a call, it would make. This would alert the water dwellers that there was a need for water transport. Up would poke the nose of an otter or other swimming creature. They would use their nose or tail or whatever they could, to move that floating item along to the other side.

This was quite a ride and adventure for the cuddly-bugs. They'd have to be brave to do this. But sometimes a cockella had a nest with a chick on one side of the lake, and they wanted a pair of cuddly-

bugs to come over and weave a blanket for their chick. So they did what they could to get a clever and helpful team over to help them on the other side of the lake—and then helped them get back again, of course.

During this time, when they were away from their proper home, they were more than welcome to snuggle up in the next with the cockella chick, who helped to keep them warm for the few days that it took to make the needed bedding.

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Tilly and Bigsbie were walking along the lake shore when something alerted them. “What’s that sticking up out of the water?”

It was an unusual sight indeed. They walked into the water a bit to get as close a look as they could. But try as they may, it just didn’t look like anything they knew. But learning about new things was always a good thing.

Just then Smarty flew up to them and landed right on Bigsbie’s back! For they were out in the water and there was no other place in sight to land on.

“That’s the new ‘kid’ in town,” Smarty informed this pair of friends.

“Kid?” they wondered.

“Ah, yes. The sea-dwelling serpent that lives in this lake has moved to this part for awhile, since it’s shallower. They are teaching their young one to do water tricks,” Smarty explained.

“I didn’t even know the sea-dwelling serpent was in the lake—rather than out in the sea. How did they get here?” Tilly asked.

Thankfully, Smarty had talked with a few of the land dwellers and some other birds around as well, and some of the deep lake explorers, and knew the answer to it.

“Apparently, there are some caves and cracks in the ground, linking the lake to the open sea,” Smarty said, sharing his newly acquired knowledge.

Bigsbie asked, “But will these visited sea-dwelling serpents return to their place, or are they here to stay?”

It was a question that many had on their mind. It did cause quite a disturbance for the current lake dwellers.

As Tilly and Bigsbie walked away to talk about it, they tried to figure out a solution.

“What will make this lake be a place those sea-dwelling serpents won’t want to visit?” Tilly thought aloud.

“If the lake was deeper, perhaps?” Bigsbie wondered.

“Let’s go talk to the otters, they might know something about lakes. They’ve lived around it and in it for a long time,” Tilly suggested.

And so off they went.

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## **Chapter 7—In a Mountain Cave**

When Bigsbie and Tilly met with Ottona the Otteress, she was just spreading a fresh layer of oil all over her furr. Ottona was the friendly female otter that often responded to the cockella's call to help cuddly-bugs be ferried across the lake.

"What might I do to help you both today?" she asked, when seeing the visiting rhino and elephant calf.

"Do you know about how a lake might get deeper? As in really deep?" Tilly asked abruptly, getting right to the point.

Bigsbie added, "We want there to be no reason for the huge, visiting sea-dwelling serpents to want to visit."

Ottona nodded. It was indeed something every one was starting to be concerned about.

"I can think of a few things," she began. "One is the need for a whole lot of water to come pouring in. That could be from rain, and under ground springs, mountain waterfalls, and all sorts of ways that waters can fill a lake in the first place."

Tilly and Bigsbie waited for Ottona to say a few more, and looked expectantly.

Ottona continued, "We need there to be a regular rain down pour, and not long times of hot dry weather. But we also need the crack in the ground to be filled in, for it is draining water out of the lake and taking it right out to the sea. Have you noticed that it's at its lowest point in the history of Paradise land?"

Bigsbie and Tilly realised that the problems and their solutions were too big for any of them to actually fix. It was going to take more than a fishing rod with some bait to try to lure out the unwelcome visitors.

Ottona continued, "The solutions would seem, at first, to be far more disrupting to our whole area, than the disturbance that the serpents have been. But..." she paused, waiting to see if Tilly and Bigsbie actually wanted a solution or just to have disruptions stop.

"Yes...?" they asked, clearly wanting a more long term safety measures to be in place, even if it wasn't so pleasant to begin with.

Ottona said words that took what was left of the smiles off of the faces of these strong looking guests. There were things like "Earthquake" and "flooding" and "no sunshine for a while" and "lightning striking anything that stuck out of the water".

After their sobering discussion, they reviewed just what it might take.

"An earthquake would shuffle the ground under the lake and help to close up the crack. The lightning would sting on the serpents when they were trying to rise out of the water to do some of their tricks, making them want to leave. The flood of water would fill it up real deep."

Then Bigsbie said, "But I think it would need to be done in the right order, so they would be gone before the restructuring of the lake bed."

Tilly contemplated, "And where should some of the animals go, to hide during this massive disturbance—if it was able to occur?"

"The mountains? They won't get flooded. But maybe in the caves for some of the time, when the lightning strikes," Bigsbie suggested, though he really didn't know how or when such a major event could or would take place.

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Some time later:

Dripping wet in a mountain cave, sat many land dwelling animals, as well a birds and bugs of all sorts.

“It’s good we came here when we did,” Tilly and Bigsbie’s parents said.

“Very good indeed,” said a tender little sparrow, resting on the back of a young giraffe.

From their vantage point, the whole valley below could be seen—and that included the troubles that were taking place. It didn’t happen right away, and the lake had continued to get lower and more shallow, and more of the water dwelling creatures were very disturbed. And the messes and disruption that the sea-dwelling serpents caused daily was very unsettling. During that time hardly any of them and their young ones were getting what they needed. This affected the whole Land of Paradise, for each one served to help each other in some way.

The dry time of nearly no rain had made the food all over the land be far more scarce than it ever had been. Everyone was wondering when the time of trouble would at last come to a stop, and good times would come once again.

And now here they sat. It wasn’t a fun scene to watch, but they knew it was all to make things better. And that is what they looked forward to.

“Oh! Look! A rainbow over Paradise Land!” two little cuddly-bugs pointed out, when at last some sunshine was seen.

“And look at the size of that lake now!” said Tilly to Bigsbie.

“You’re right!” he commented. It had been hard to tell that it really was deeper and bigger now, from that distance, but when pondering the size it used to be, it definitely was different.

“Do you think the sea-serpents are gone now?” said the now more grown up cockella chick, who had a coat of feathers now.

Mother cockella replied, “Yes, darling. The Storm Maker saw to that.”

At that great announcement, all the young ones, of all types, broke out into a dance and song, and romping around.

“Yea, yea! It’s going to be okay now. Yea, yea, it’s okay, we can go down!” they were singing and saying.

The parents smiled. They were glad the little ones were looking forward to the future.

Setting things up again would take quite some time, but if they worked together, it might even be fun.

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## **Chapter 8—Chlonee the Cockella**

Some time later:

Bigsbie and Tilly were now fairly grown up, and had started up families of their own, yet they still liked to meet down at the lake’s edge to talk things over. Their friendship together meant a lot to them, and there was much still to be learned.

One day while at the water’s edge they saw a certain grown up cockella flying overhead and landing down on a log in on the lake.

“Chlonee!” they called out. “You fly so well! How is your chick doing?”

Chlonee had grown up too, and was starting a family of her own.

“I’m just helping to transport some cuddly-bugs over to where my nest is. They will make the finest blanket for them, I’m sure,” Chlonee replied.

Tilly try to strain her eyes to see if there were any cuddly-bugs holding on to Chlonee’s feathers. It was hard to see, as they were rather small, but Bigsbie was the first to spot them.

“There!” he said, “On the right wing, nearly on Chlonee’s shoulder.”

“Ah, yes!” Tilly exclaimed, noticing the little, slightly glowing cuddly-bugs resting there.

Now they’d need to climb down, of course and sit on the wet and bobbing log.

If they could have heard the cuddly-bugs talking, they might have heard this:

“Well, Milly, we better make our descent to that log portion there. It’s safer then trying to told on to a cockella all the way over the lake.”

“Yes, I’m going. But I still am terribly frightened of falling in the water, Tony. It looks so wet and slippery. How long will it take until we get across?” Milly the cuddly-bug said.

Just then Chlonee made the special bird call, and up popped Onnowa, a fast swimming otter.

“Ready to be of service!” he said with a smile and a flip.

“Thank you very much,” replied Chlonee. “Can you please very safely, yet quickly, help to transport these two cuddle-bugs over to the other side of the lake? I have a chick that is just about ready to hatch, and I’ll certainly need some good covering for it. I heard snow is soon to fall on these parts of Paradise Land.”

“Right away!” responded Onnowa the otter, and before a wink could be made between the cuddly-bugs, the movement was felt.

“Hold on!” said Tony to Milly. And so they did, all the way over the lake’s surface—which of course was much longer of a ride than it had been before, due to the changes in the land and lake.

“I think I’m actually enjoying it,” Milly said after a while. It was indeed a rather pleasant day for a sail. Though they held on tight, at least she at last had opened her eyes to look at the view. They didn’t have to worry any more just when the huge waves would disrupt them or even knocked them off their log—the unexpected waves and trouble that the sea-dwelling serpents caused. Things were peaceful now, much of the time.

Well, every now and then a flying fish would be seen leaping out of the water, or a duck would sail on by and have a chat, leaving gentle ripples on the water’s surface that bobbed them up and down a bit.

But Onnowa was a very smooth and calm conductor, and though out of sight for much of the time, did his best to get the cuddly-bugs across the lake swiftly. He did this by grabbing on to one little protruding twig, with his mouth and pulling it as he swam. This helped the log to also remain upright in a semi-stable position.

Chlonee the cockella was there to help them disembark at the other side of the lake and take a ride on her feathers over to the nest. To their delight, Chlonee had already piled up lots of dried strands of water-growing plants, so work on the blanket could start right away.

“Do you think Chlonee’s chick will hatch while we are here?” Milly asked Tony, who of course didn’t know. But just to keep up the conversation added, “I imagine so. We were summoned here rather

quickly. There is a good chance we'll get to see this new addition to the feathered creatures of Paradise Land."

And so it happened, that three days later, when the egg cracked, and out popped Chlonee's first baby chick, the cuddly-bugs were there to see it, and even help to spread the newly made blanket over its sparkling body.

After providing a little snack for her chick, Chlonee said she'd help the cuddly-bugs to get back on a log and make their way home again.

"After all, I do have something, or rather someone else, who needs some attention. There are some wumps in the caves up in the mountains, who might be just wishing for their evening snack," Chlonee explained what she was setting off to do.

But before leaving, she gave her new little chickling a name.

"I think I'll call you Rubina, as you are so very red and shiny. Later your feathers will change it, but for now, that's what you are, and so that's what you shall be called. When you gain your feathers and your flight, you'll get a new name.

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## **Chapter 9—Wumping and Exploring**

Wump Three and Wump Four sat looking at the stars, right outside their cave's entrance. They were roasting some wump fruit and tree nuts on a fire.

"It was so nice of Chlonee to come all the way here to help give us a special snack," Wump Three said.

"I feel so snug here, " replied Wump Four.

Then looked inside the cave and said, "and so do they, I think."

From the cave was coming the sounds of sweet slumber. An owl and her owlette were taking a rest. Yes, even though it was night time, which meant usually they'd be awake and watching. But they'd had a long day with some new duties, and just needed a place to call home for the night.

The wumps had learned to enjoy other ways of feeling snug, such as having a fire outside under the stars, rather than only wumping in their cave bed. In a few hours the owls would get up anyway, and the wumps could get back into their snug little beds.

This cave had been set up in traditional and perfect wump style.

Right beside the bed surface area was a table with anything and everything they might possibly want when resting—big shells filled with water for washing; large stems of the Gigantia flowers filled with water and nectar; clothes for drying and wiping themselves when droplets of moisture from the cave roof sprinkled on them; seed pods filled with dry berries, in case of a food shortage one day.

Their beds were covered in cloth of all types, so that each of the different temperatures they felt, in the day or the night, they could have the correct feel and covering.

Some were of woven together flowers with their long thin stems. Some were made of woven woolite strands from the woolite bush. Some types could be made with grasses and hay. There were lots of types of blanketing made from plants.

And of course a little lantern hung just over the table, made with the oil of the akazaya plant. The hard seeds of this plant were filled with oil, and the seeds could burn for a very long time. There was a stash



of dry, woodlike-seeds in their cave, in a stone container. All the wump needed to do when the light was getting dim, was to drop a few more seeds in to the lantern, to keep it going and burning more brightly.

At the foot of the bed was where they put their shoes. Now these shoes were not for them to wear, of course, as no animals in the Land of Paradise needed to be shod. But these shoes were for foot cleansing and massaging. Before getting in to bed, the wump would put his feet into these “foot cleansing” shoes, and rub and scrub them on the rough and bumpy surface of these “shoes”. Once all the mud and dust was worked off their feet, and their feet felt rather good with all that rubbing, they then climbed into bed. They did like to have clean feet.

The next morning, after the wumps had gotten some rest in their own beds, they decided to do some exploring on a new side of the mountain.

Wump Three said to Wump Four:

“Things have sure been different since the big change. The flood and the earthquake and tons of water pouring over all of the Land of Paradise made so many things so much better.”

Wump Four replied, “Yes. The food growing around is so much more abundant, and bigger too! There used to be hardly any thing to nibble on around here, but now there is plenty.”

Wump Three added: “When Chlonnee brought us some food to eat last night, she didn’t have to carry it from so very far away. She found it from nearby. She has better eyes to spot it in the dark, and we were too tired to get it, but at least it was available.”

Things were different now, in so many ways.

Even the fish and water creatures living in the lake appreciated the new depth of the water. The land around also looked so much more lush. Trees were growing wider and taller. The abundant vegetation and new springs of water around the Land of Paradise even caused the creatures to get bigger too.

Sometimes a creature would be exploring around and discover something that reminded them of the old way things were—some old bird nest or cuddly-bug woven sleeping box, or dried Gigantia flower stem, and be amazed at how small they used to be. For now, the plants and the creatures were flourishing and growing so much bigger and better. Even the ants were bigger in size than they used to be.

“Bzzzz” sounded a bee, who was zooming past Wump Three and Wump Four.

“What was that?” at first they wondered. Was it a bird?

But when they looked they knew it was a bee.

“It’s almost the size of what used to be a small bird!” Wump Three said.

“They have larger flowers to tend to now,” said Wump Four.

Then they both got a thought: “The hives and the store of honey must be bigger and more as well!”

The bees in the Land of Paradise would make nice hives filled with honey, and then leave it for the creatures to nibble on it, when they moved to start up a new “Honey farm”. It was their way to contribute to the paradise of this land. The abundant and large, nectar filled flowers around made it very easy for them to make abundant honey.

As the wumps explored a very jungly area of this side of the mountain, it wasn't long before they came across an old bee hive, filled with the honey they made for just such creatures—traveling and exploring wumps who needed a snack to give them energy.

Finding some Gigantia flower stems they filled them to the brim, after having a bit of a snack of honey. They'd bring this special treat back to their cave, or nibble on some as they went.

"Is that an ant?" said Wump Four. "It's so big! Of course, much smaller than we are, but big for what it used to be."

Wump Three took a closer look. The ant was pushing a rock out of the way of the hole to it's home.

"Gotta keep things clean around here," the ant was saying.

Another ant was coming back with a large leaf, followed by his friend who carried a bite of some mountain growing fruit that had fallen to the ground.

"I guess everything needs to be bigger now! Even the ants, in order to do their job of cleaning things up," said Wump Three.

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## **Chapter 10—Shiny New Shell**

Tilly and Bigsbie were now grand-parents, but they still liked to take their walks down by the lake to talk; but they were never alone. Lots of romping young ones ran and played around and dug in the sand and dirt or made stick play houses.

"So, Bigsbie, would you say life is better than before, before the big event and change? Or is it only different, with new types of challenges?"

Bigsbie looked at the many young ones happily playing—animals of all sorts; even the fish life that was bobbing up and out of the water; the birds flying to feed their young in big luxurious nests by the lakeside holding in their beaks sprigs of plenty of berries.

"Things look pretty happy and well cared for now," Bigsbie replied. "There is so much more life and activity, and the sounds and songs of the dwellers in the Land of Paradise are so much happier. I think I like this renewed land, much better than before."

"Me too!" replied Tilly with a trumpet sound.

And an unexpected "Me three!" cawed from the air, as a certain very smart bird, in fact Smarty herself, flew down and landed on Bigsbie's back.

"Remember this?" Smarty said, handing Tilly a gift-wrapped package.

Both she and Bigsbie remembered it well.

"Our shell from Selly!" the two of them chimed together.

They opened it up to look at it once again.

It too was bigger than they remembered it, but just as shiny as ever.

"So that must have been the message that Selly was trying to tell us!" Tilly said.

A mysterious fish indeed.

"How did she know all that was about to take place—that there were big changes coming?" Bigsbie said.

“I’ll keep my eye out for more shells that may come our way,” Smarty said, before flying off.

“For those who are alert, they may be signalled before things happen!”

A with a caw she was gone.

Tilly and Bigsbie lingered just a bit more, before joining in with the game their children and grandchildren were playing.

Then, as the sun was setting they called out to each other,

“See you tomorrow!”

And before they could get very far, “Bing!” something flew out of the water and hit Bigsbie right on his horn.

“What was that?” he wondered.

“Selly? Did you do that?” And indeed she had. For there on the ground lay a new and extremely shiny new shell, freshly tossed from Selly.

Tilly and Bigsbie looked at one another with wide eyes. What this could mean, they weren’t sure. But whatever was to happen next, though difficult at first, would end in a very nice way—leaving things even better than before.

It was hard to imagine what could be better—or what might go wrong at first—but one thing they knew was life in the Land of Paradise was going to be both challenging, as well as keep getting better all the time. And each time something new and big happened, the Land truly became more and more like its name: Paradise.

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29-Oct-2022

**P.S. To animal days in the land of paradise**

## **Chapter 11—The Numniches New Home**

Two numniches were sitting in the rubble of what used to be called their home. They had such a nice place, before this major catastrophe occurred. They ate and ate this and then that. That’s about what they did best.

So because they could eat so much and so fast, and almost always find something or other to eat, they had gotten a grand idea.

“Why don’t we grow food right above us, then all we’d have to do is go up briefly to pick something growing, and zoom back down here to enjoy it.”

And so they worked on what they thought was the best plan of all. But they didn’t realise that food growing needs roots, and without roots there would be no fruits. And without fruit there would be no seeds. Without seeds they couldn’t make more and more things grow, like they were hoping.

That was actually a big part of their plan, to have a bigger and wider place both to live in and to invite many more numniches to live there too, and then just above them would be all the food they could dream of.

Well, they did that for a while, the growing part at least. But they didn’t realise that the seeds they had found and planted were seeds of the biggest trees there ever could be. As the roots began to grow

deeper on this one certain kind of tree it began to separate different parts of their underground dwelling. It was breaking things up and rearranging everything; shifting and smushing what used to be an orderly dwelling. It was a good thing for the roots to go down deep, for that is the only way the tree would survive and thrive and grow fruit on it, big and luscious fruit.

It wasn't the planting of the tree that needed to change. It wasn't that their desire for nummies to nibble on that was causing the problem, it was that THEY needed to change. It was time for them to move "upstairs" and out of the downstairs place they called home.

So after sitting there for a while wondering what to do and what went wrong, suddenly they got a great idea.

"Say! I have an idea! Remember that squirrel we saw the other day? They seemed to have a lot of fun running up and down trees, gathering what they like to eat. Why not us? I think I could enjoy living up where we can see the sun and feel the wind and enjoy the fruit out in the open air."

And so they did, and promptly too, for they seldom liked to hang around one broken plan, when there was a good and better way right there and available.

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After enjoying their first day above ground, they were sitting up on a sturdy tree branch enjoying the setting sun going deeper, looking red, and shooting all sorts of colours here and there.

"I really like it up here," said one numnich to another.

"Me too, though it takes a little getting used to. But I guess the other animals know how to do it."

"How to do what?" asked the other.

"How to balance on the branches, up high above the solid looking ground, eating and resting in a completely new environment. But it's good."

And so it was that they closed their day with a song, since it was much easier to sing in the open air, because, well, it took air to sing and sing aloud. And all around their song rang. Nobody knew that numniches could sing, but they knew now. And what a lovely chorus it was when the other squeaking and squawking and singing creatures joined in and they all sang together at the close of the day.

"Sing again tomorrow" they said to each other—that is all the creatures above the land, as they wished each other a lovely rest. They would greet the shining sun with a song the following morning.

The two numniches kissed each other and cuddled for the night, still chewing some savory sticks they found. This was their first night in their new location. It wasn't so bad after all. They were getting to rather enjoy it, actually.

Then as the sun began to peak its rays over the horizon announcing the new day, the numniches stretched and yawned, and shook themselves into action. Down they zoomed as fast as they could to find the most delicious breakfast they could. After locating a few delicious snacks, they nearly ran down to their place underground, just out of habit I guess, or maybe they did miss their little cozy underground abode. But seeing that was a mess and wouldn't be nearly as comfortable as their new place was, then up they climbed and sat on the branch. And just in time too, as the morning time concert of all their above ground friends was starting up. Their voices would have been missed if they had been tucked away in a hidden away location.

The morning song that day was more spectacular than ever, as never before had the creatures there had the pleasure of the numniches singing with them at the start of a new day. It was simply heavenly.

Then it was time for adventure. No more being tucked away doing next to nothing. There were new places to explore, new friends to meet, and most of all new things to try—mostly new things to taste and nibble on. It was going to be a great day; and it sure ended up being.

The song that night, inbetween bites of new goodies to nibble on, showed that everyone was content with the pleasant and adventure filled day.