

Creatures with Character –12 [Imaginary story]

A Buffalo and a Brother

Jasmine and her family lived where the weather was mostly warm, and where plenty of rice was grown.

Her favourite thing to do was to fly kites along with the neighbour children. When the water from the rice paddies was evaporating and being warmed in the sun, it was easy then for kites to lift up into the air.

Sometimes Jasmine wished she was like bird or a kite that could float up and up into the air. She didn't particularly like walking in muddy places. And when the big rains came, there was always plenty of mud. Mud tended to get everywhere.

She knew she shouldn't complain, for it was because of the rain and the soil that they had a nice bowl of rice to eat, sometimes twice a day when crops had grown well. But the thought of being up above where no mud touched, was a pleasant one to her.

Perhaps because her name was Jasmine she liked to be like a flower, smelling nice and looking pretty. And that is good, for there is a time to be clean and neat, and to look your best. If your job is to be a flower, then that is what you must do, at all times.

However, people also need to work, and not only look nice. They need to do nice things, and sometimes doing nice things means they have to get sweaty, or wet, or dirty with soil.

One day after helping her mother to plant the sprouts of rice, Jasmine was longing for a good wash. She walked to the pond that her father had made for foot washing and for the animals to drink out of when they came around.

As she splashed in the water, trying to get some of the soil off her feet, legs and arms, she wondered what it must be like to be one of

the working animals that spent so very much time in the dirt and mud.

Jasmine was glad it wasn't her job, but she was glad that their family owned a few water buffaloes to help them. Otherwise it would have been much harder for her family to produce the crops needed, to keep them all satisfied.

Since they were not needed for the ploughing work at that time, they were at rest under the shade of a tree. There they had plenty of feed to nibble on, water to drink, and could rest as they needed.

When it was time to work they would have to be strong enough to pull a plough for many hours in a day.

They were appreciated also for the milk they could produce, that could be made into cheese. Some of this was used by Jasmine's family, and some was sold to others who needed it.

There were other things these faithful farm helper's provided, and it was good to have them.

Jasmine, who had a hard time that day, going in the mud yet again to help out, wished there was something she could do to make herself feel better.

Was there someone she could talk to who would help her to feel more cheerful next time she was asked to do something that might make her get soiled up a bit?

Then she got an idea.

"I'll go talk to the water buffalo! Maybe he would understand and give me some advice."

That thought made her feel happy—a bit silly too, but at least she was cheering up.

She went over to the fence and looked into the penned area where the water buffalo were placed before night fell.

"Hi Mrs. Buffallo!" Jasmine started saying.

But before she could say any more, her older brother had come up

right beside her, so quietly she didn't even know it.

She was so startled to hear a grunting kind of voice answering her back,

“Hello miss Jasmine!”

Jasmine turned around to see her brother and laughed.

“Go on,” he said. “Tell her all you want. I'm sure she'll answer you!”

So, to play along with it, Jasmine asked,

“Is it hard for you to go into the mud for so many hours, getting all dirty? I sure don't like it.”

“Well, little girl,” came the brother's voice, answering for the buffalo. “We're just different. Little girls are meant to want to stay clean—that's because humans do better when they are clean. They stay healthier when they pay attention to what is clean and don't ignore the need for washing.”

Jasmine, starting to enjoy this game of talking—in away to the buffalo, but also in a way to her older brother. She asked another question,

“Do you like it? Is it actually fun for you?”

The grunting reply came:

“I enjoy it more when I am useful, though some of the work is hard. But I know it makes the farmer glad, and then he rewards me with good care and food, and nice place for my young ones to grow up also.”

“Is it better if I just never get dirty, then I'd always be nice? I'm not animal like you. Maybe only you are meant to do the muddy work,” Jasmine wondered.

The response came,

“Now that wouldn't be so fair or fun would it? Isn't it nice to know that the food you eat at meal time is something that you also helped to produce?”

“Would you want your tired mama and papa, and others, to do all the work? I know that even if you don’t enjoy the mud and dirt, what you do enjoy is the feeling that you helped them. And you do appreciate the thanks they give you.

“They smile at you when you help out in the house or yard, or sometimes in the rice field. And for me, the water buffalo, I couldn’t produce all the rice myself, I have to have humans to work with me—and they need me to help work with them. Working together gets the job done faster and better.”

Jasmine felt like patting the water buffalo in thanks for the hard and faithful work it did.

She then thought of one more question.

“How do you manage to stay cheerful doing all that muddy and mucky work? I seem to get grumpy every time I try to help out. I wish I didn’t. Do you have any suggestions? I wish I could have your good attitude,” Jasmine said honestly.

The grunting reply, said by her brother, came:

“You get more credit and thanks when you do something that is hard for you but are doing it kindly to help someone else.

“Everyone one of us here on the farm have to do something that isn’t our favourite. So even if we can’t manage to actually enjoy that job, the fact that we do it anyway is a good thing.

“But if you want to keep happy, sometimes games are what makes the hard things a bit more fun. Maybe your brother can help you think of some game you can play with your mother while you are planting crops together.

“Talking games help to keep your mind on something other than what you are doing that you wish you didn’t need to do, or that is hard for you. It can make time go by more quickly.”

Jasmine smiled. It was a great suggestion.

Jasmine turned to hug her brother, but just before she could wrap

her arms around him, he turned quickly so as to give her a ride on his back. He was strong—strong as an ox they would say.

“Come princess,” he said, “I’ll take you to the royal dinner banquet without so much as a drop of soil touching your dainty, sparkling feet.”

Jasmine laughed and enjoyed the ride to the house.

Before dinner she looked in the mirror and gave her hair a brushing. Then washed her hands and face, and put on a tiny drop of Jasmine perfume that her grandmother made for her.

She then noticed that from head to toe, she had two of most body parts that were needed to do things. Two eyes, two ears, two feet, two legs and knees, two hands and arms.

“Hmm,” she thought of an idea.

Jasmine told herself,

“Maybe I can think of it this way: there can be two sides to me—one that stays all nice and clean like a princess, and the other that works hard and doesn’t mind getting a bit dirty.

“When it is time to help with the animals and farm, I’ll put aside my thoughts of being all ladylike, and get to work. Then when it is over, I can act and dress in my preferred way.”

Somehow this thought seemed to help her. She even thought of a new name to call herself when she went out to work—since her regular name reminded her of being oh so clean.

“I know! My working name can be, Rice-Now,” that will remind me that we’ll have enough to eat because of my help.

“It will also remind me to do it right away and not to delay just because I may not be looking forward to the job.”

“Jasmine,” came the call from her mother.

The meal was served, and a lovely and clean Jasmine brightened up the table with her presence.

The next morning, before the sun rose too hot, “Miss Rice-now”

would go to feed the chickens, collect the eggs, and water the plants around the house.

When she was in bed that night she thought how interesting it is that people can be and do so many things, whereas animals are generally always the same way, doing their same jobs.

People, however, need to relate, understand, and help other people. And since people all are different in some way, and like different things, then it is important to be able to do all kinds of things, and act in different ways.

Meeting the needs of an animal is easy, as they it was easy to know what they need. However, people are different.

It takes more thoughtfulness, really noticing and watching, and listening to people, to find out just what they need and what will make them the happiest. Because of this, it's good that people can act, and look, speak in different ways, and enjoy a variety of activities.

Jasmine realised that even just growing up and learning about herself was a challenge.

She realised now that everyone else had different feelings, likes, and dislikes, but each one also needed to learn to do things that weren't so easy, so they could make life better for others. It was all part of living.

Every day was a chance to learn something new, and learn new ways to be kind and thoughtful, caring and supportive of each one she came in contact with.

Jasmine went to sleep with a smile on her face. She felt a bit more grown up than the day before, and able to manage whatever the next day brought.