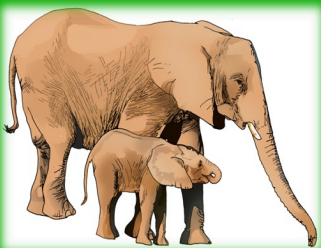




Creatures with Character

Stories 1-12



Creatures
with
Character



—Imaginary Stories—

Written by: Chariane Quille

Illustrated by: John Greene

Titles:

Peggie the Penguin

The Tiger and the Artist

Delightful Dolphins

A Brush Turkey and a Bower Bird

Travels with Camels

Llevo the Llama

Little Bear and Mama Bear

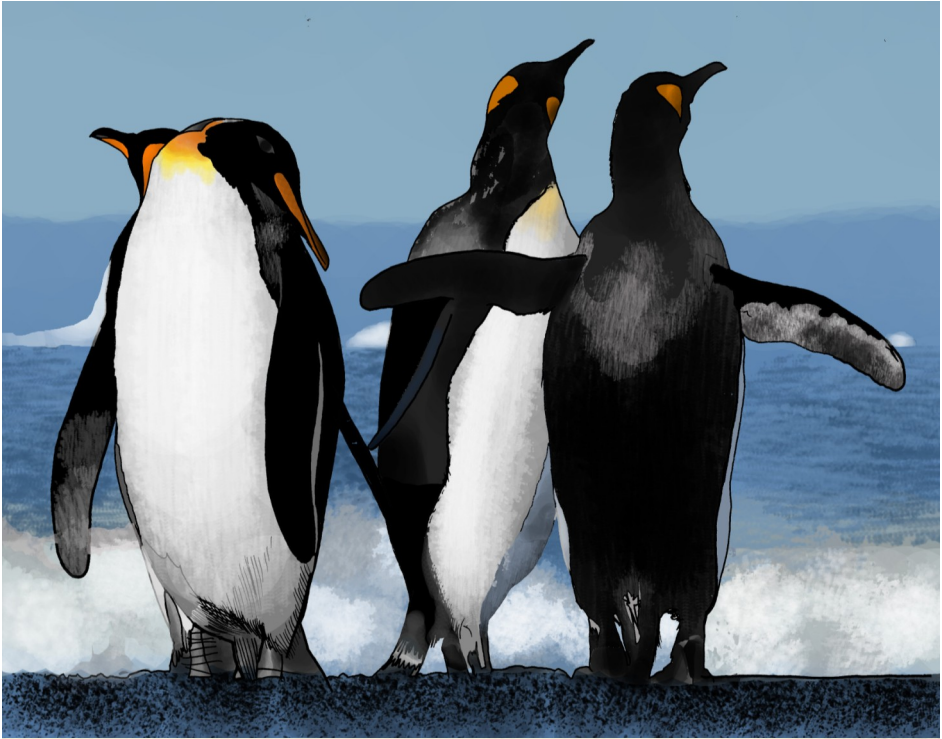
Little Joey Likes to Learn and Jump

The Elephant and the Giraffe —Part 1—

The Elephant and the Giraffe —Part 2—

St. Bernard's Search in Snow

A Buffalo and a Brother



Peggie 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 Peggie.

“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 do it.

“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.”

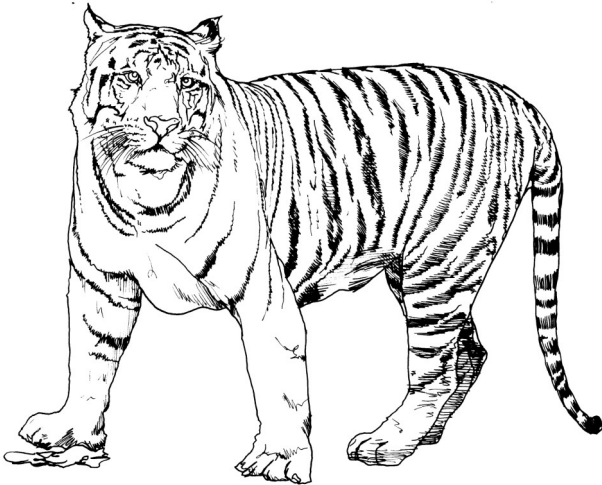
Mama penguin smiled, “Yes, very good! I’m so glad you do.”

Peggie snuggled up warmly to her mama. She needed to now be patient until she was bigger. She needed to grow more before she could venture to the sea and learn to swim and 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.”



The Tiger and the Artist

Grandfather was saying goodnight to the grandchildren who had come to stay the night with him and grandmother. They got to talking about all the interesting animals they each had seen in their lives.

Grandfather was a wildlife specialist and did his best to learn about as many local creatures as he could. He was also a great artist and had painted an array of all kinds animals—from colourful butterflies, to pets, to even what he thought dinosaurs could have looked like.

Some of these reptilian creatures were reported to have existed in this area many, many years before. Natives had stories passed down to them, and some had also preserved records of their animal sightings by making pictures on huge rocks.

“Did you ever see a tiger?” his young granddaughter asked him.

“Well, yes I did. I’m sure you’ve heard the story,” he said.

They all giggled. They knew it well, but they liked to hear it again and again.

The way Grandfather could tell of even simple events, and make them sound interesting, was all the more amplified when he told of more dramatic and surprising happenings.

“Guess what?” he announced to the children. “Your uncle has just written a new chapter in his book about the history of this village. He gave it to me to look over. I happen to have it with me today.

“This chapter includes a written account of my tiger sighting. Would you like to hear it?”

The children nodded eagerly .

“But first, now, where are my glasses? Oh, there they are. Okay, let me sit over here by this lamp and read it to you, while you sit back and try to imagine it.”

Grandfather sat over in the arm chair, took a sip of water and cleared his throat. He began to read:

The tiger crept every so silently around the hut in its native land. However, those inside slept peacefully under their mosquito nets.

Though they knew there was possible danger in all parts of this jungle, they trusted in God to protect them.

That evening, before going to bed, they did what they knew best to preserve and keep them, while living in these wild and unpredictable areas.

After their evening meal of cooked rice, bananas and papaya, as was their custom, they huddled together by the light of a single lantern.

While insects, attracted by the light zoomed and fluttered around, the family prayed and committed their safe keeping to the One that formed the jungle and all manner of creatures and plants there in.

Though the night was hot and muggy, and the buzz of eager mosquitoes was often heard, there was something else on the mind of these daring ones; something that gave them the bravery to endure these tropical and wild conditions.

This was a team of artists, and their goal was to draw the most vivid and realistic pictures of God's Creation that they could, right from seeing things in the wild, .

There was no electricity coming to their abode, neither was there running water. Water had to be fetched carefully from the stream—making sure no other water seekers of the troublesome type were there to share it at the same time.

Near the hut was a large tall tree. The tree went straight up until a good height. This was the perfect type to adopt as a tree house watch tower. Much could be seen from up there. Birds from the trees around could be seen up close. A good view of the landscape all around was seen up there.

The bugs that seemed to enjoy living close to the ground and near water sources didn't bother to come up there. Of course there was the risk of falling, or of having to stay up there for a long while, should they be "treed" by an curious prowler.

The team built this place and added to it a rope-and-branch ladder. They would take turns drawing, painting and observing from up there. The others on the ground level would find beautiful tropical flowers to sketch, right as they were growing.

Some plants that would take more time to draw, or if a special little plant was discovered late in the day, these could be dug up and placed in a pot and brought back to the hut to be sketched then.

For three months this team lived there, ate there, explored there, and drew and painted as many gorgeous pictures as they could.

When at last they returned to their home village again, they had many stories to tell along with the pictures they showed. The team of artists took turns showing their works of art and telling the story and situation behind each picture. It was all so fascinating to those in the little village.

The one that perhaps attracted the most interest and questions was the painting of a tiger. When that picture was shown, everyone got very quiet wanted to hear the full, complete and detailed story. They knew it would be interesting.

The artist, who is my father, took a breath and began to give the detailed account of that memorable event. He said:

“Ever since I was a young lad, tigers fascinated me. I liked them at a distance, only, of course. But I always wished there was a friendly type. I wanted a tiger that could be like a family pet for us—like a very large cat. It could keep the rats away, and chase away other wild creatures that were troublesome, yet a tiger that ate fruits and drank milk from a plate. A gentle one.

“I knew that this didn’t exist, but still I always wished such a thing would. Well, one night while going to sleep I heard some creeping around our hut. Now, there are always nocturnal animals doing what they must do at night.

“I can’t say it was something I got used to, because you never could quite see in the dark what was going on around there. Besides praying for safe keeping in the night, you couldn’t give yourself the visual satisfaction that all was fine and good.

“You just had to sleep and trust that all would be. Anyway, the sounds around our hut that night were a little bit different; there was a sound I hadn’t heard before.

“It was a very quiet creeping, like something was trying to be as unnoticed as possible. Just then something amazing happened. I looked out the window, hoping that some glimmer of moonlight would give me a clue as to what was going on in the night scene—perhaps even give me something to remember and draw the next day.

“All of a sudden a flash of lightning lit up my view, and there, half behind a bush was a large, striped and creeping tiger!

“At first I was stunned, in a way, thinking, ‘What are they going to do? Why is it here? Does it see me?’

“Well, the next flash of lightning, accompanied by a loud crack of thunder, and soon pouring rain, seemed to make it take off deep into the jungle, for that is what I saw when the third lightning struck.

“I lay down again, glad that the tiger was on its way elsewhere, yet after a few moments I smiled. I was glad, too, that it had been there; glad that I got to see it so very close, and still be safe and unharmed.

“This was only a few days before we left, so I didn’t have a chance to see it again. But the flash of the lightning acted like flash of a camera to my eyes as I peered out into that dark jungle all around.

“That made the image stick to my mind. I spent the next two days drawing and painting this picture. As you can see the scene around show very dark, nearly black green colouring, then you have the silvery blue reflection on a few wet plant leaves of lightning flashing.

“Then you see in the picture the orange and black tiger half-way out from behind the bush, beginning to run.

“Of, course in that lighting that night I didn’t see it in all its full colour, but since I know well the colouring, to make the picture show good contrast, I painted it in this way.”

Everyone clapped. They were glad to have these brave artist safely back home again, and glad to get a closer look at some of the wonders in the jungle that they had never ventured into.

Much of the art was when placed in picture frames and displayed in the central meeting venue for the community.

These pictures showed how amazingly designed and beautiful nature is, and also declared the stories of protection when in a challenging situation. The pictures gave hope to others to take steps of courage to do what they felt was needed and good.

The chapter portion ended, and Grandfather tucked it back away in his bag. “Good night my dears,” he said. “Perhaps tomorrow I can give you some artistic pointers and tips for drawing. Would you like that?”

The children were glad, and went to sleep looking forward to their art class with Grandfather the next day.

Perhaps they hoped, too, that one day he would take them out deeper into the jungle to explore and even discover the hidden living treasures there.



Delightful Dolphins

“Mama, look over there! I saw a splash! Some big fish, or something is swimming!”

The girl pointed out as the boat sailed along the blue ocean. Amy and her family were on a trip to the south of Italy, to meet her grandparents for the first time.

“There are all kinds of amazing creatures out there in the water. There are some that we know about, and some that we don’t know much about,” mother said, looking carefully to see what else they could see.

“I think what you saw was perhaps a dolphin—oh, look there they are again, several of them,” Amy’s father spotted.

“Come sit on my lap and let me tell you about these amazing creatures. They are very special indeed,” her father said.

The family was sitting on the deck, since the sailing weather was particularly nice that day.

There was so much to see—and mostly just lots of wide open space, without anything obstructing the view. Even if most of the time there was just water and more water, still it was a pleasant and relaxing view.

The waves were calm, the sun sparkled on the water, and it was the right time for a story about sea creatures.

Father began,

“Did you know that though they look like fish, big fish, they need to breathe air just like us!”

“Really? I didn’t know that,” commented Amy.

“Yes, and what is more, the mama dolphins feed milk to their babies, even while they are under the water!”

“The dolphin mother is very caring—and not just her, but the other dolphins around try to help each other in different ways.

“They teach their swimming babies everything they can, so they can grow up safe and strong and know what is right and what is wrong to do.”

Amy was enjoying learning about these special creatures that liked to help and care for each other, and their babies.

Father added,

“And just like we know about them, did you know they are also aware of us? They know when humans are around.”

“Sometimes they have helped to protect people who are in the sea, or even in a ship. They have even been known to

help guide ships through tricky places, where a shipwreck might occur,” Father said.

Amy started to sing a little song about sailing in the blue ocean. She kind of made it up as she went, and it told of their trip so far. When she was done, her father said,

“Did you know that dolphins sing too? Well, really it’s one of their ways of communicating, to make certain sounds under the water, to tell the others a message.

“When it’s recorded—as some people have done—it sounds a bit like music; special sea music.”

“But how can they hear anything under the water? Do they have ears? Do their ears get full of water?” Amy asked.

She was imaging how it must be hard for sound to travel without air.

Father replied,

“Actually, it might surprise you to know this, but sound can travel very well under water. —Even better than in the air!

“The water can take the sounds fast and far away, so that dolphins and whales and those that can communicate with sound can hear each other just great.

“It’s an amazing realm under the water. There is so much left to be discovered.”

Mother said, “I remember when I was a little girl I went to a show—a water animal show. I saw some dolphins in this big pool of water.

“They were doing all kinds of clever tricks, and responding to what the humans were trying to communicate. They had trained the dolphins to do certain things.

“Everyone clapped at how amazing it was that the friendly dolphins liked to do things together with the people. It seemed fun for the people, and for the dolphins.”

“What kind of tricks?” Amy asked.

Mother replied, “They would leap up in the water and swim through hoops when they were asked to. Or they would beep a button with their nose to give the right answer to some question. They were very smart, though it took years of training.”

“And I remember, when I was a boy..” Father began to recall.

“My great-uncle was a sailor, and he had some interesting experiences, and great stories to tell. Let me see if I can remember one of them.”

“Let me tell you a story before you go to take a rest.”

Amy was ready to hear.

“Not all creatures in the sea are friendly and pleasant, in fact there are some that are too aggressive to be safely around. These we need to watch out for. Even other fish need to look out for them.

“They weren’t always that way. But one day things changed in nature, and some creatures got harmful and rough,” Father began to explain.

“Yet, other animals, whose job it seems is to be a help to people, are nice and agreeable, or can be trained.

“Can you think of some that are harmful, and others that are helpful?” Father asked.

Amy thought a moment, then said,

“Like dogs—some kind help the blind people know where to go, or can be a friend to a lonely person.

“But some other creatures that are a bit like dogs, are not wanted around human dwellings—like wolves and foxes.”

“Yes. Those tend to come and take away things and to be rough and troublesome. And so it is in the sea as well,” Father commented.

Father continued with telling his story,

“Well, one time a sailor, who was a friend of my great-uncle, had fallen in the sea while trying to fix something on the ship. The wind and waves were rough and he slipped overboard.

“The other crew members were trying to get some rope and a life ring out over to him, so he could hold on to it and they could bring him back.

“Meanwhile, my great-uncle saw something troubling. Coming through the water, nearer to his friend, were some unwanted guests; the kinds that just want to take away and not take care of.

Amy’s eye widened, listening intently.

“What happened?” she eagerly asked.

Father continued,

“Just then, to his happy surprise, wonderfully along came a few dolphins. These helpful, friendly creatures swam around and around him, forming a ring of protection.

“They put aside their own safety and comfort, and were a help to someone that was very different than they were. They just knew that is where they were needed, and what to do to protect him.

“The men on the ship were able to pull the man back again on board. Everyone was much relieved.

“They even thanked the dolphins for their help by tossing some over some of the fish they had caught. Then off the dolphins swam, and on the sailors went.”

“That’s a nice story,” Amy said.

“And did you know,” mother added, “Some dolphins even help people catch fish? I heard of one beach where the fishermen take their nets at a certain time of day to go fishing.

“These men depend on this food from the sea for their families and village. At the right time, some dolphins are able to get many fish to swim over to the fishermen.

“The dolphins also get to have some of the fish, too. The fishermen and the dolphins help each other. Isn’t that nice?”

Amy nodded with a smile, then yawned.

She went to lie down in her little bed on the ship, and fell asleep to the gentle rocking of the boat.

Soon Amy was enjoying a dream.

In her dream she had gone down into the water, along with some divers.

She was able to stroke the dolphin's smooth and shiny coat. She swam along with them for awhile, and a dolphin even came up under her—like they do with their babies, and pushed her up to the surface, so she could see above and get air.

Even though it was a dream, and Amy didn't actually need to have air but could swim and swim in the ocean, still it was fun going up and up in the water.

When she woke, Amy wanted to learn more about dolphins. She and her mother went to talk to some of the sailors, to learn all they could about these amazing and caring creatures of the sea.



J. BEVERLY GREENE

A Brush Turkey and a Bower Bird

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 earnest feathered 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 with a little chuckle, “I wish our house had a 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.

Father added as he joined them in watching, “What is also just as fascinating is that when the chicks hatch deep down in that pile of leaves and dirt, that 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 said,

“Yet, those little ones didn’t get to watch or have a class with their parents on how to dig and fill a hole with the right things, 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 a have a chick hopping out!”

The boys laughed at that.

After eating their lunch, 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, “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 birds 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 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.”

Mother looked up some interesting information on line about brush turkeys and bower birds, and read aloud as they drove. There is much that can be learned from the way birds are, and the things they do. Learning about them can teach us many things, and also make us grateful for the way we are as well, and all the things we can do that they will never be able to.



Travels with Camels

“Ishmael, come! Now we must go,”

Uncle Emeel called.

The two climbed up on to their camels. The sun was low in the sky and it was the perfect time for desert crossing.

“Why do we always travel late in the day, and often at night?” Ishmael asked his Uncle.

“I find it easier to deal with the heat, and so do the animals. When water is scarce for them to drink, it helps them conserve their strength.”

Ishmael and his uncle were mail and supply carriers in a desert region. These hearty and steady animals could manage the crossing much more reliably than a car or other vehicle.

Their wheels never got flat nor their engine fail to start for lack of water cooling it. The camels could carry on through the difficult climate.

The train of half a dozen camels were each loaded with supplies of all sorts. Uncle Emeel would take it all to be delivered, and then return with them as equally loaded on the trip back.

Just where exactly Uncle Emeel lived, was hard to say, for he was nearly always on the move, sleeping in tents at night if there was no other accommodation available.

He often had a relative accompany him, or someone hired to help if no one else he knew could come along.

Ishmael was learning what it was like to be on the move for weeks at a time.

During sandstorms they would have to wait it out. They would cover themselves in blankets and hope the troublesome wind that was blowing dust would pass soon. They would hope the trail wouldn't be too hard to find again, once it was over.

The camels were naturally equipped with all that was needed for handling each type of danger and challenge they would be faced with. They had to.

There was no way a camel could put up a tent, or dig a well, or do other things that humans could do to take care of themselves. And they didn't need to either; they were designed to manage just the conditions they faced.

When it was late in the night, the travelling team pitched a tent and sat around the fire they built with wood and fuel they carried for this purpose, or what they could find around.

“Say, Ishmael, when this month is over and it is time for you to go back to your studies and family in the town, do you think you’ll miss these fine friends of ours?” Uncle Emeel said, motioning over to the camels who were now at rest. They had found a spot with water, an oasis, and the camels had had a long and refreshing drink before going to sleep.

“I suppose there are some things I’ll miss, and something things I won’t,” Ishmael replied.

“But one thing is for sure, I’ll never forget. For I have learned much, and this trip has been an adventure in many ways.”

They recalled some of the events.

Once, as a sandstorm was blowing their way, they settled the camels down on to the sand, and took shelter on one side of them, under cover of blankets.

The camels’ eyes and nostrils were made in such a way as to not be greatly affected by this harsh weather condition.

When Ishmael was tired sometimes on the journey he was able to place himself in such a way over the comfortable creature, so as to get some rest.

He strapped himself on, and dozed while the hard working camel continued plodding on, one step at a time. Without such a creature, they would most likely never have made it to their destination, if all they could do was walk.

As a treat for the camels, when they needed extra motivation on the journey, Uncle Emeel would offer them each a few dates. He brought them for this purpose. Dates were a natural package of nourishment and energy. In fact, they all took a snack of them every now and then—Ishmael and Uncle Emeel included.

The moon and stars were very bright on this night, and the light was reflecting off the water. The camels were resting, and it was time for the travellers to do the same.

When the fire had died out, the last cup of tea was sipped, and the small meal enjoyed, it was time for rest.

They were glad it wasn't very windy on this night. It seemed rather pleasant. There were good times and tough times when travelling. One needed to be brave through the challenges to then get to enjoy the things that not many others did.

Uncle Emeel decided to tell his nephew some stories, from long, long ago; stories about when one of their ancestors took a train of camels to find a special person.

“The manager of the goods of a rich distant relative of ours had gone on a trip. This was many, many years ago.

“He had travelled for a long while before at last reaching his destination—a certain town where he had been instructed to go.

“When they arrived, there was only one thing on the camels’ minds, and that was water, and lots of it.

“To keep the town as nice as it could be, the well for drawing water was kept outside of the town entrance.

“Flocks and animals, and travelling trains of camels would be given water out there.”

“The manager at last sat down, thirsty and tired. But he wasn’t about to forget what he had come for.

However, before he could proceed into the town, something must be done for the water needs of his camels.

“Just then, some women came out to draw water for their households. They often came together, so they had time to chat, and perhaps help one another.

“The travelling manager with the camels asked one of the women if she might be so kind as to give him a drink from the jug of water she had just drawn.

“Taking pity on this weary traveller, she did so, though she didn’t know there was a special surprise about to be offered to her.”

At the word, “surprise” Ishamael listened even more intently. He always enjoyed the story time at the end of the day with his uncle. He learned much, and would have plenty of stories to pass on one day to his own nephews and children, when he was older.

Uncle Emeel continued,

“The manager had in his bag some very expensive jewellery to give to the best woman he found—and to the one that helped to give water to the camels, without him asking her to do so.

“When this beautiful young woman noticed the camels were also in need of water, she offered to help them.”

“It took many trips to the well for the lady to fill her jug with water and bring it back to the trough where the camels were drinking. The camels were very grateful indeed.

“When she was done, the manager surprised her by giving the beautiful gifts to her, and said she was just the type of woman he had hoped to find on his journey.

“But that wasn’t all. More kindness followed. The young woman’s parents and brother let this man and his travelling team, including all the camels, come to their house and property.

“The camels were given food and a place to rest, and the travelling men were given a meal by this family. Without the camels, this trip wouldn’t have been possible.”

“Who was the special person the man was hoping to find on his trip? He needed to find the best woman he could, that would also want to travel back with him and his team. —A young woman that would agree to be a wife to the son of our rich, travelling relative.

“Like me, he too didn’t have a certain place to call home, but depended on his good, hardworking, well-trained camels to get him along where he needed to go.

“Did the woman want to go?” Ishmael asked, wondering what happened in the end of the story.

“Yes, I’m happy to say she did. So from one day to the next she became a wealthy woman, married to a kind-hearted man—all because she took the time to care about the needs of someone’s travelling camels.”



Llevo the Llama

“Antonio, please bring that last bag over here, we need to get Llevo our llama loaded and ready. Your brother and I have a long trek down the steep mountain trail.”

Antonio did just as his father asked, and then continued playing with his sister, Anita. He was to watch over her well, while his parents and older brother made the last preparations.

His father and older brother were going down the mountain trail to trade some of their goods.

They brought things they had grown and made, and would trade them for some supplies that they needed that were available in the village below.

Llevo their llama had done well these years that they had him. He was dependable and strong.

Of course, Llevo would probably have preferred to just eat grass, rest, and just look around or explore new areas with the other llamas, most of the time. And often this is what he could do. But when it was time to work, then work needed to be done.

The weather was starting to change and take on more of a winter chill. This mountain-dwelling family needed to stock up with supplies, and make the exchanges of goods in the village, while travel wasn't too difficult.

Llevo their llama wasn't at all in the mood, on this morning, to go on a long hike, that would probably last for most of the day. But it wasn't a time for giving in to whines and wishes.

Pablo, the father decided to have a chat with him. Perhaps he understood, perhaps he didn't; but at least he would show that he cared.

“Yes, my good hard-working friend, it is going to be a difficult day in many ways, for us all. But it won't only be hard work. We'll get to see areas of the mountain that we haven't been to in a while, and you'll get to sip water from the mountain stream.

“Perhaps you will see some friends too as we go along. I'll take a supply of your favourite grains to give you for special treats.

“Here, have a bite to eat now, and let it show you that we really appreciate you.”

After that well-meaning chat, Pablo continued getting the last things ready. At last he and his oldest son Guillermo, were heading down the windy mountain trail, while Mama Esperanza, Antonio and Anita were waving and wishing them a safe journey.

Mama Esperanza and her children went to the back yard to check on and care for the rest of the animals.

There was a mama llama sitting under the tree, with her little one by her side. Some chickens were clucking around the garden patch.

The dog who was ever on watch, was barking and wagging his tail as he dug about in the back yard, hoping to find some hidden and forgotten bone to chew on.

Mama Esperanza and the children made sure all the animals were fed and had fresh water to drink.

Mama then got to work on creating yarn out of llama hair she'd saved up, along with some wool they'd gotten from the village months before.

First she had to wash and clean it, then brush it this way and that, until it was ready to be twisted and twisted and shaped into long strands. These strands could be rolled up into balls of yarn.

This could be used to knit into socks and sweaters and hats. Some could be woven into cloth. Some that was woven into cloth could then have patterns sewn on it with other coloured yarn that had been made.

This was work that took a long time, but with a family to keep warm in the coming months, she had to work on it.

Sometimes Antonio and even Anita helped their mother with making clothes. She showed them the skills they would need to have if they were to care for some of their own clothing needs one day.

Mama Esperanza was glad for her hardworking and strong llamas. These animals designed to be a help were really depended on.

They lived out in nature, and away from the hubbub of a city; living instead where some supplies and other forms of transportation weren't as available.

Five days later Antonio was having his llama riding lesson with Mama Esperanza, and the llama was learning to be patient, tolerant and obedient.

Antonio looked over to where the trail led down the mountain, and imagined that one day he might ride down there. Unexpectedly, as he looked over, he spotted a welcome sight in the distance.

“Papa! Papa’s home! Papa and Guillermo! ... And someone else I see. Mama, someone else is on another llama,” Antonio exclaimed.

Mama looked over and sure enough it was as he described. Mama helped Antonio to get off the llama, and let him run to greet his father.

She and Anita would set out something for everyone to eat. They were most likely hungry and cold and tired.

“Come in!” Mama Esperanza, holding Anita, greeted the team.

“Come, we have some bread and beans, along with fresh garden vegetables, and a warm drink. When you are comfortable you can tell us all about your trip.”

Mama Esperanza greeted Emily, her youngest sister, who was now an adult and came to spend the cold winter months with this family. This was the woman who had been riding another llama.

She knew how to care for animals, how make yarn and clothing, how to prepare food, as well as how to teach children.

She would be a great help. Mama Esperanza was very grateful to have her company.

That night Mama Esperanza spent a long time talking and chatting with her husband, Papa Pablo, and older son Guillermo; while Aunty Emily told the younger children stories.

She told them all about the journey, and about llamas—what they like, what they don't like, and interesting things about them.

Anita fell asleep in her Aunty's arms, while Antonio drifted off to sleep on his little bed, dreaming of the long journey on a llama that he hoped to take one day.

Meanwhile, in the stable, the mama and papa and baby llama were glad to be together again. If you could have understood them speaking, you might have heard the stories.

Llevo llama might have wanted to say,

“At first I didn't want to leave you behind. I wished we

could have gone together. But even our master had to leave his own wife and young children behind as well. What must be done, must be done.

“However, when I saw the steep trails, and even some that my steady feet slipped on a bit, I was glad then to know that you and our little one were safe here and getting well cared for.”

If he could have said that, perhaps Mama Llama would have replied,

“I was able to have a riding lesson with the boy. Perhaps when he is a bit older, yet still young enough to need a ride on one of us while on longer journeys, we’ll be able to go out together.

“Papa Pablo might wish to take both his sons on a journey sometime, and then we can travel together.”

If the little one had heard this and could speak, there’s a good chance the young growing llama would have wished to go on such a trip as well. He probably would have thought of a reason to do so, like,

“And I could carry the littlest one on my back, or maybe a few snacks for the children!”

However, since llamas are llamas, instead of a long, verbal conversation, these dependable animals just curled up nice and snug and rested.

I think Llevo and Mama Llama were glad to be needed, and glad to be cared for. To be needed meant they had to do what was best for others; and do as they were told to do.

And each member of the family was needed, and depended on, as well. The children were needed by their parents, too, and there was lots they could learn. One day they might be in charge of a farm that grew food and raised some animals.

The only way they would be prepared for it is if they learned now all that they could, and were a help to their family, listened to and obeyed their parents and older loved ones, and did their best to make things easy for others. — Just like their faithful llamas each helped in the ways they could.



Little Bear and Mama Bear

Little Bear woke up in his cave for awhile. There was Mama asleep soundly, for it was the time of year that she needed to sleep oh so much!

It was much too cold for Little Bear and his Brother Bear to venture outside. He was too young to be off on his own, anyway. He needed to stay close by Mama.

When he was hungry and thirsty, he drank milk, nice warm milk that his mother's body made. He could curl up with brother for feeding time, and then go to sleep as well.

They would dream of the day when they could go exploring far beyond the cave.

But there is a time for everything, and when everything is done at the right time, things seem to work out best.

Just like there are season in the year—some places have dry and wet seasons; some places have warm and cooler seasons; some places have hot and hotter seasons; some places have cold and then colder seasons.

Each place in the world has its seasons and a change in the climate at different times in the year. This helps the people, the animals, birds and bugs, and even the plants and trees know what they are to do.

Little Bear and Brother Bear didn't know this yet, but outside of this little cave there were some trees around that were doing just what they were doing—resting.

The trees had grown leaves for most of the year, and grown taller and wider too. And now when it was best, they rested.

First the leaves fell as some of the sap for the trees' growth and survival retreated down further into the ground. The tree didn't need to produce leaves or seeds or fruit at that time.

“There is a time for rest, and a time to be doing things,” Mama Bear told her cubs when she woke for a short while, before going back to sleep again.

One day, Little Bear heard some lovely sounds coming from outside, and just then Mama Bear seemed more wakeful. The sounds were from the birds singing.

Birds seemed to be announcing and celebrating the changing of the seasons. Now there was new growth and activity out in the nature around their cave.

Before too long, when Mama Bear knew it was the right time, said to her two little furry cubs,

“Are you ready to go out? There’s lots to be done—and I am sure hungry!”

“We are too!” chorused the two lively cubs. They were eager for exercise, and eager to try some new food.

Soon they were bounding over fallen branches, and sniffing here and there for snacks.

Mama Bear found an old fallen down tree that, thankfully, seemed full of edible treats in the form of bugs.

She taught her little ones to nibble what was good, and where to find other foods they needed for their nourishment.

Mama Bear led her cubs to the cold stream that was being filled with melted snow. It was wider now than it would be in the summer, later on.

“Mama, we want to go off and explore, but you don’t have to come with us,” the little cubs said.

However, Mama Bear knew better. Just because young bears wish to go and do this and that, it didn’t mean they had all the skills necessary to do it safely, nor would it be the best for them.

There was a time for exploring—like they had been doing with their mother, and there was a time to learn and be taught things.

Mama Bear knew there was much for her cubs to learn before they would be ready to go out and around on their own.

“Come, I’ll show you the rapids upstream a bit. We’ll go together. It’s better and safer that way.

“You might learn things on your own, but unless you are right beside me you won’t learn all the things that I need to teach you.

“See, I’ve lived a long life, and learned many things. If you stick close to me in these growing years, you will learn so much, and learn it much faster than if you had to start at the beginning and try to find out how to do everything on your own,” Mama Bear explained.

“That’s what parents are for,” she said. “They can keep you safe, and also help you learn how to care for yourself and others, if you listen and look and learn.”

“There will be a time when you do need to go on your own, and you will be very glad that you waited for the right time, and patiently learned at learning time what you needed.”

Mama Bear then showed her cubs some water tricks, how to walk on the rocks and not get too troubled or distracted by the sounds and splashes of the rushing water.

They needed to not worry about getting their fine brown coat wet if they wanted to be able to catch fish sometimes. There was a time for everything.

“I think I saw a bear and her two cubs at the rapids this afternoon,” said the woodsman, who had moved back here for the spring and summer.

He was at the table with a few other lumberjacks, eating some warm stew after a long, hard day’s work.

“Yeah, we should keep a watch out at this time of year...” another man commented.

“I don’t mind being here,” the woodsman continued, “Though there are some things that are difficult.

“There are wild animals that we need to stay safe from. And of course the work is very hard. It’s the season of hard work.”

“Well, there is a time for everything, isn’t there?” another man interjected. “If we work when it is work time, then during the long cold winter we’ll have what we need.”

“We’ll have support, from the payment we received, as well as wood to keep the home fires burning, through those long cold nights.”

“Yes,” the woodsman acknowledged.

“If I only did what I felt like doing at the time, each day, there would come a time when I couldn’t do what I needed to do later on. I’d suffer for my lack of perseverance through the hard jobs.”

The men missed being with their families and around their other friends, but they knew that those back in their household were depending on them.

Later, they would have many long months of cold and snow, to sit by a fire, chat with loved ones, and sleep extra—because it would be too cold and dark to do much outdoor work.

However, now was the season of working in the woods, though they felt somewhat lonely at times. Some work can only be done at a certain time, and in a certain place, and you can’t always have everything you want or need all at the same time.

Something that helped the woodsman during this time was writing his thoughts in a diary, or writing letters to his loved ones, that he would bring to them later on.

He took time to jot down his thoughts in his book after reflecting on what they were discussing, and when remembering the bears he saw that day.

He wrote:

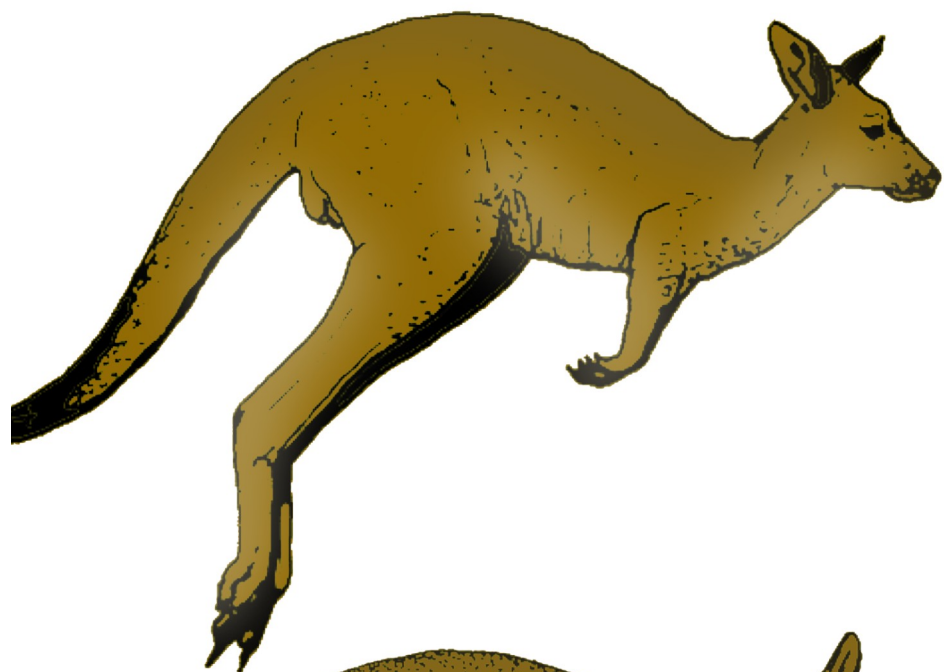
**Just like the mama bear needed to stick with her job of keeping her little ones in the cave until the time was right to go out; and just like the bear cubs now need to stick to their job of learning with mother until they are old enough to learn things on their own; so do men and women need to stick with their jobs, until they finish their tasks.*

**Seasons and the change in the nature around help to prompt us, like a signal, telling us it is time to change and to prepare for what is next ahead. If we fail to notice the signs and are too busy doing this or that thing that we wish to do, we'll have a long time regretting it, later on.*

**The sun does what it needs to do, hour by hour; the plants do what they need to do, day by day; the animals do what they need to do, week by week; the trees do what they need to do month by month; and us humans must do what we need to do, year by year, doing all the things in the year that we must, so we can be ready for the next year when it greets us!*

With those thoughts penned, he and the others curled up in their sleeping bags for the night. They'd need a good night's rest.

Tomorrow was another day of good hard work—work they would be glad they did, while they still had the time and strength to do it. The work needed to be done before the seasons changed, and it was time for doing other things.



Little Joey Likes to Learn and Jump

“Grab! Reach and grab! And again! I know I can climb up to the top of this furry wall!”

Little Joey, the baby kangaroo—so small you might not have even seen him as he struggled with all this might. He was hardly bigger than a bean, and had just been born.

If Joey was to survive at all, he must make this heroic climb and reach the place of warmth and safety, and most of all food to drink.

“There, at last! Now down into the pouch I go! Ah! I’ve made it.”

Joey had earned himself a long and wonderful sleep, while drinking his mother’s milk whenever he needed it. He wouldn’t have to climb out for some time, but could now just take the time to grow.

How this little joey knew, when freshly born and with a brain of a very tiny size, where it was meant to go and how it was meant to get there, is a fascinating mystery of the animal kingdom. There are some secrets that haven’t been fully discovered.

With the baby kangaroo now safely tucked away, off and away mother kangaroo hopped. Her large feet and even larger tail aided her to make the grand leaps that she and those of her kind are famous for.

Months passed and Little Joey, now much bigger, could peek out and over the edge of his mother's pouch. Quite a view he got of the world around.

It was in here that he got used to the idea of jumping, and he hoped for the day that he would be old enough to take large leaps as well.

One day mother kangaroo was nibbling on some grass near a picnic site when she saw something curious.

“Why, look at that! They must like our Creator's invention—a baby-carrying pouch.”

Walking not too far away was a human mother with a baby in a carrying pouch that was strapped on. The mother was patting her baby, as he was curled up snug and warm, being held securely to his mother. It felt good to be so close.

It was a big change for the human baby to be now on the outside, when it was so close and wet and warm while inside of mother, surrounded by soft walls.

But when the human baby was born, then could they feel cold and heat, and heard sounds much louder than before. The baby had to learn to breathe and swallow—learning to do both, yet only to be doing one at a time.

The unborn baby had grown accustomed to hearing the sound of his mother's heart beating, during all those long months of growing and waiting.

When he was now held close on her chest, that familiar “pom-pom” sound could be heard a little; the sound of her heart still beating in almost musical rhythm.

The baby-carrier and blankets, along with mother’s arms around him, helped him to feel almost as snug as he used to.

It was nice that now, while outside in the world around him, he could hear the voice of his mother and father much more clearly. This too was something he had gotten accustomed to hearing while yet unborn.

The sound of their voices were dear to him, and very familiar. So when mother talked lovingly and soothingly, the little baby felt at peace.

It was the voice of his mother, and he knew it. No one else on the earth had a voice just the same.

It was the voice of the one that had housed him all those months, and the one he wanted to be around, for he knew that the person with that voice was the special one who cared for him and loved him dearly. And someone he loved, too.

One day, while mother was feeding on grass, Little Joey discovered that he was now big enough to reach his little face out and nibble a piece of grass as well.

Mother had reached far enough over, and Joey's face was met with something he was now able to eat.

He was big enough, actually, to climb out and hop around a bit too, but he wouldn't stay out for long. He liked his safe happy nook, and that way he would always be where his mother was.

He knew he needed to stay real close, until he was too big to fit inside this pouch and could jump fast with his strong legs.

When the sun was starting to go down each day, and the heat of the sun passed, and there weren't as many people around, that is when mother would venture out to more exposed areas of grass to feed along with the other kangaroos.

One thing they had to watch out for was cars! What used to be grassland, was now striped through with a wide black surface—a road.

The time of day when the kangaroos liked to feed, was also the time when it was hard for drivers to see animals crossing the road, as it was getting darker.

The kangaroos had a meeting about it, joined by their growing young ones.

"If I try to cross over there, where the feed is good, there's a risk, a sorry risk, that I won't make it back—due to getting hit by a car," said one kangaroo to the others.

“Well, there is only one thing to do—well two, really. Stay here, and don’t venture over, or watch the speed that these vehicles have and try to be faster than they are, to make it over before they get you,” one wise, kangaroo, who obviously had lived a long time, said to the others.

With the those younger than him listening, he continued to offer his advice:

“With the way this land is today, with so many others trying to occupy and operate in the same piece of land, you really can’t make sudden moves.”

“You can’t jump to conclusions?” said a witty, bright youngster.

“You’re starting to get the idea,” he added. “Yes, you can’t assume something is right or good and make a fast decision. When you have made your decisions, then you sometimes do need to move very quickly, or there will be trouble if you don’t.

“But weigh out the pros and the cons before leaping to get something new and tasty to fill your belly.”

“You mean, look before you leap?” said Joey, who was taking this class on road safety very seriously. He would need to be wise if he was going to survive.

“Exactly!” Replied the wise kangaroo.

“Look, ponder, and consider if it is worth the risk, and worth your time to do something. Will there be draw backs to doing it?

“Will you regret going to get something you feel you really want? Will getting what you want take away from you something you’d much rather—like your ability to hop around alive and free?”

Joey did want to be able to keep hopping around free and well, for a very long time. He wanted to keep on growing until his feet were just as big as Papa’s, and could take leaps as big as him.

So Joey decided to start practicing now! Even though he wasn’t going to cross the road, still there were some choices he could make right where he was.

Joey could learn to stop and think and decide what was the best thing to do, and not make a sudden move to do something just because he felt like it.

When he got a thought,

“Oh, I wonder what is over there, and what that grass tastes like?” he could stop himself, and think these three things:

*Is it safe?

*Do I even need it, or do I already have what I need right here?

*Does my mother think it's good?"

After he would decide that something was safe, and a need, and good to do, then he would hop over and do or eat what he had wished to.

This wise way of acting came in handy one time especially, and he was glad he was doing his best to be watchful.

He had gotten a sudden interest in hoping a bit further away, but because there was no real need to, and the food was plentifully where he was, he thought about the other two things:

Is it safe? Does my mother think it's good?

Well, going too far from mother, while he was still young and growing, wasn't usually a good idea. He looked up to ask his mother about it, just in case she thought it was fine this time.

He was glad he checked.

Since she was taller and could see further she noticed something slithering in the grass behind a rock that was obstructing little Joey's view from the danger. A venomous snake was just where Joey had thought to leap over to.

It was good he checked first, and was saved from the danger.

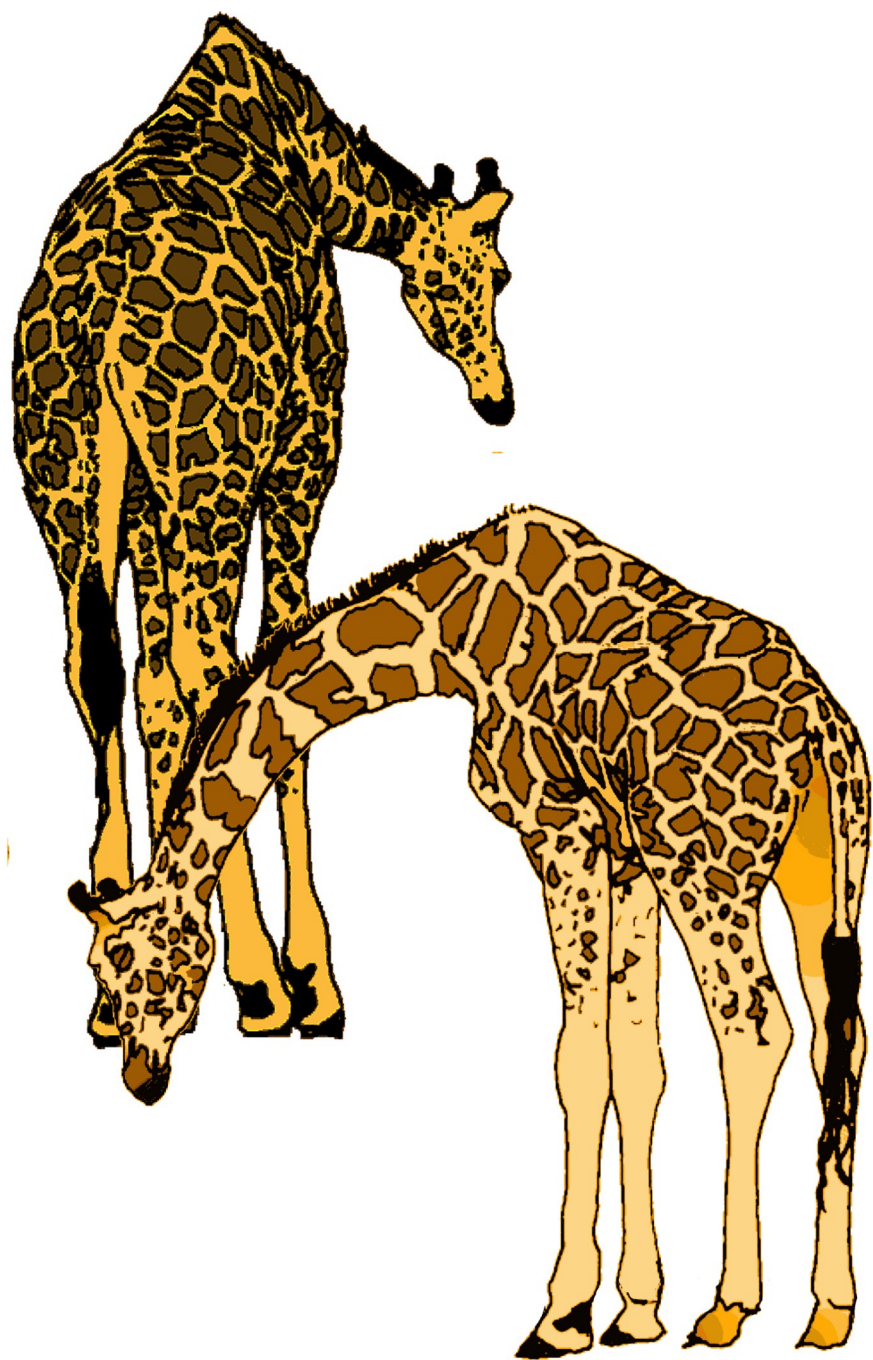
If he had suddenly landed on it, it might have quickly bit him, not knowing what was going on, and in an attempt to get this creature off of him. Joey would have been very sorry for such to have happened, as would his mother have been.

Mother smiled to see that her young one was growing bigger in body, and was able feed himself better, and get around.

She was glad to see that he was also growing in wisdom and knowledge, too. Joey was being watchful, careful.

He learned that finding out helpful information from those who might know things he didn't, is part of growing up smart.

Joey was learning that it was best to not react and do things because of feelings only, or to only make decisions because of desires. Instead, to pause to make sure it really was best, and right, and good.



The Elephant and the Giraffe

—Part 1—

Malga and Oubo were running and playing chase together, as the sun was setting in the grasslands.

They had helped their father for some time to make bricks to add a new room to their house. Now they were having play time.

“Be careful for the snakes in the long grass!” their mother called out as she kept stirring the pot of maize and beans.

This family had moved to this part of Africa in order to learn more about the land of their forefathers. They thought if they left the city life behind for awhile that would help them find civil order and get back to their roots.

Speaking of roots, Savannah, the oldest sister, with her baby strapped on her back finishing her work out in the field they had all cultivated.

The men of the team were out working a new patch of land for growing a good crop of vegetables.

When supper time came, the simple food was served, though it had taken a long time to make it.

Pounding the grains took time and strength, cooking took time also—not to speak of all the work that someone had put into growing that food, transporting and selling it.

They had brought plenty with them to last them for a long while, as long as they ate a moderate amount.

They had to find ways to keep the foods safe from creatures—tiny or big—that might help themselves to it. They had to keep it preserved from weather conditions also, so it would last well.

Under the stars, around their campfire, the simple family chatted about their successes. Life indeed was harder in some ways, but for now it was the best they could do. They enjoyed the quiet.

The fresh air, and the working together as a family team, were good. Things weren't easy. No matter where they lived there would be great challenges.

Each family has to choose what type of challenge they want. Sometimes there is a choice, or sometimes you are served something in life and just have to make the best of it, without having much choice in it.

As the evening fire that this family sat around was fading, Malga asked her dad, “Why is the neck of the giraffe so long?” She had seen a few in the distance that day, and was pretty excited about it.

“Well, if your dinner bowl was set up in that tree over there, and you didn’t have a ladder to climb, don’t you think you would like to have very long legs, and an extra long neck so you could reach it?” Daddy asked.

The children giggled.

It was part of the design. If an animal was created to eat and digest a certain type of food, it also needed to have the way to access or get that food.

Father explained to his attentive children:

“See we have specially made hands and arms, and legs too, that make us able to work hard to grow food, and then to be able to prepare it for eating, and store it for later.

“We are equipped in ways that help us get the food that our bodies need. Giraffes need the nutrients of plants, and in this place it’s up in the trees that some great green food is growing.

It’s like a puzzle piece,” their father continued teaching. “Just like the pattern on the long neck of the giraffe looks

almost like a puzzle all fitting together, so does the plan fit together for keeping this type of creature surviving and thriving for thousands of years.

“Its fast and strong legs can run away from danger if need be, or they can spread out wide to help the giraffe keep its balance as it reaches down to take a drink of water.

“The long neck can help it reach green foods that grow way up high, even when the grass and plants below are turning dry from lack of rain at times.”

Oubo was imagining how useful it would be to have a pet giraffe that was trained to pick fruit for them from the tops of high trees—or to let him climb up its neck to go and pick them himself.

Mother added,

“I saw giraffes dancing one time, it was the most graceful dance I ever saw! They can gracefully use their necks to move, as if some relaxing music was playing and they were swaying this way and that way, undulating and moving, together with another giraffe.

“You can almost hear music when seeing them dance with their necks, nearly wrapping them around each other.”

Malga and Oubo got up and stretched up one of their arms, pretending it was a long neck on a giraffe.

They moved them about gracefully as they walked around and wrapped their arms around a bit, then went off to use their hands as their pretend giraffe's mouth, to find some leaves to eat.

"I think these young giraffe calves have had a long day—about as long as a giraffe's neck! I think it's time for them to rest their long legs and long neck and go to sleep," Mother said.

After she helped to tuck them into bed and said good night then Savannah, their older sister, came to tell them a story. Savannah snuggled and nursed her little baby to sleep, while telling stories to her younger brother and sister.

"Would you like to hear the story about the wide and short giraffe, and the tall, thin elephant?" she asked.

It sounded funny already, and so they drifted off to sleep, half listening, and half dreaming about the story she told.

"Of course this is not a true story—but it has something we can learn from it," Savannah began.

“It was the time of year when new calves were born. In some places there were cattle calves just beginning their young life. In the ocean there were dolphin and whale calves, learning to swim and find food, and staying real close to their parents.

“But around here there were some new giraffe calves, as well as some elephant calves starting to run and learn about how to be such creatures.

They stayed close to their mother, and were given lots of nice milk to drink. When they were old enough, they were taught how to drink water on their own. It was a difficult task for each of them, but they would soon get the hang of it.

The giraffe calf had to learn how to stay balanced while reaching his very long neck all the way down to the water at the edge of the water hole.

The elephant needed to learn how to use his nose like a straw to suck up the water, hold it in there, and then bend his nose straw to reach his mouth, and pour it in.

They had daily lessons on this, and soon they were able to do the job well. They were learning and it was another good step to being able to care for themselves one day.

The next lesson was in how to eat leaves and plants. The giraffe had to reach up and learn to use his very long tongue to manoeuvre plants into his mouth, using no hands at all—unlike the hands we get to use.

The elephant had a neat tool at the end of his long nose. It was like a pair of lips that could pick things up, but without a long tongue that could be extended, like the giraffe had.

The elephant's trunk was strong too. If there was some fruit on a tree that was too high up, he could wrap his trunk around the tree and shake it, or push against it to make some ripe loose fruit fall.

So one day when at the waterhole they were examining the different qualities they each had or each didn't have.

As the giraffe calf and the elephant calf chatted it seemed they each wished to have what the other one had.

Each of these creatures could do different things to get their food and water, and these two animals seemed in many ways to be opposites.

One was slim and tall, the other was strong and shorter. One had to go down to drink water, the other had to bring the water up. One was patterned with colour, the other was plain grey.

There were many differences that the giraffe calf and elephant calf noticed each time they saw one another.

“I wish I was beautiful and graceful like you are, giraffe,” said the elephant calf.

“Oh, but you are so strong, even the lions are afraid to trouble you. You can do so many things that I can’t,” the giraffe responded.

“Do you wish you were an elephant?” elephant asked his friend.

“No, not really. I like my family, but I wish I was just a bit different and had all the great things that you do,” Giraffe said.

He was imaging himself very fat and wide, with ears that were extra big, and of course with a trunk that could wave.

Giraffe also he wanted to have shorter legs, so he wouldn’t have to reach down so low to get water on the ground level.

However, giraffe didn’t realise what trouble that would be for him, if his wish came true.

Elephant thought too,

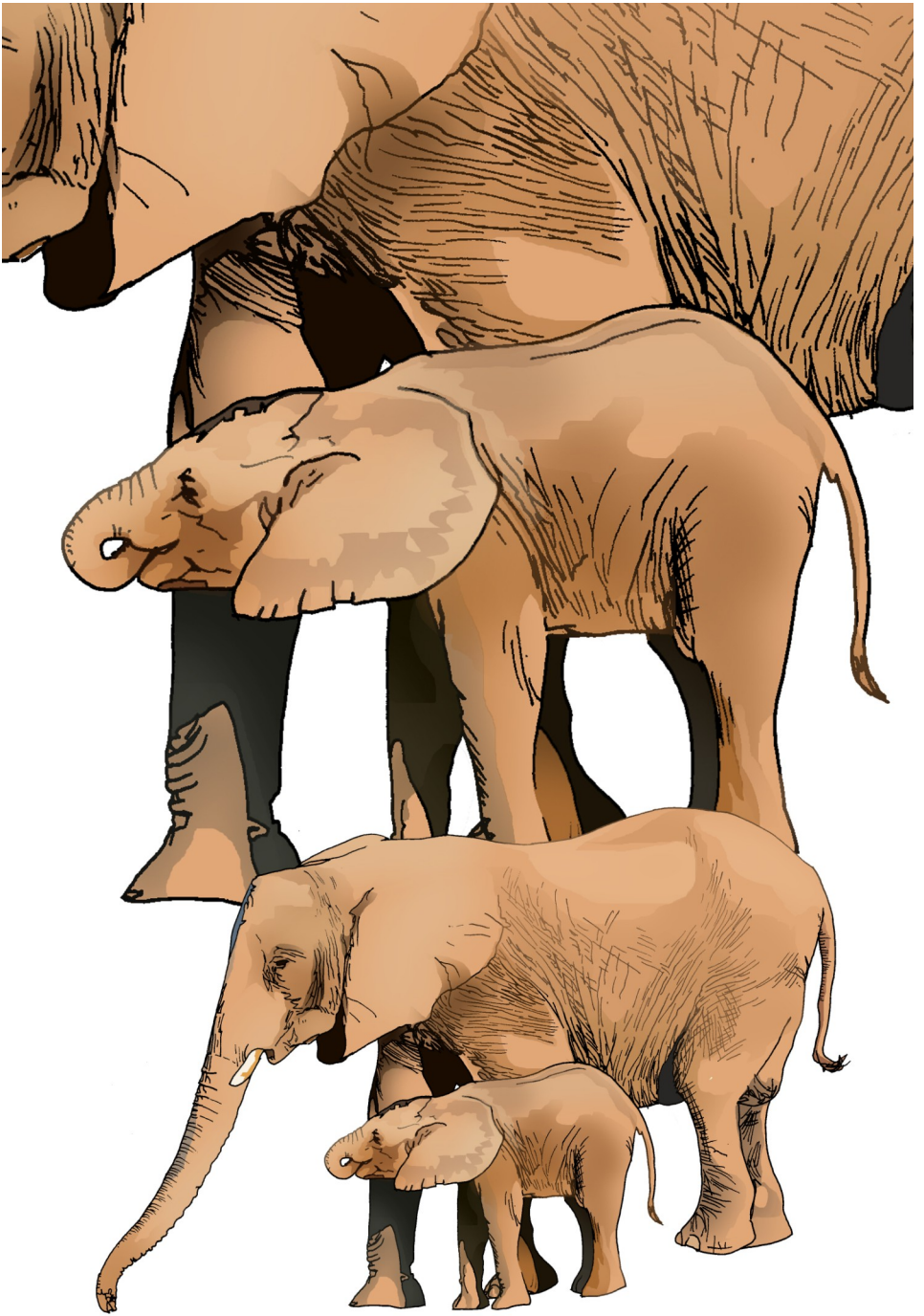
“Maybe if I had a long and tall legs, and thinner ones then I could walk without thudding along. I think it would be nicer.

I would be tall enough to then reach up high into the trees, that would be great.”

Savannah then said, looking at the sleepy children, and her own sleeping baby,

“Stories with Savannah will continue tomorrow night. I’ll tell you ‘Part Two’ of:

“The Short Giraffe and the Tall Elephant.”



The Elephant and the Giraffe

—Part 2—

Malga and Oubo, and their sister Savannah and her husband, along with their parents, again settled in the calm evening for a meal. They had all spent another day of working on their fields and crops, and helping to build the next part of their house.

This night however, the younger children were eager to get to bed, for when they did they would get to hear the rest of the story that was started the night before.

So, Savannah the Story Teller (or so she was called tonight) began telling the rest of the promised story of, “The Short Giraffe and the Tall Elephant.”

“When the elephant calf and the giraffe calf saw one another again at the waterhole, they continued noticing the differences between them.

“For example, one had large ears, the other had small ones. One would get long white tusks at the bottom of his face, the other would grow short dark ossicones on the top of his head.

“One had long thin legs that could gracefully walk and run, or tip toe through the bush, it seemed; and the other had wide and heavy legs and feet that made the ground rumble when it stomped and ran with the herd.

“That night as these two young creatures went to bed, a dream came to them—something that taught them that not all wishes will make us happy if we get them.

“It showed them that each of us are made just right. To be happy with the way we are and with what we have, is to be content.

“In his dreams there was one thing that the giraffe couldn’t do—well, nearly everything really, because he simply couldn’t stand up. His head, in his dream, had the grand addition of a long and heavy trunk, and he had huge ears placed up high on his head that topped his long neck. His legs were much shorter also. In this condition things just didn’t work for him.

“So giraffe, feeling thirsty and tired of trying to stand up, with a headache now also, just moaned and looked over at the beautiful giraffes. They looked perfect and could move about so gracefully and swiftly with light feet. That is just what he wanted to be like. —The real him, all the way.

“Elephant was having just the same problem. Though he could stand up for some time, his heavy head and body just couldn’t keep up when on those stilt-like, thin and long delicate legs. He felt tired and exhausted real soon.

“When he tried to get a drink, he experienced a nose dive for sure, and into the water he plunked. Oh how his legs ached trying to hold up the weight of his very heavy form.

“So for most of the day he just lay there on the ground. He saw a herd of elephants running along. He would have liked to join them, but he couldn’t even stay upright. —And certainly couldn’t run!

“When giraffe and elephant woke the next morning they were thrilled to see that they were just the way they were meant to be!

“With glad vigour they appreciated every moment of the day, doing the things that they were made to do. No longer did they wish to be just a bit like another creature. The features each of their bodies had just right for them.”

When the children were sleeping, Savannah crept out of the room to place her baby in her bed and sleep now with her husband. He was tired from his long day of working also.

However, they were glad that tiredness was the only challenge. They could see, and hear, speak and move. They had food to eat and water to drink, and a place to sleep.

There were some things she missed, or some things that others could do, and not her. But in telling this little story to her younger brother and sister, it had helped her to accept some things about her own life that might be different than others.

Savannah decided that she too wanted to be content with what she had, knowing that others might be looking at her life and all she enjoyed, wishing they could have it too.

She wanted to wake with smiles the next day and be ready to do the best she could with the little they had, and be glad for it all!

The next night the children had some something exciting to talk about. It had been a day when they saw some elephants in the wild when they travelled on foot for many hours, in search of certain fruits and roots.

When it was time for sleep, they asked their sister Savannah for a special story, all about a young elephant.

Malga and Oubo washed their faces, hands and feet, said their prayers, and settled down to listen. They were curious as to what tonight's story would tell.

Sister Savannah the Story Teller began, and dreamily the children visualised it as they drifted into a deep sleep.

“Mama I can almost run as fast as you!” said the little elephant calf who was now a year old.

“You are doing very well, dear. You are growing fast—and going fast,” mother elephant said to her elephant calf.

“Come now, darling, it’s time to hold on to me, as I lead you this way,” she told her young one to hold to her tail for a while.

“We are going into new and unexplored areas. Our herd is travelling, and I don’t want you to get lost. But just remember that Mama and Papa are very strong, and if any troubling beasts come around, we’ll protect you. But that is only if you stay very close and do just as we tell you.”

“Okay, Mama,” replied the elephant calf.

Papa elephant came over to see how they were doing. Using their trunks they greeted one another in a friendly kiss.

Trunks were useful for doing so many things. They could be tough and pick up huge and heavy logs, or they could gently place a kiss on a elephant loved one.

The herd had spend some time at the waterhole, eating and bathing, showering, and splashing, and resting. Now it was time to go.

“Everyone ready?” the leader blew his trumpet trunk, and off they went. Sometimes they walked in a line, holding on to each other’s tails, other times they ran faster as a herd, to cover more ground or if they thought there was trouble.

That night they settled in a bushy area. “Mama, thank you for taking care of me today,” the little calf said before drifting off to sleep.

“You’re welcome, darling, she responded.”

Just then, one strange sound seemed to follow after another—or so it seemed to Little elephant. This was a new place, with new smells, new sights, and new sounds. Little elephant was woken up time and again, somewhat worried.

“It’s okay, darling, we’re safe. Why don’t you try to sing a song? Have you tried out some new sounds with your trumpet yet?”

Little elephant didn’t think he came equipped with a mobile, ready to use, musical instrument that he just needed to learn to play. But there it was, ready for use.

“Sometimes a bit of music might help you when you are having trouble sleeping—the right kind that is,” mother said.

“Just like to make a good sound with your trunk you have to hold it up and not drag it in to the ground, so is it true that the right kind of music helps to pick up your mood and gets you looking up at the neat things to look forward to.

“The wrong kind of music will get you feeling low and sad, or afraid too.”

So the little elephant stood up for a moment and lifted up his trunk up to the sky and blew out a musical sound, with all of his might.

It might not have sounded like his daddy, but it was a very good try.

“That’s nice Darling,” Mama said. “And every day you can practice using your musical instrument, and lift it high up to make the right kinds of sounds.”

It felt good to be able to learn something new, and making musical sound like that seemed to remove some of his worries.

Perhaps if one day he really needed help, he could just blow out the sound, and someone would hear. Maybe if one day he was feeling a bit down, playing song on his elephant trumpet would perk up his mood and make others glad as well.

Or perhaps if it was a special day and he was feeling particularly happy, he could express it with a joyful sound.

Maybe one day when he had a family of his own, he could use it to lead his family in the right direction. He would teach them all the importance of reaching up high first, then the right and good sounds could be made.

Somehow, making a bit of music when he was feeling uneasy, got his focus on something else. Soon he and the others were sleeping well, and would be ready for travel the next day.

They story ended, and Savannah quietly left the room to tuck into her own bed, with her baby and husband. As she lay down to sleep, a new idea began coming to her.

“Maybe I should teach the children some songs. Maybe I could make up some story songs—stories that tell of important things for the children to learn and remember.

“We can sing and review them often, and maybe one day they can then teach these songs to their children.”

This thought came to Savannah, as she mused on the story she had just told—where music of the right kind could make you feel better, remove worries, and make you and others happier. And it can be used to teach others and lead them.

She didn’t really plan the stories long in advance, but casually told them as thoughts came to her mind. So this part in the story about music was a new idea to her too.

“Yes,” she determined, “Musical stories would be a wonderful addition to our nightly bed-time story. I think the children would learn well this way.

She was starting to get many ideas of all the things she could teach her young brothers and sisters, and would start, perhaps the next day.

Life wasn’t just about eating and working, but about being together as well, and helping younger ones to discover secrets to living joyfully.



St. Bernard's Search in Snow

Heinz was taking his son Helms on a special, long skiing trip in the alps. They had prepared for this for many months. Fit and dressed well, they set off on their much anticipated expedition.

Heinz looked at the weather and wondered how they would fare. But with everything else ready, they took the step to set off for the white and cold trip.

The mountain air was invigorating and ever so cold. But these mountaineers were strong, and had been on skis just about as long as they knew how to walk.

It came easy for them to manoeuvre themselves on the silky and smooth snow—unless some sudden dip on the pass caused them to speed up too much.

If they went faster than they could control themselves, it would plunge them where they didn't want to land.

With a warm drink in their thermoses, and stout hearts, this team was determined to make the best of their trip. They liked to stay fit and skilled, and wished to one day be able to rescue others who got into trouble in this area.

Snow, deep snow, constant falling snow, could make a formidable challenge for just about anyone who was not prepared and well protected from the cold. —And speed!

The speed one could accidentally begin to go when happening into certain steep passes, would take many by surprise.

This father and son team wished to learn the art of mountain rescue, in even the coldest and darkest winter months.

The first few hours of their trip on this day caused them to work up quite a sweat skiing vigorously, as they swiftly moved up and down, and across the rugged and white terrain.

Heinz and Helms stopped for some time to rest and take in the beauty of the moment. They sipped their still-warm drinks, and took off their ski glasses for while to see everything in its proper colour and brilliance.

What a difference snow made on these mountains. Heinz remembered what it was like to hike around here, when there was ground and greenery to be seen.

They knew this mountain area well, no matter what colour the ground took on.

That was Heinz and his son's goal—to know every part of it well, and to have the physical strength and knowledge to tackle skilfully any rescue situation.

They had put much time into training, and being fit in every way.

Back at home they had another team they were training to be able to assist them as well:

A family of St. Bernard dogs.

The mother and puppies were healthy and growing strong. They were given the best food for their breed. Heinz would help to train the young pups just as he had their mother and father.

These types of dogs could also manage the cold and snowy weather, and seemed to enjoy the thrill of helping to find and rescue people stranded in the cold.

It was some weeks later, when Heinz was at home eating a light midday meal with his family, that he noticed the adult male of the St. Bernard family acting restless.

This dog begin to whimper and yap, and pace around—as if something was troubling him.

Sometimes these dogs seemed to know, even before the humans, when someone was in trouble.

Heinz learned to be sensitive to the cues of these caring canine creatures.

He turned on his radio to listen in for any local news of those who may have been reported as lost and in need of assistance.

“A team of two skiers went missing about 4:00 PM yesterday. A search party has been sent out since early this morning, but so far no signs of them ...”

The radio spoke out.

“What should we do, Dad?” Helms wondered if they were to take part in this rescue operation.

“The first thing we are going to do is pray for them,” his father replied.

“We know how the chances of survival are slim in these weather conditions—not to speak of the dangers of the cliffs, and falling and being injured.”

So the family paused to commit the situation to the one who could take care of it better than anyone, no matter how skilled and wise and well-trained they felt they were.

After this, something began moving—both in the heart of Heinz and his son, as well as in the minds of the two adult dogs.

“Let’s go take a spin around the parts of the mountain that we know well,” said Heinz to his son. “And if the dogs are keen to go along with us, they will be a great help.

Mother Helda helped to strap on to each of the dogs a small keg of drink that sometimes was used in these situations. If the dog found the lost person first, this could help them to hold on a bit longer until better help could come.

Mother Helda would look after the puppies, and give them warm milk to drink in a bowl, and do her part by praying both for those lost and for those looking.

Heinz summoned the help of his neighbours to come along on this search and rescue mission. Mrs. Gulda and her adult son were just as, if not more, adept in travel through the mountain here.

They too had heard of the lost personal, and were themselves wondering if they were to play a part in the rescue operation. They both agreed to go. Each team would take one of the dogs with them.

Before too long they set off from their mountain cabins, each in a different directions. They knew these places well, and were well equipped for the occasion.

Both St. Bernard dogs were keen to get going, and soon took off with a run, following the team they were helping.

After about an hour, with no success yet, the dogs seemed to have gone missing. Of course they weren't lost, as that was a clever skill they had—to find their way around.

Rather than being lost, these dogs had both found the missing personnel!

Together the two St. Bernard dogs had approached the very cold, and half-aware skiers. They licked some snow off

their faces, then barked as loudly as they could, and nudged the stranded ones to get up.

Realising that it wasn't a dream, the two very thankful skiers sat up and gratefully received the drinks that were made available to them on the collars of the dogs.

Mrs. Gulda and her son Gutten knew the dog was on to something when he had taken off with a run suddenly. They followed in the direction of the foot prints. It was not an easy place to ski. There were many boulders in the way and trees to wend between.

At last they had found the team—the dogs with the people they had found. They were very grateful to see that everyone was all right.

Meanwhile, Heinz and his son pulled out their monitoring device. It gave an indication as to where the dogs were, as their collars had a tracking device.

“I see they are both over to the right, in the forest area. Let's go. They might have found something.”

Helms had a look at the monitor, took a drink, and was ready to continue. It wasn't too long before they also arrived on the scene, to survey the needs.

“Good boy! Good girl!” Helms complimented the dogs and gave them pats, and a treat to eat that he'd carried in his backpack.

Mrs. Gulda had already radioed back to her home, where her husband could pick it up. He had been incapacitated for a few months, due to a skiing accident himself. But he could send and receive messages to his wife and son, and others.

Mr. Gulda had already passed on the good message to the rescue centre that was leading the search.

With the two lost skiers now gaining strength from the food these mountain dwellers brought, and the drinks the dogs had offered, slowly they got up and began to make their way out of there.

Each of the teams took one of them, supporting them on each side, as they made their way slowly along. After a while they felt well enough to get back on their skies.

Heinz and his son suggested a short cut they knew, a way to get back to their cabin a quicker way. The search had taken them around a long way.

So by and by, after only a bit more than an hour, these cold and weary ones were escorted to the cabins.

First they visited the cabin where Mother Helda was. The puppies were very glad to see their dog parents again. The people were glad to sit by the fire and warm up, with kindness and joy and a warm drink.

The skiers went to spend the rest of the day and the night in Mr. and Mrs. Gulda's cabin. They had a loft where visitors were welcome to stay.

When days were short and nights were long, it was best to have a place where people could stay, since travel home in the dark wouldn't be easy nor safe.

The next day their family members, staying in the village below, would come up to see them and bring them back.

As Helms sat by the fire awhile longer, in the quietness, surround by sleeping dogs. He was glad now for all the vigorous training that he and his father had taken the time for. It was for a time like now.

He would start tomorrow, in some simple way, to begin the training program for the this new batch of St. Bernard puppies, who were getting bigger and stronger every day.

"Perhaps I should learn more about these amazing dogs, that are clever at being a help to humans," Helms thought.

Helms picked a book off the shelf, and began to read about them. He was determined to be the best at the skill of being a mountain rescuer—along with the smart and skilful St. Bernard dogs.



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 helpers 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 a 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 an 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 mealtime 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 behave 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.