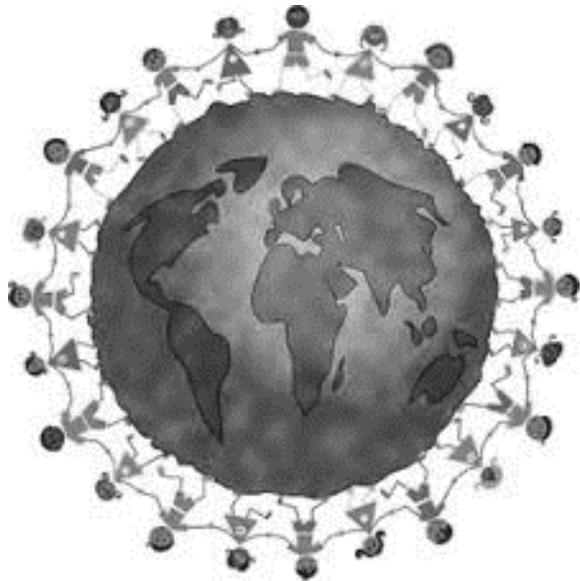


# Stories from around the World



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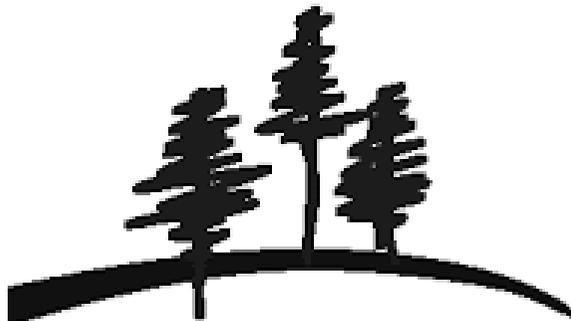


## The story of God's trees

*This is the re-told story by Helen Frazee-Bower, who was born in the USA in 1896.*

Far away on a hillside grew a forest of trees, little and big, old and young, tall and short. The trees were very happy with life just as it was on the hillside. They loved the warm sunlight of summer, the cool rain of spring, the beautiful colours of autumn and the blanket of glistening snow that fell in winter. We know that trees can't talk, but if they could, we can imagine that they sometimes spoke of the future, the things they would like to do and be when they grew up.

In this forest there was a mother tree and her three children.



One said, "You know, I would like to be a baby's cradle when I grow up. I have seen people come into this forest carrying babies in their arms."

The second tree spoke: "That would not please me at all. I want to be something important. I would like to be a great ship, beautiful and strong. I would like to cross many waters and carry cargo of gold."

The third little tree stood off by himself, thinking carefully. "And what would you like to be?" asked Mother Tree? Do you have any dreams for the future?"

"No," said the little tree. "I just want to stand on this hillside and point people to God."

"I could think of nothing better," said Mother Tree.

Years passed and the trees grew up to be beautiful tall trees. One day men came to the forest and cut down the first tree.

"I wonder if I will be made into a baby's cradle now," said the first tree. "I hope so. I have waited so long."



But the little tree was not made into a baby's cradle. Instead he was sawn up into pieces of wood that were put together to make an animal's feeding trough – a manger, in a stable, in the town of Bethlehem.

"I do not like this," he cried. "This is not what I had planned. I did not want to be put into a dark stable with no one to see me but animals!"

In the same country there were some shepherds in a field, keeping watch over their sheep at night. And suddenly an angel came to them, and a bright light shone all around them. The angel said, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news, that will bring joy to all people. Today, in Bethlehem, a baby has been born. He is Jesus Christ the Lord and He will save people from their sins. You will find the baby wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger." Then suddenly there was a whole host of angels, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth, peace to those who please Him."

After the angels had gone back to Heaven, the shepherd said to one another, "Let's go quickly now to Bethlehem, and see what the angel has told us about."



And when they arrived in Bethlehem, they found Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus, the Son of God, lying in a manger."

"Well," said the first little tree. This is better than anything I had planned!" And the trees on the hillside clapped their hands because their brother's dream had come true.

Months passed by, and men came to the forest to cut down the second tree.

“I wonder if I will be made into a great ship now,” he said. “I have waited so long. Perhaps I will do the great things of which I dreamed.”

But the second tree was not made into a great ship. Instead he was made into a tiny fishing boat, owned by a fisherman called Peter of Galilee. The little boat was very unhappy. His owner, Peter was not even a good fisherman. He had been out all night and had not caught a single fish.



The next day the fishing boat was anchored by the shore of Galilee while Peter cleaned his nets. Out from the crowd came a person called Jesus, who came and sat in the little boat and taught people about God. People listened eagerly to what He had to say. When He had finished, He told Peter to launch out into the deep and let down the nets again.

This time, there were so many fish that the nets broke. The little boat knew that he was carrying a wonderful person, who had made this miracle happen.

“This is wonderful,” he said. “This is better than anything I had planned!” And the trees on the hillside clapped their hands because their brother’s dream had come true.



Weeks went by, and men came to the forest to cut down the third little tree. This was the tree that wanted to stand on the hillside and point people to God. He was most unhappy as the axe cut into him. “I do not want to go into the valley,” he said. “Why couldn’t men leave me alone?”

But the men did not leave the little tree alone. They cut off his branches and cut into his bark. They sawed his wood into a large cross. He knew what this meant, because in his country, bad people were put to death by being hung on a cross.

“This is terrible,” he whispered. “They are going to hang someone on me and the person will die. Oh, I never wanted this to happen. I only wanted to point people to God.”

One day, outside Jerusalem, a great crowd gathered. There was Jesus, and beside Him was a cross. As they led him away, they forced him to carry the cross until He could carry it no longer. Then a man called Simon carried it for Him. And when they came to the place called Calvary, they nailed Jesus to the cross.

Jesus had done nothing wrong. He did not deserve this treatment, but He allowed His enemies to kill him, because He knew that it was part of His Father’s plan. Every one of us has done wrong. This stops us from being a friend of Father God, because God is perfect. But God made a way for us to become friends with Him. Because Jesus loves us so much, He died instead of us. He took the punishment that we deserve. To become a friend of God

we can ask Jesus to forgive us for the wrong we have done, and become a follower of Jesus.

If those trees could talk, they would say, “Thank you God, that even though we couldn’t see it at the time, your way turned out to be best.”



The tree that became the cross said, “This is wonderful. In all my dreams I never thought I would point people to God in this way. This is better than all I planned.”

When Jesus is in charge of your life, the things He shows you to do will always be best for you.



## Cave rescue

This is the true story of the rescue of thirteen members of a boys' soccer team, who were trapped in a flooded cave in Thailand.

On June 23rd 2018, twelve boys went exploring in Thailand's Chiang Rai province with their football coach. They all found themselves trapped deep inside a cave underneath a mountain.

What happened over those two weeks is a remarkable story of friendship, and human endurance, and shows the lengths some people will go to save someone else's life. Here's how it happened.

It all began with a birthday. On Saturday June 23rd, one of the members of the Wild Boars soccer team turned seventeen. His family had prepared a bright yellow birthday cake in football colours, and several colourfully wrapped presents, at their home in a rural village in Mae Sai district.

When their football practice ended, the boys raced through the rice paddies on their bicycles and up into the hills. They were heading for their favourite spot, the

Tham Luang caves. The boys loved exploring the nooks and crannies of the mountain range towering over Mae Sai.

When they reached the entrance of Tham Luang caves, they left their bikes and bags. The team and their coach had often ventured deep into Tham Luang, sometimes as far as 8 km. With excitement, they clambered into the cave with just their torches. They didn't need much else. After all, they were only planning to be there for an hour. However, this time, they would not come out again until two weeks later.

Back at the seventeen-year-olds home, his family began to worry. His birthday cake sat untouched. Where were the Wild Boars?

The caves were popular for exploring, but there were dangers. People had gone missing in Tham Luang before. And once monsoon season starts in July, the caves become extremely dangerous. When water fills the caves, you cannot see under the water because it so muddy. Once the caves flood, it's risky even for experienced divers.

Almost everyone in Mae Sai knows this. So when the parents of the Wild Boars began to worry about their missing boys, they headed straight to the caves. The boys' plans to visit Tham Luang had been discussed in a group chat on a messaging app with other friends. They found the bikes, the bags, and some football shoes outside. They raised the alarm.

Deep in the caves, the Wild Boars found themselves in trouble. It had been raining for the last few days, and all that water falling on the mountain had to go somewhere. That somewhere was the Tham Luang cave system, which was fast filling up. The boys needed to get out, but instead had no choice but to scramble even deeper into the caves.

The Wild Boars eventually found themselves marooned on a small rocky shelf about 4km from the entrance. Surrounded by darkness, the boys and the coach lost all sense of time. Fear, perhaps even terror, would no doubt have crept in. But they were determined to survive. The group used rocks to dig 5m deeper into the shelf, to create a cavern where they could huddle together and keep warm.

But an extraordinary set of circumstances also worked in their favour. They had no food, but they did have a supply of drinkable water in the form of moisture dripping from the cave walls. It was dark, but they had their torches. There was also enough air for a while, because the porous limestone and cracks in the rocks meant air could come through. They had the right conditions to survive, at least for a little while. And most importantly, the Wild Boars had one another.

Outside the cave entrance, a full-blown rescue operation was quickly unfolding. Authorities called in the Thai Navy Seals, the national police, and other rescue teams. Local volunteers also pitched in to help. Initial investigations found footprints at one of the chambers in the cave, but no other sign the boys were still alive. The Wild Boars were somewhere in the depths of the Tham Luang Caves, but where exactly? And more importantly, how could rescuers get to them?

Exploring the cave system was a challenge. Most of the Navy divers had little cave diving experience, and the heavy rain meant the water level was still rising, flooding chambers and cutting off rescuers from parts of the cave.

Engineers desperately tried to pump water out of the cave, but struggled, at least at first.

Rescuers brought whatever equipment they could think of: small water pumps, long pipes, knives and shovels, but much of it was unsuitable. They even tried drilling into the mountainside, desperate to find cracks into the cave system which they could squeeze into. They also used drones with thermal sensors to try to locate the boys.

While the rescue operations were going on, a small group stood at the mouth of the cave. These were the boys' families, praying for the lives of the boys. The group gradually expanded to include concerned teachers from the schools the Wild Boars attended. Classmates of the Wild Boars held group prayers, sang songs of encouragement into the cave, folded paper cranes, and posted messages of hope on school noticeboards. Village people donated money and hundreds of packages of food to the relatives of the boys and their coach. News of the boys quickly spread all around the world. People all around the world were praying for the boys.

The first international rescuers arrived on Thursday 28 June. These were US air force rescue specialists, and cave divers from the UK, Belgium, Australia, Scandinavia, and

many other countries. Some had volunteered, and some were called in by Thai authorities.

Over the next few days, they and the Thai divers would fight a constant battle with the forces of nature. They had to swim against a strong current, and were often forced back by rising floodwaters.

On Sunday July 1st, just over a week after the boys went missing, the rescuers made some progress. They reached a large cavern that would be later called "chamber three". This cavern would serve as a key base for the divers.

The very next day, two British divers, John and Rick, made an incredible discovery. As they continued onwards into the darkness, they found an air pocket. John shone his torch into the air pocket and there was one of the boys, coming down the ledge towards him.

Rick started counting the boys, while John asked: "How many of you?"

"Thirteen!" came the reply in English.

"Thirteen? Brilliant!"

Rick and John couldn't quite believe what they were seeing. "They're all alive!"

The lost Wild Boars had been found. The two divers spent some time with the boys, encouraging them. Then, they left lights with the boys, and promised to return later with food.

Rescuers set to work to figure out how to extract thirteen people, some of whom couldn't swim, from a winding, flooded 4km-long stretch of caves that even experienced divers would struggle with. Time was not on their side because of the heavy rains.

Food stalls were set up. Some were staffed by members of the Thai royal kitchen, serving free drinks, hot noodles, chicken and rice.

Former Navy Seal diver Saman Gunan was one of many volunteers who had rushed to help in the rescue. On July 6th, while on a routine run to deliver air tanks to the boys, he lost consciousness after running out of air for himself. His dive buddy pulled him out and tried to revive him, but sadly, he died.

The death showed the danger of the rescue mission, and the risks facing the boys. Saman was a fit and healthy diver who had also represented Thailand in triathlons in the Olympics.

There was another thing to worry about too. Despite efforts to replenish the air, oxygen levels in the chamber had fallen to 15%, lower than the usual 21%. Time was running out.

Rescuers worked out three possible options:

1. Training the boys to dive through flooded areas of the cave, - a very dangerous process. so considered a last resort.
2. Pumping water from the cave and waiting for water levels to recede naturally - but this could take up to four months.
3. Finding or drilling alternative passages into the cave.

The divers started practicing with some local boys at a swimming pool, trying to work out how to transport a child safely underwater.

Finally, late on July 6th, rescuers set up an oxygen supply. And in the end the boys communicated with their parents the old-fashioned way - by writing letters. They listed the food they wanted to eat: fried chicken and pork crackling. One even cracked a joke: "Teacher, please don't give us too much homework!"

Sunday July 7th, two weeks had passed since the boys went missing. The Thai authorities announced they were pulling out the boys – now!

Why the snap decision? There had been a break in the heavy rain, giving rescuers a rare opportunity. Locals had also told the Thai Navy Seals that by around July 10th every year, the Tham Luang cave system would be completely flooded. It was time to launch what would later be described as a "superhuman" rescue effort, one that involved nearly 100 Thai and foreign divers.

The journey out was split into two sections.

The first stage: from the boys' rocky ledge to chamber three. This was the most difficult. Rescuers made their way for hours through pitch dark waters that were extremely cold, feeling their way with guide ropes. At times they had to navigate sections so ridiculously narrow that they could only just about fit a body through. Each boy was given a full-face air mask to ensure they could breathe, and clipped to a diver. Another diver accompanied them. A cylinder was strapped to the front of each child, while a handle was attached to their backs, and they were held face down to ensure water would run away from their faces. At the narrow sections, rescuers

had to unstrap their air tanks in order to squeeze through, while also pulling along their precious cargo, their boy.

It would have been terrifying for experienced divers, let alone for children who were not strong swimmers. The boys and the coach were given anti-anxiety medication to relax, to ensure they would not panic.

The second stage: Once they reached chamber three, it was time for the second phase. This took another few hours. Each boy was secured in a stretcher, and carried by a team of at least five men. At one point they had to place the stretcher on a raft and pull it across a chin-high pool of water.

Rescuers had to winch the boys up a steep slope using a pulley system. In some rocky areas they formed a human chain, passing the boys hand to hand, while at others they slid them on top of pipes pumping out water.

One by one, the Wild Boars were brought out of the darkness of Tham Luang. As soon as they were out, they were given oxygen before they were swiftly taken by ambulance to a hospital in Chiang Rai city.

Rescuers took them out in three batches over several days, as they needed time in between to replenish air tanks. But they were cutting it close. By the time the last batch of boys and the coach were out, water levels were starting to rise again, as rapidly as 30cm in one hour.

It was Tuesday July 10th, the day that locals said the cave would become completely flooded. But while the boys were out, there were still rescuers left on the rocky ledge deep inside Tham Luang. These were the Navy SEAL divers and medic who had looked after the Wild Boars, as well as Richard Harris, an Australian cave diving expert and doctor.

They emerged shortly after the last boy was taken out. It was not a moment too soon, as a pump suddenly stopped working. Floodwaters rushed in, sending workers clearing up the site fleeing for their lives.

All around the world, millions of people who had anxiously followed the story celebrated the return of the Wild Boars. Their parents, who had waited so very long to hold their sons again, were not by their side. They were behind a viewing window in the hospital, some sobbing with joy at the sight of their boys.

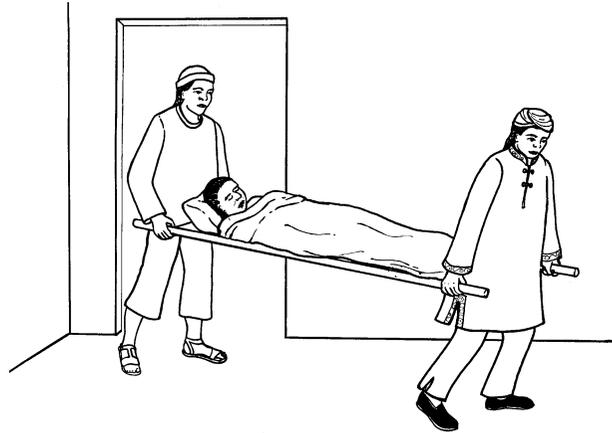
At the hospital, the boys and coach were put through a series of health checks. Eye shades were a must at first. Their eyes, accustomed to two weeks of darkness, could not bear the light. Hospital authorities said that some had minor lung and eye infections and needed antibiotics. Apart from that, they appeared to be doing OK and all of them recovered.

Eventually, parents were finally allowed to briefly see the boys, although they had to maintain a 2m distance, and put on hospital gowns and masks. At first the boys could only eat small amounts of special food that was easy to digest, but soon they were able to start eating normal food again, after days of craving chocolate and their favourite snacks.



## Angels all around

This is a true story about an English missionary who worked in China. He worked in a hospital helping sick people.



One day the missionary and his Chinese helper had to travel to a nearby city to take out some money from the bank, to use for the hospital. In that part of China there were many thieves. They were called bandits. They would wander around the country in gangs, hiding behind rocks or bushes and waiting to attack travellers who passed by.

The trip to the bank would take two days, because it was a long way. This meant that they had to camp on top of a little hill for the night. The return journey was dangerous because they were carrying money. When they camped

at night, they knew the bandits could be nearby, watching them and making plans to rob them. The missionary prayed and asked the Lord to protect them. After they had finished praying, they lay down on the ground to go to sleep, with the box containing the money between them. They slept soundly and were thankful to wake up in the morning without being attacked.



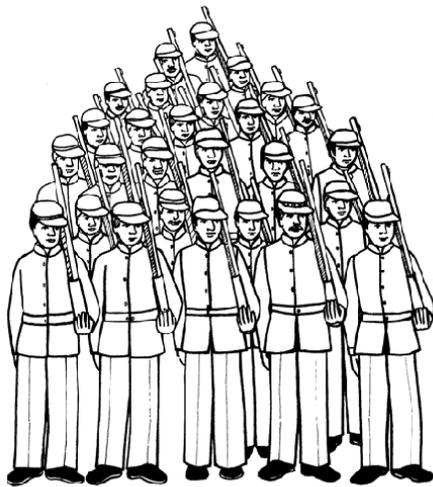
Some months later, the chief of the bandit gang was brought into the hospital for treatment. The bandit chief recognised the missionary and started talking with him. He said, "A little while ago you went to a certain city and brought back money."

"Yes," that's right replied the missionary.

“And you camped at night on top of a little hill. And you had soldier with you.”

“Yes, that’s right,” replied the missionary, “but we had no soldiers with us.”

“Oh, but you did,” said the chief. “We had planned to rob you that night, but when we saw the soldiers, we were afraid they would fight us. We thought we would be killed so we left you alone. I know there were soldiers with you, because I counted them. There were 27.”



*Psalm 34:7 For the angel of the Lord is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him. (NLT)*

But neither the missionary or his helper had seen any soldiers. They knew that the soldiers must have been angels sent by God to protect them while they slept.

Sometime later the missionary made a trip back to England. While he was there, he spoke at a Christian meeting, and told about what had happened. A man in the group asked, “Do you remember the date when this happened?”

“Yes,” said the missionary, “It is very clear in my mind so I will never forget it.” The missionary told him the date.

“I thought so,” replied the man who had asked the question. “On that very same evening, a group of us met in our church to pray especially for missionaries in China.” Then he looked in his diary and added, “I have written it down here. There were exactly 27 of us present in the prayer meeting.”

So as the 27 people prayed in England, God sent 27 angels to guard the missionary and his helper. The angels appeared to the bandits as 27 soldiers.

*Psalm 91:11 For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go. (NLT)*

## A whale out of water

*A true story from South Africa*

James and his family lived in a house near the beach.

“Mum,” called James, as he rushed inside after school one day. “There’s a whale on the beach! Please can I go and see it?”

“A whale!” exclaimed Mum. “Do you mean a dead one washed ashore?”

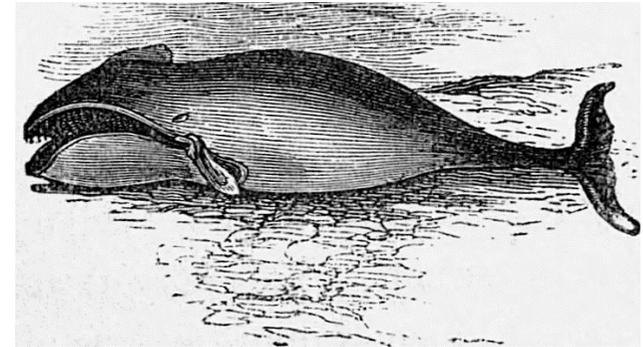
“No Mum. It’s alive, and it’s a baby one. It’s stuck in the sand.”

“OK. Let’s both go and have a look at it,” said Mum.

They hurried down to the beach at Fish Hoek Bay, near Cape Town in South Africa.

On the way James explained to his Mum what the children had told him at school. The tide went out and left the whale out of water, stuck in the sand. Now there is the danger of the whale dying in the hot sun.

When they reached the beach, sure enough, there was the baby whale, lying in the sand. By now there were crowds of people looking at it.



“Oh dear,” said James’s Mum. “I’m afraid this poor little whale hasn’t a hope of surviving in this hot sun. I wonder where its mother is?”

Just then a man walked by. He was in charge of the rescue. He had heard the conversation and explained, “The mother is out there in the bay. She’s swimming back and forth in a terrible state because she can’t come in and rescue her baby.”

“The whale looks quite big to me,” said James, “not like a baby.”

“The whale is only about 3 months old and weighs about 2 tons!” said the person in charge.

“Will it die?” asked James.

“We’re going to do all we can to save it, but I doubt if we will succeed. The tide doesn’t come in again for a few hours. We’ll try to re-float it then. Meanwhile we’ll pour sea water over it to keep it damp and cool.

James joined a group of children near the whale. He put his hand out and stroked its shiny black back. He watched with interest as men came and laid wet sacks all over the whale. Then they brought large hoses to the beach and sprayed sea water over the sacks. They kept on doing this, but the little whale showed no signs of life. Many people feared that it was dead.

At long last the tide began to come in. Slowly, slowly, the breakers came nearer. There was a loud cheer from the crowd when the first wave went over the young whale. They hoped to see it float. But no. It did not move. More waves came and broke over the whale until it was almost covered with water.

“Oh no, it’s dead!” cried James.

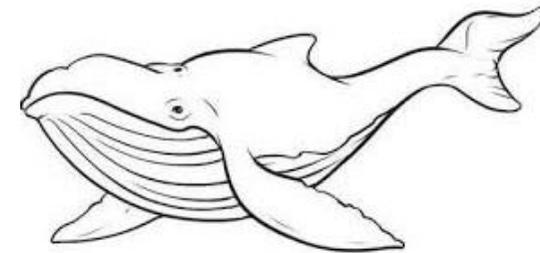
“No,” said the person in charge of the rescue, “It’s stuck too deep in the sand to move.”

Just then, two divers arrived. They went down under the water on each side of the whale and scooped out the sand under it. They had a strong canvas sheet that they rolled under the whale. They needed many helpers to do this difficult job.

A row of men took hold of the canvas on each side. As each wave broke over them, they pushed forward in a mighty effort to try and release the whale. Again, and again, they tried. Then a very big wave broke over them. They gave one more big push and the whale rose up out of the sand. Suddenly a little spurt of water shot up from the whale. The crowd cheered.

“It’s alive! It’s saved,” shouted James.

The next minute the whale used every bit of strength it had and shot out into the bay. It went at full speed until he joined its anxious mother. Together they sped out into the deep sea. Hundreds of people on the beach clapped and cheered.



What a story James had to tell Dad when he got home. Later that evening, as Dad was praying with James before bed, he asked James what he had learned from the experience of the whale.

“Well, I know that God wants us to care for His creatures, and help them when they are in trouble...,” said James

“And I think that little whale may not have listened to its mother when she told it NOT to swim towards the beach. If the whale had stayed with its mother, it wouldn’t have been stranded.”

“That’s so right,” said Dad. We all must listen when we are warned of danger, and most of all, we listen to God. He tells us how to avoid danger.

The Bible says, *“Whoever listens to me will have security. He will be safe, with no reason to be afraid.”* Proverbs 1:33 (GNB)

Story by Elsie M Milligan, from “The Peanut Butter Hamster”

## Bernard and his dogs

*A true story from Switzerland*

The highest mountains in Europe are called the Alps. They are so high that there is always snow on them, even in the summer. The Alps stretch across three countries: France, Switzerland and Italy.

This is the story of a boy called Bernard who was born a long time ago in a town in the Alps. When he was old enough, he learned to climb these mountains. It was a wonderful feeling to climb up and up, until the houses below looked like a little toy town. It was sometimes dangerous, because you could easily slip and fall on the steep rocks, or have great piles of snow fall on you if there was an avalanche. There were also cracks in the ice that you could fall into, and then great snow storms would cover you so that no one could find you.

When Bernard grew up, he went to live in a house high up in the mountains. He lived near a mountain pass. A pass is a way through the mountains, and travellers used to come through this way. But sometimes these travellers would get lost in the snow and ice, and then Bernard and his friends would go out and find them.

Sometimes they would find these lost people, and bring them safely home, but sometimes the snow was so deep that the lost person could not be found, and they died of cold in the snow drifts.

This made Bernard and his friends very sad. One day Bernard had an idea. 'Dogs would be better at finding lost people than we are,' he thought. 'They can smell people buried in the snow, and get to them more quickly than we can.' So he went to the town at the bottom of the mountain and bought some big dogs. They were huge dogs with white and brown coats and long flapping ears, and they had big paws that could move over soft snow without sinking in.

These dogs were trained to go out and look for lost people in the snow. Round their necks they carried baskets with food and drink. The dogs would run all over the mountain side, and when their noses told them that there was someone buried under the snow, they would dig down with their strong paws until they reached the lost person. The



person would look up and see a dog's kind, gentle face above them and know that they were now safe. The food and drink around the dog's neck would help to make the person feel strong again. The dog would go back to its master and let them know that a lost traveller had been found. Then the master would come quickly to rescue the person. The traveller would be taken to a place of shelter which had been built especially for this purpose, and cared for they were well again.

The place where Bernard and his friends built this shelter is still called Saint Bernard Pass today. It is in the Alps of Switzerland. The great dogs Bernard trained for rescuing lost travellers are called Saint Bernards, named after the kind man who first had the idea of using them to rescue people lost in the snow.

### **More about Saint Bernard dogs**

With an excellent sense of direction, an excellent ability to navigate through dense fog, snow storms and to warn of an avalanche, the dogs always accompanied the monks on treks. But the dogs later did make expeditions on their own in small packs of two or three to search for travellers buried in after an avalanche or snow storm. The dogs would often dig through metres of snow and ice and if

found alive the traveller would be kept warm, conscious and comforted by one dog one whilst the other would return to the shelter to raise the alarm. Over the approximated 200 years that the Saint Bernard dogs worked on the Pass it is estimated that 2000 people were rescued. The last rescue recorded was of a 12-year-old boy who was nearly frozen to death and found in a crevice and was awakened by a Saint Bernard dog in 1897.



## Joey

*A story from Australia by W.L. Williams, from the book "Among Friends"*

Joey was a baby kangaroo. He had been only 2 centimeters long when he was born, but now he was much bigger. He was as big as a small dog, and was able to eat grass for himself. He no longer needed to be fed on his mother's milk.

But he was a lazy little fellow. When his mother wanted to take him back to the bush after feeding on grass in the paddocks, she would have to carry him in her pouch, even



though Joey could have hopped all the way by himself. It was the same everywhere they went. She hopped and Joey rode in the pouch. Like all mother kangaroos, Joey's mother had a large pouch at the front. Joey had lived in it for weeks, from the time of his birth, and it had kept him warm and safe.

He still jumped into it, head first. Then he would kick and wriggle until he was the right way up. If there was danger, his mother would be off, with great leaps.

Joey was like any other baby. He was not very good at eating his food. He nibbled on the grass for a little while, and then he was off to play. Round and round his mother he raced, just for fun, while she went on eating. But every now and then she would stop eating, lift her head and listen. She was listening for sounds of danger. Joey had no thought of danger, so she had to take care of herself and him as well. Every sound from the far-off farm made her raise her head for a moment.

All of a sudden, she sat up straight. She had heard the thud of horses' hoofs. Joey could hear them too. His mother bounded towards him, and he made a flying leap and landed in the pouch. As his tail went out of sight, his ears and nose poked out. His mother stood up and looked at the line of trees towards the farm. Four dogs raced out from the trees. Three men on horses followed them. At once she turned and sprang away, heading for the bush.

As she sped over the grass and over the logs, she heard the men shouting and the dogs barking. They were hunters. The chase was on, and the edge of the bush was

a long way off. She could not go as fast as she wanted to, because Joey was quite big now, and heavy in her pouch. The dogs and the horses were gaining fast. When she reached the edge of the bush, they were close behind.

Yes, Joey was heavy. As she bounded over the top of the fence she slipped. Her hind feet struck the rail, and she rolled over and over. In a flash she was up and off again, but the dogs were already at the fence. She thought of Joey and she felt afraid. If the dogs caught her, he would be killed. As she moved through the bushes she reached into her pouch, and with a quick jerk she threw him out. He rolled under a bush and lay still, too scared to move.



Then on went the mother, leading the dogs after her. She went more easily now. Besides, she could make her way through scrub better than the dogs and far better than

the horses. For ten minutes more she bounded and the hunters followed. She did not try to hide. She wanted the dogs to see her for a while yet. While they were after her there was no chance of them finding Joey. So, she bounded high above the bushes and made a great deal of noise as she crashed her way through.



The dogs, now growing tired, barked only once in a while. Now and then one of them yelped as he hit a log. The horses were a long way behind, but the men were shouting, and the mother kangaroo knew that they were still coming.

Then she made for a steep gully. After a few leaps along its side, she dived down the hill among the bushes and

ferns. She paddled on all fours up the stream as fast as she could, but quietly. Then she crept in between some rocks and lay still.

The dogs had lost her. She heard the barking and the crashes die away, but she stayed where she was for two hours. Her breath came back and her fear left her. Then she went slowly back along the path by which she had come.

She remembered the right bush and went straight to it. There was Joey, safe and sound but very lonely. As he crept into her pouch, she touched him with her cool wet nose. Then she went easily back toward the deep gullies and the rough hills, and once more, one small nose and two small ears poked out in front.

## **More about kangaroos**

### **Baby kangaroos**

The young kangaroo, or joey, is born when it is only about 2 cm long and weighs less than a gram. As soon as it is born, it crawls up the mother's body and enters the pouch. The baby attaches its mouth to one of four teats, which holds the young animal in place.

The joey stays in the mother's pouch for about 9 months and drinks its mother's milk. Only female kangaroos have pouches.

### **How many babies does a kangaroo have?**

Mother kangaroos only have one baby at a time, although they can have their babies 9 months apart. This means that there could be two babies at a time drinking from the teats in her pouch, (one newborn and one older one).

### **Why are kangaroos hunted?**

These peaceful animals are hunted by those who want to sell their meat and skins, or by farmers who want the pasture where they're found, so that there is more grass for their cattle and sheep.

## Stone Soup

*A traditional folk tale from Europe*

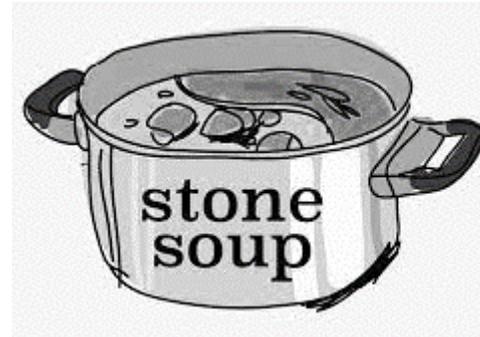
Once upon a time, a wise old man decided to go on a journey. So he packed a small bag, said goodbye to his wife, and set off. He traveled all day without meeting anyone. When it was evening, he came to a small village. "I think I'll stop here for the night," he said to himself.

Near the centre of the village, he met a group of people. So he introduced himself. "I'm a simple traveler," he said, "looking for a safe place to sleep and a hot meal."

"We'd be glad to offer you a place to sleep," the villagers told him, "but we have very little food. Our crops were very poor this year, and there's not much to eat in the whole village. Most of us are just barely getting by."

"I'm sorry to hear that," the old man said. "But you needn't worry about feeding me. I already have everything I need. In fact, I was thinking of making some stone soup to share with all of you."

"Stone soup?" the villagers asked. "What's that? We've never heard of stone soup."



"Oh, it's wonderful," said the old man. "Best soup I've ever tasted. If you bring me a soup pot and some water, I'll make some for all of us."

And so the villagers rushed back to their homes. When they returned, one was carrying a large soup pot, another had wood for a fire, and others brought water.

When the fire was going and the water had begun to boil, the old man took out a small silk pouch. With great ceremony, he reached in and pulled out a smooth, round stone. He carefully dropped the stone into the boiling water. The villagers watched eagerly. The old man began to slowly stir the pot, sniffing the aroma and licking his lips in anticipation. "I do like a tasty stone soup," he said. "Of course, stone soup with cabbage—now that's really special."

"I might be able to find a bit of cabbage," one villager said. And off she went to her house, returning with a small cabbage she had stored away in her pantry.

"Wonderful!" said the old man, as he added the cabbage

to the pot. “This reminds me of the time I had stone soup with cabbage and a bit of salted beef. It was unbelievably good.”

After a moment of silence, the village butcher spoke up. “I know where there’s a bit of salted beef,” he said. And off he went to his shop to get it. When he returned, the old man added the beef to the soup pot and continued to stir.

“Can you imagine what this soup would taste like if we had a bit of onion...and perhaps a few potatoes...and a carrot or two...and some mushrooms. Oh, this would be a meal fit for royalty.”

And before he knew it, the soup pot was filled to the brim with vegetables of all kinds— carrots and potatoes, mushrooms and onions, turnips and green beans, beets and celery—all brought by the men and women and children of the village. Not only that, but the village baker came out with some fresh bread and butter.

And as the soup simmered slowly over the fire, the wonderful aroma began to waft over the villagers. And they began to relax and talk together, sharing songs and stories and jokes.

When the soup was finally done, the old man ladled it out into bowls, and they all shared a delicious meal together. There was more than enough for everyone to eat their fill. Afterward, they all declared that it was the best soup they had ever tasted. The mayor of the village pulled the old man aside, and quietly offered him a great deal of money for the magic stone, but the old man refused to sell it.

The next morning, he woke early and packed up his belongings. As he was leaving the village, he passed by a group of children playing at the side of the road. He handed the youngest one the silk pouch containing the stone, and he whispered, “It was not the stone that performed the magic. It was all of us together.”

#### **Questions:**

1. What does this story tell us about our lives?
2. What does this story tell us about feeding the hungry?
3. What bible story does the Stone Soup story remind you of?
4. How could we make enough “soup” to feed the hungry people of the world?

## The Wind and the Sun

*A story from Ghana or the Ivory Coast of Africa*

One day, a boastful wind declared to the sun, 'You know that I am the strongest and most effective of all weather!'

And the sun replied, 'All weather can be strong and effective.'

But the stubborn wind disagreed.

'All weather is strong,' said the wind, 'but I am the strongest of all. Let us have a competition to prove this. The weather that makes people remove the most of their clothing will show that they are indeed the strongest of all.'

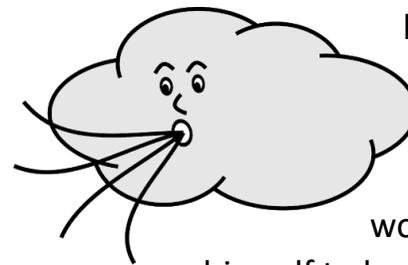
The sun agreed to take part in the competition and suggested that the wind should go first. And so the wind blew and blew upon the earth, creating first a light breeze, and then massive gales that swept across the lands below. Peoples' hats flew up into the air and many were forced to hold tightly to their jackets and coats so that they would not lose them in the mighty gale.

After many minutes of blowing and blowing, the wind had managed to cause a great deal of chaos. He had swept

away empty bottles, rubbish, newspapers and umbrellas. But he had not caused people to lose their clothes.

Next it was the turn of the sun and the sun shone brightly in the clear blue sky, heating up the earth below until the people began to take off their clothes. First, they removed their shoes, then socks and shirts, then jackets. Some even removed their trousers in an attempt to stay cool in the lovely afternoon heat.

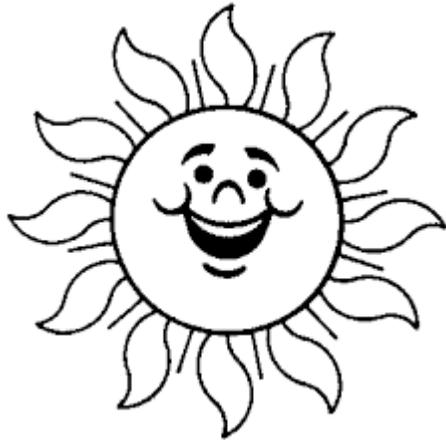
When the wind saw how efficient the sun had been, he grew very angry indeed and caused the weather to change from sunshine back to wind so that the people



below had to quickly put their clothes back on and head indoors away from the unexpected gale. Wind could not believe that the sun had won the competition and proven himself to be the most effective of all weather.

The rain and clouds, and the rest of the weather, all cheered for the sun and hailed him as the new hero. But the sun immediately stopped the cheering and told everyone that he was not a hero at all, but that all weather was important in its own unique way.

‘There cannot be one of us without the other,’ explained the sun. ‘Each of us does an important job; each of us



depends on the other to create the seasons. We water the earth, we blow the clouds across the sky, give people light and shade, and make sure that trees and flowers and crops grow in the earth.’

The sun explained to the wind that all weather was part of a team and that they should all be proud of the work that they do.

Wind then understood that everything and everybody is different. It is important not to feel that you are better than anyone else. Wind also understood how important it was to work as a team so that you might make the most of the strengths of those around you. And so it was that all weather worked in harmony, each doing the task best suited to them, each appreciating the work of the other.

### Questions

1. What is the character quality you could use to describe the wind?
2. Who wanted to hold the competition – the sun or the wind?
3. What was the reason for wanting to hold the competition?
4. What was the result of the competition?
5. What did the sun say to the other members of the weather, when they cheered and treated him as a hero?
6. What did the sun say to the wind?
7. What can we learn from this story?

## The Ugly Duckling

Once upon a time down on an old farm, lived a duck family, and Mother Duck had been sitting on a clutch of new eggs. One nice morning, the eggs hatched and out popped six chirpy ducklings. But one egg was bigger than the rest, and it didn't hatch. Mother Duck couldn't recall laying that seventh egg. How did it get there? Peck, peck! The little bird was pecking inside it's shell.



"Did I count the eggs wrongly?" Mother Duck wondered. But before she had time to think about it, the last egg finally hatched.

Out popped a strange looking duckling with grey feathers. It should have been yellow. The ducklings grew quickly, but Mother Duck was worried about the grey one.

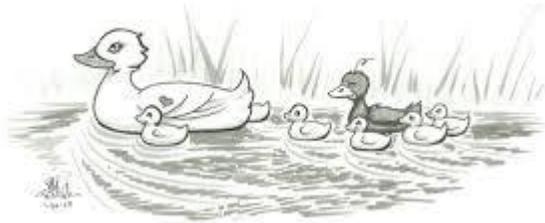
"I can't understand how this ugly duckling can be one of mine!" she said to herself, shaking her head as she looked at her last born. Well, the grey duckling certainly wasn't pretty, and since he ate far more than his brothers, he was outgrowing them. As the days went by, the poor ugly duckling became more and more unhappy. His brothers didn't want to play with him. He felt sad and lonely. Mother Duck did her best to make him feel better.



"Poor little ugly duckling!" she would say. "Why are you so different from the others?" And the ugly duckling felt

worse than ever. He cried every night. He felt that nobody wanted him.

"Nobody loves me, they all tease me! Why am I different from my brothers?"



Then one day, at sunrise, he ran away from the farmyard. He stopped at a pond and asked the ducks there, "Do you know of any ducklings with grey feathers like mine?" But they all shook their heads.

"We don't know anyone as ugly as you." The ugly duckling went to another pond, where a pair of large geese gave him the same answer to his question.

"Don't stay here! Go away! It's dangerous. There are men with guns around here!" The duckling was sorry he had ever left the farmyard.

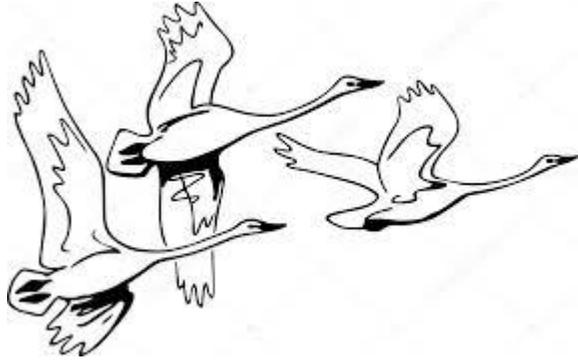
Then one day, he found himself near an old woman's cottage. Thinking the bird was a stray goose, she caught him.

"I'll put this little bird in the hen house. I hope it's a female and lays plenty of eggs!" said the old woman, whose eyesight was poor. But the ugly duckling laid not a single egg. The hen kept frightening him.

"Just wait!" said the hen. "If you don't lay eggs, the old woman will kill you and pop you into the pot!"

Then one night, finding the hen house door slightly open, he escaped. Once again, he was all alone. He ran as far away as he could, and at dawn, he found himself in a river bed, thick with reeds. "If nobody wants me, I'll hid here forever."

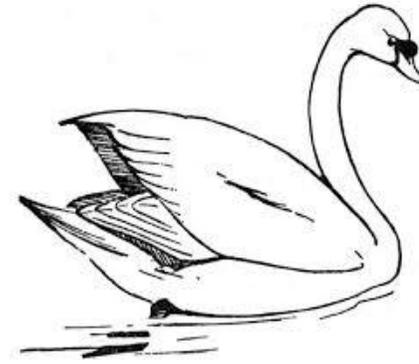
There was plenty of food, and the duckling began to feel a little happier, though he was lonely. One day at sunrise, he saw a flight of beautiful birds overhead. White, with long slender necks, yellow beaks and large wings, they were flying south.



"If only I could look like them!" said the duckling, Winter came and the water in the river froze. The poor duckling left his home in the reeds to look for food in the snow. He walked a long way and finally dropped to the ground, but a farmer found him and picked him up.

"I'll take him home to my children," he said. "They'll look after him. Poor thing, he's frozen!"

At the farmer's house he was given lots of care. In this way, the ugly duckling was able to survive the cold winter. However, by springtime, he had grown so big that the farmer decided: "I'll set him free by the pond!" The duckling looked in the water and saw his reflection. The pond was like a mirror. That was when the duckling saw himself in the water.



"How I've changed!" he said to himself. "I am no longer grey and ugly. I am white and beautiful!"

He looked up and saw swans flying above him. They glided down on to the pond. When the duckling saw them, he realized he was one of their kind, and soon made friends. "We're swans like you!" they said. "Where have you come from?"

"It's a long story," replied the young swan as he swam about with the other swans. Some children came to play at the pond. He heard them say, "Look at that young swan! He's the finest of them all!"