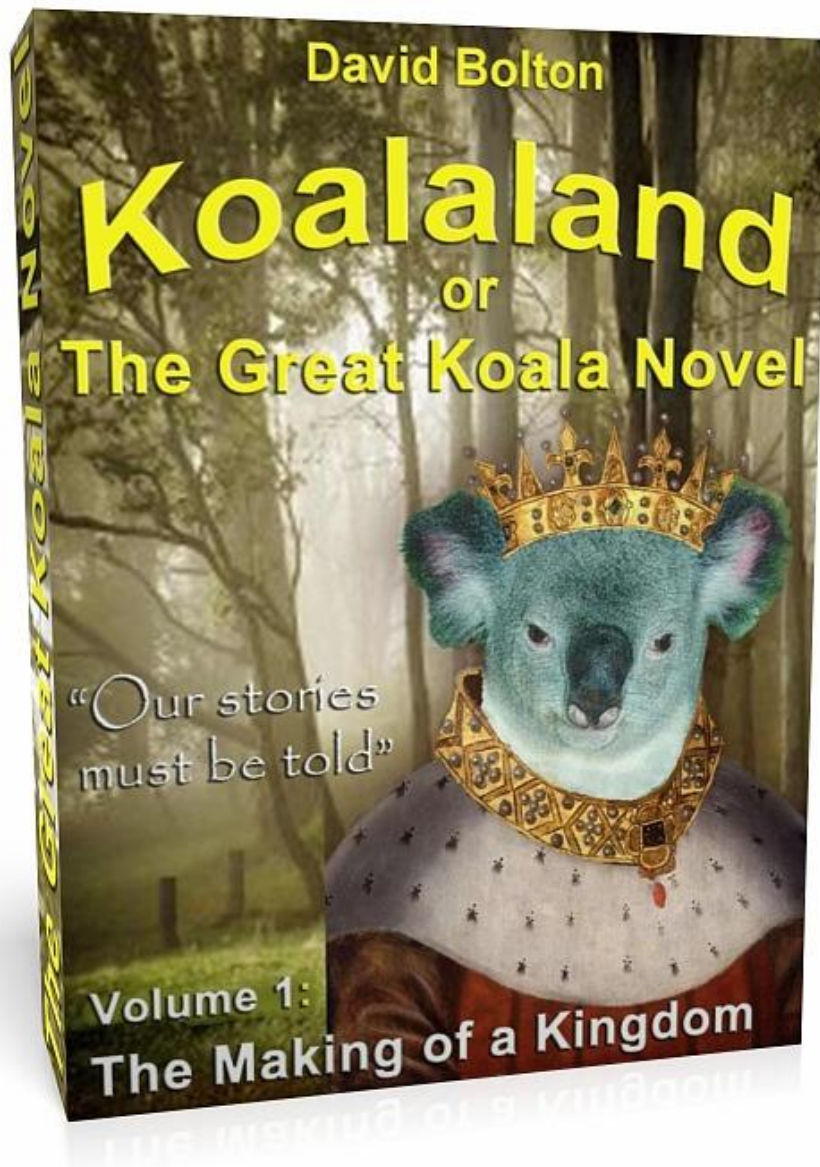


For the Young at Heart of all Ages
(though Parental Guidance is recommended)



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Koalaland
or
The Great Koala Novel
Volume I: The Making of a Kingdom

by
David Bolton

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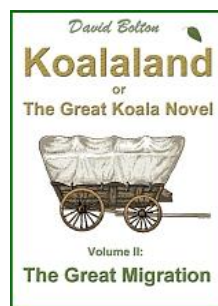
David Bolton

Koalaland or The Great Koala Novel - Volume I: The Making of a Kingdom

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[Volume II](#)

To Maki, who inspired this work

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Volume I: The Making of a Kingdom

Preface

For the reflective reader, and most especially for those of the sceptical persuasion; providing definite, conclusive, and therefore indisputable proof that everything you will read in this book is without a doubt true.

Or, if you prefer...

A peculiar piece of scientific sophistry, being impossible to refute, and furnishing the koala-lover with information essential to the understanding of this work.

In 1957, an ingenious physicist by the distinguished-sounding name of Hugh Everett III introduced a theory that he called the "relative state formulation", an insight that was, in the 1960s, popularized by another very erudite gentleman, the physicist Bryce Seligman DeWitt, who gave this idea a more catchy title: the "Many Worlds" theory. Also known as the "Parallel Universes" interpretation of quantum mechanics, it contends that there is in fact, an enormous, perhaps even infinite, number of different universes that exist simultaneously, though we, being trapped in one of them, are not aware of the vast multitude of others. According to this postulate, everything that could possibly happen in our world, but does not, does *indeed* occur in one of these myriad parallel worlds.

Why we usually cannot peek into these other universes and satisfy our curiosity as to what might be going on at this, or any other moment, is a question that only the most learned of scientists could answer; I, for my part, am unable to do so.

Nevertheless, I do not deny the validity of the theory, for I myself have envisaged a parallel world, one characterized by certain similarities to our dimension, yet that also reveals some striking differences. To give but a few examples:

In our world, koalas live only in Australia. They are about two feet high, walk using their hands as well as their feet, have a very limited mental capacity, possess no advanced language skills (let alone a high culture), and run around naked.

Yet in the realm we are about to explore, their situation is markedly different. There, the koalas are on average *three* feet tall*, and the trees that they inhabit are correspondingly larger than the ones with which we are acquainted. Those koalas ambulate upright, and think as well as any of us. They use complex language and converse incessantly, occasionally with conspicuous eloquence. They have, in the astoundingly short time of about three hundred

years, developed a burgeoning culture, and they would never dream of running around naked. Well, they might in their dreams, but certainly not in everyday life.

On the earth we know, hyenas live in Africa. None has, to our knowledge, ever eaten a koala, alive or dead, since the two animals live on continents that are very far from each other. In the parallel reality we will explore, spotted hyenas live within a day's journey of the koalas, much to the latter's chagrin.

On our planet, those cute little bright-eyed, bushy-tailed creatures that live in trees and eat nuts are called "squirrels," not "scrills". In our world, hawks carry off rabbits, and other small animals. Yet in this other universe, these evil birds are so big that they can easily carry off a full-grown koala.

In the reality we know, humans do all they can to completely control, dominate and even tyrannize those species they consider mere "animals," all-too often going to the extreme of killing them: for food, in the name of scientific research, or just for fun. That humans would respect another type of being, and simply leave it alone in its own territory, without interfering in any way – this is almost inconceivable to us, and is perhaps the most amazing distinction between our actuality and the one you will soon discover.

Recalling that one common version of the "parallel universe" theory asserts that there is an *infinity* of worlds in existence, and that everything that *could* happen *does* in fact occur in one or another of these worlds, it follows logically that everything you are about to read in this narrative is factual, and therefore eminently true.

Yet logic is not always the best persuader. Often, one's own intuition and imagination are more trustworthy guides in our quest to recognize reality. Relax, therefore; breathe deeply, open your mind, and prepare yourself emotionally to encounter one of those zillions of universes that exist as surely as does our own.

You are about to enter Koalaland.

*Our scientists tell us that during the Pleistocene period (1.8 million to 10 million years ago), there existed on earth the so-called "Giant Koala," who was indeed three feet tall. Is it thinkable that it was this species that chose to continue its evolution in a probable reality that diverged from our own, perhaps about 50,000 years ago, when this type of koala became extinct in our world?

Part I: Eucalyptus Grove

The Dangers of Disobedience

(Shortly before the beginning of summer)

As Joey, the young koala, walked across the grassy, open field separating the two groves, he enjoyed the feel of the sun's rays warming the fur on his head and back.

It had been an exceptionally moderate spring, and the hot days of summer were definitely just around the corner, which meant that he and his friends would have all the more opportunities to bathe in the stream that ran along the eastern edge of Eucalyptus Grove, and even venture out beyond it, to cross the field to old Koalaville. The weather was, even now, warmer than he had expected, and he was wishing he had worn lighter, summer overalls. This blue pair, that his mother had given him to put on this morning, was fine for spring, but made him sweat on a day like today.

Old Koalaville, less than a hundred yards ahead of him, always was a place where they could find entertainment. Though virtually abandoned for a couple of months, there were still many things there waiting to be discovered by young adventurers such as himself: left-behind cups, plates, and cooking utensils, slightly damaged, and therefore not thought worth taking along to the new grove back when the great migration had occurred; pieces of wood, now left to rot, that never did become parts of the objects for which they were originally cut and carved; even the remains of a platform in a tree, the foundation of a tree house never completed. The last one the carpenter koalas had begun in that grove, it no doubt would end up covered with dead, brown leaves from the branches above it by the end of the year.

Today, he and his friend Koby were going to climb up to it and see whether they could find anything of interest on that platform. Koby wouldn't be able to get there for another hour or so, but Joey didn't mind. Once he got to Koalaville, he'd go to that tree with the platform, climb up and pick a few leaves for a snack, then take a little nap until Koby arrived.

Still walking at a leisurely pace, he suddenly felt the fur on the back of his neck stand up, and began to sense a fear that soon gripped him entirely even before he was fully conscious of that ominous sound in the sky above: a harsh shriek, still somewhat distant, yet whose slight crescendo revealed that it was getting closer – the shriek of a huge hawk, one of the koala's most formidable natural enemies.

It's hard to say whether it was the instilled memories of his parent's warnings, or just sheer instinct that now made Joey act in the way that would most increase his chances of survival. Without even taking a second to look up – for what good would that do? – Joey broke into a frenzied run, dashing towards some bushes right next to the nearest tree on the edge of Koalaville. Between him and that grove, there was no place to take shelter, not even as much as a small rock, or a hole in the ground. His only hope was to reach those bushes, burrow his way into them, and hug the ground.

A second shriek was considerably louder than the first; the hawk had already halved the distance between itself and its terrified prey. Joey was running for dear life, when this second cry of the savage bird made him realize that he would never be able to reach the bushes before being grabbed by the iron-like grip of the predator's claws. He nonetheless kept on dashing at full speed, though his thoughts, paradoxically, now became almost calm.

Despite his frantic pace, Joey felt that everything was going in slow motion. It was as if it would take an eternity to cross the forty yards or so now separating him from the bushes, but in his mind, time became blurred, with events from the past now intruding into his present. His legs were carrying him faster than they ever had, but he didn't sense any strain, only a tranquil, yet all-pervasive, sadness.

In his mind's eye, he was much younger now. It was dark in his mother's pouch, and so nice and warm! He reached up, grabbing hold of the rim, and slowly pulled himself upwards until his little head cleared the top of the pouch. Looking up, he saw his mother looking down at him, smiling, the love in her eyes filling him with happiness. He wished he could freeze the moment, and remain there forever, yet abruptly, the vision changed, and he saw both his mother and father. Joey himself wasn't there. He seemed to be watching them from a few yards above. His mother was weeping; the fur on his father's face was damp with the tears he had been shedding. He knew why they were crying. They had just received the news that he, Joey, their only son, had been carried away by a hawk.

Why hadn't he listened to the adults? How could he have been so careless as to cross the open field, especially on such a clear day? Hadn't he heard again and again about the sharp eyes of the hawk, who could spot even a small koala from a great distance, and who would then swoop down at an almost unbelievable speed, to sink its claws into your shoulders, sweep you off your feet, and carry you off into the sky, off to some distant mountaintop, perhaps, where you would then become dinner for the evil fowl and its hungry young ones?

Other koalas had been carried off before, but it could never happen to *him* – or so he had thought.

A rush of almost unbearable sorrow filled his being. He had had so much to live for, there were so many things he wanted to do in his life, so much to learn, to see, so much beauty in this world from which he was now about to be mercilessly torn away.

All at once, Joey was jolted out of both his melancholy visions as well as his remorse by another bone-chilling shriek of the hawk, now just a few yards above him. But this time, it was rather a sharp, pained cry, whose sound revealed that the flight of the bird had been abruptly arrested. A sort of desperate, optimistic curiosity momentarily overcame his natural instinct to simply keep staring straight towards his goal. He turned his head, looking upwards, and saw that the hawk, flapping its wings somewhat helplessly, had twisted around and was already beginning a slow ascent into the sky, up and away from him. Joey stopped to watch, suddenly flushed with relief and unexpected joy.

"Don't stop now! Get yourself over here before that bird has second thoughts!"

Joey looked again at the bushes towards which he had been hurrying, and saw the lone figure of Handy, holding his slingshot, primed with another stone, just in case the hawk decided to return. Joey scurried over to him, though he knew he was in big trouble.

Handy was not someone you'd want to cross. An adult koala in his best years, he was lean and strong, and had a no-nonsense approach to just about every task he tackled. Those traits, coupled with his common sense, strength of character, and scrupulous honesty, were perhaps the reasons why the elders of the Council in Eucalyptus Grove, of which Handy himself was the youngest member, had convinced him to take charge of security matters in that part of Southern Koalaland. His dark brown overalls seemed to underscore his uncompromising personality, and if Handy had a sense of humor, Joey had never seen any signs of it. Now, he looked sterner than ever.

"Why, you little rascal! What were you thinking of, leaving Eucalyptus Grove and walking over that open field, in plain sight of every creature that might want to eat you alive! Don't tell me you didn't know better: I know your parents well, and they taught you not to do such fool things. What do you have to say for yourself?"

"Oh, well, sir, I... You see, I thought... Well, I was just..." Joey stammered.

"That's what I thought. No excuse at all! And what did you want over here in Koalaville, anyway? You know that children aren't supposed to come over here without their parents," Handy scolded.

"Well, my parents never want to bring me over here, and there are a lot of neat things here, and..."

"Yeah, well, when your parents hear about what happened today, they aren't even going to let you leave your tree for a good month or so."

"Ooooh," Joey whined, knowing that Handy was right about that.

"This isn't the first little koala that has thrown caution to the winds, and crossed that field alone," a third voice added.

Both Joey and Handy looked over at the Judge as he approached them. Judge Granddaddy, as he was known, due to his advanced age, was one of the elders of Eucalyptus Grove. His fur was largely whitish-gray now, yet he was in remarkably good physical condition, though he did need a pair of spectacles for reading. Very few koalas had been around long enough to remember a time when Granddaddy was not aged, yet he kept going, year in, year out, and never really seemed to get any older than he already was. His dark gray overalls gave him a somewhat somber appearance, yet this wasn't the reason he preferred them. He simply felt that the color of one's clothing should match the fur on one's body. Granddaddy knew that several generations before, koalas had worn no clothing whatsoever, so he figured it would be mere foppery to flaunt colors that nature had obviously not meant for koalas to display.

"Really?" Joey asked, now perking up. "You mean I'm not the only one who did such a dumb thing?"

"Why, of course not!" the Judge replied with a smile. "As a matter of fact, it seems like just yesterday that some other foolish young koala did the same thing you did. We were living here in Koalaville back then, of course. The little fellow made his way over to Eucalyptus Grove, and then walked back here after a few hours. He crossed that field on a clear, summer day, and was attacked by a hawk. That one was even bigger and meaner-looking than the one that almost got you."

"Wow!" Joey exclaimed. "Did the hawk get him?"

"No, he managed to dive into a ditch, just to the right of that tree over there, if I remember correctly. The young rascal was really lucky, if you ask me!"

"Yeah, I guess he was!" Joey agreed. "What was that koala's name, Judge?"

"Uuh, this is no time for long conversations, and you certainly aren't going to change the subject," Handy interrupted sternly. "Joey, you climb that tree over there, eat some leaves, and take a little nap until the Judge and I are finished our business here in Koalaville, and then we'll take you home."

"Oooh, all right," Joey moaned, sulking as he walked over to the tree.

"Granddaddy, you shouldn't tell him stories like that," Handy said.

"Why not? It's true, isn't it? You were just as foolhardy as he was when you were his age, and if it hadn't been for that ditch, you would have been bird-feed right then and there," Granddaddy replied.

"Yeah, I know. The truth is, I see a lot of myself in that little Joey. That's why I worry about him sometimes. Sure, his parents take good care of him, but when a young koala has an adventurous spirit, it can get him into all kinds of trouble. And I'd just hate to see anything happen to him."

"Yes, Handy, I understand. But maybe you shouldn't be so hard on him. You don't have to tell his mother about today, do you? You know Hana. She'll give him a hard time, and his life will be miserable for weeks."

"Well," Handy drawled, "I guess I wouldn't have to mention it. Though I should, you know."

"Hey, I'm the Judge. Let me decide what's best, okay?"

"Right, sir, I'll keep quiet about it," Handy promised, bowing to the authority of the older koala. "I'll go put that wood in our wagon, and then we can have a snack before we head back to Eucalyptus Grove."

"Yes, you do that," Granddaddy replied. Then, as Handy began to walk away, the Judge, his voice softening, added with a hint of a smile, "That was one heck of a shot. The bird didn't know what hit him. Good job, Handy!"

"Thanks, Judge," Handy smiled in reply.

"Oh, and Handy. About what you and I saw when we were up in the forest..."

"You mean that big round thing?" Handy supposed.

"Yes, that... whatever it is. I'd like to ask you to keep quiet about it for now. Don't mention it to anyone, you hear?"

"Not even to the King?" Handy asked, feeling the monarch should be informed of what they had seen.

“No, not even to him. I’ll inform him about it myself. I don’t want anyone else to know yet, not a soul, understood?”

“Understood, Judge. I won’t say a word, I swear,” Handy replied.

“Now, why don’t you go get a little rest before we head back,” Granddaddy suggested.

“Good idea, don’t mind if I do,” Handy smiled slightly and walked away to find a good branch on which to take a nap.

Granddaddy didn’t feel like napping. The day had given him a lot to contemplate. Joey had almost been killed, and that would have been a terrible tragedy. Lucky Handy had been there! But he was thinking even more about what they had happened across in the forest an hour before. He wasn’t able to figure it out, but he sensed that its significance went far beyond what the koalas – even he himself – could ever imagine.

The sun was setting as the Judge, Handy and little Joey arrived at the eastern edge of Eucalyptus Grove. Koby, Joey’s best friend, had seen them coming.

“Oh, no!” he thought to himself, “Joey must have gotten himself into trouble again. A good thing I hadn’t gone over to Koalaville yet.”

Joey spotted Koby standing between two trees, and asked Handy if he might go talk to him.

“I suppose so,” Handy replied, “but remember: no more crossing that field again alone or you’ll have to answer to me.”

“Oh, no sir. I won’t do it again, I promise!”

“Okay then,” Judge Granddaddy said to Joey, “run along now.”

“Bye!” Joey blurted out to them as he began to scamper over to Koby.

“Joey! What happened? How did you let them catch you like that? You know we’re not supposed to go over there. How could you be so dumb and let them see you?” Koby asked angrily.

“Hah! A lot you know! If Handy hadn’t seen me, I’d be dead right now,” Joey answered.

“Dead? What are you talking about?” Koby inquired.

“Well, if a big hawk picks you up and takes you home for dinner, you’re dead real soon, and that’s what almost happened to me!” Joey explained excitedly. He then went on to relate

the whole story, and Koby could tell that this wasn't another one of his tall tales; Joey was far too animated to be lying.

“Oh, wow! You mean that hawk almost got you?”

“Another few seconds, and I would have been history. That Handy shoots a stone like no koala I've ever seen. I think he hit it right on its ugly head, and it was flying really fast!”

“Well, when your mother finds out, you'll wish that bird *had* killed you,” Koby remarked. He knew how strict Hana, Joey's mother, could be, and how angry she could get when Joey made mischief.

“Yeah, I know. Not enough that I almost get killed, now I'm gonna get punished, too. Oooh, why did I go over there in the first place?” Joey whined.

“It was all your dumb idea. Why did you have to walk right in the middle of the field? Couldn't you have walked through the forest, like everybody else does?” Koby chided him.

“How was I supposed to know some bird would see me? Fine thing that is. You can't even walk across a field these days without having to fear for your life.”

“Yeah, but that's the way it's always been, and I guess it's the way it always will be. Just be glad you're still alive. I don't want to lose my best friend!”

“I don't want to lose me either, so we agree on that. Hey, why don't we get our anteaters and take a ride around the grove?” Joey suggested.

“Don't you think you'd better go home?” Koby asked.

“Home! And get punished right away? No way! There's always time for that. Let's go get the anteaters.”

The anteater was one of two animals that the koalas had managed to domesticate, and indeed, the long-snouted creatures were quite useful. They were raised by Choty and Mo, two diligent koalas who had become quite well-off by renting out the anteaters to koalas who liked to keep them tied to the base of their tree, so that the creatures would eat any ants that began to crawl up the trunk. Some smaller anteaters could even climb, and would comb the trees branch by branch, slurping up all the ants they found. Many koalas rented this type for a few days, for after all, there were few things more disagreeable than picking a leaf and biting into it, only to feel an ant wiggling around in your mouth as you chewed! With a hungry anteater at the base of your tree, and perhaps also a little one in the branches, your leaves would be virtually ant-free.

A few koalas had discovered that they could ride an anteater. True, the average anteater didn't like it very much when a koala first climbed onto his back; he would take little leaps, and swirl around in circles, trying to get the rider to fall off, but to no avail: a lifetime of climbing trees gave the koala a strong grip, and no amount of wild gyrations on the part of the anteater was sufficient to throw him to the ground. Invariably, the anteater would give in after no more than an hour or so, and after that, didn't seem to mind much when a koala wanted to ride him.

Joey, and his friend Koby, who was about a year older, were both still children. Yet they had the distinction of being among the very first koalas to become experts at riding anteaters. Not that they really needed to. They could walk from one side of the grove to the other in fifteen minutes or so, and weren't allowed to travel outside the grove on their own anyway. But for them, the anteaters were more like pets – even friends – than mere useful beasts.

True, anteaters couldn't talk, and to any objective observer, didn't seem very intelligent. But somehow, Joey and Koby felt that the anteaters understood them, in their own way. And ever since their parents had bought them their own anteaters, back when the prices were very low, both of the young koalas took excellent care of their pets, cleaning the anteaters' fur regularly with a special brush, giving them all the exercise they needed, and above all, making sure they found a sufficient number of ants to keep their bellies full.

That wasn't much of a problem, since the forest, which began at the northern edge of the grove and extended both eastward and westward, connecting Eucalyptus Grove with Koalaville in the east, and with Koalatown in the west, had more than its share of anthills. They had only to lead the anteaters into the forest, and before long, the creatures had sniffed out an anthill, and were soon using their sharp claws to dig up the entrance, after which they used their long, sticky tongues to slurp out the ants, sometimes catching as many as seventy or eighty with a single dart of the tongue. Not a very appetizing sight, to be sure, yet Joey and Koby knew that after all, anteaters had to eat ants, or they wouldn't be called anteaters, would they?

The two had tied their pets to Koby's tree earlier that afternoon. They now walked towards it, carefully peering upwards to see whether Koby's parents were there. They were there all right, but both appeared to be taking a nap, so they wouldn't give them any trouble. The two young koalas quietly untied their anteaters and led them by their reins away from the tree, walking for thirty or forty yards before climbing onto their backs and continuing northward.

“My anteater seems pretty hungry. He seems really anxious to get to the forest,” said Joey.

“Yeah, mine too,” Koby answered. “Not so fast, boy,” he said, patting his anteater on the head, “we’ll be in the forest before you know it.”

At the Council Table

“Granddaddy! Where have you been? You know we couldn’t start the game without you!”

Doctor Koala was peeved, as he always was when their daily card game was delayed. He had them in his hands, and was shuffling them mechanically.

“Now, Doctor, don’t get upset, we have plenty of time to play. Have a seat, Granddaddy,” said the King, who was sitting on a chair at the head of the roughly hewn wooden table that was placed at the upper-right end of a small clearing at the lower edge of the “Royal Arboreal Complex,” that area at the southern tip of Eucalyptus Grove where the monarch lived, and carried out his official functions on a day-to-day basis.

The King was used to smoothing things out between his two older friends. His gentle demeanor, natural diplomatic talent, good will, tolerance for the weaknesses of others and generally noble behavior had, after all, been the main reasons why he had been chosen to be the leader of Eucalyptus Grove just before the migration several months earlier, even though he had barely reached middle age.

Of only average height, the sovereign was nonetheless physically quite strong, though this wasn’t immediately obvious. Despite his exalted position in the grove, he only wore his fancy royal garments and crown on solemn occasions. On normal days, he dressed quite modestly, a simple pair of navy blue, unadorned overalls being his clothing of choice. The dark blue bib of the garment formed a noble-looking contrast to the pure white fur on his chest, a genetic trait present in a number of koalas of all ages, even those whose other bodily hair was a darker shade of gray, as was the monarch’s.

“I’m sure Granddaddy has a good reason for being late,” the leader smiled.

“Well, this time I do indeed,” the Judge said. He then went on to tell the whole story of Joey, the hawk, and Handy’s expert shot.

“Why, that is remarkable,” the King wondered aloud. “Imagine, hitting a hawk in mid-air, right in the middle of its dive! Doctor Koala, remind me to commend Handy when I see him.”

“Pure luck, if you ask me,” replied the Doctor. “Oh, I know that Handy can handle a slingshot as well as anybody around, but to hit a hawk in the head at that speed? Pure luck, I say. That Joey can be glad he’s still in one piece, which he may not be for long, once his mother hears about it.”

“No need to worry about that,” said Granddaddy. “I convinced Handy not to tell Hana anything. You know how she is.”

“Good for you!” Doctor Koala exclaimed. “The last time Joey got into trouble, Hana was convinced he needed some medicine or another to ‘calm him down’, as she put it, and she bothered me for a half hour, trying to make me give her some potion that would make him behave better.”

“What did she say when you refused?” asked the King.

“Refused? Why, I gave her some mint tonic,” the Doctor replied.

“Mint tonic? Since when does that make a young koala change his behavior?” the Judge asked.

“Well, I know it doesn’t do any such thing, but the point is, I got her to *believe* it does, so I gave her a bottle of it. Only way to get rid of her.”

“Why, Doctor Koala!” the King laughed. “I do believe you’re an old charlatan!”

“An old charlatan that needs his daily nap,” Doctor Koala chuckled as he removed his spectacles for a moment and gently rubbed his right eye, “and that Hana has a knack for always calling on me just when I’m about to fall asleep.”

Doctor Koala, despite his occasionally gruff manners, was perhaps the most respected citizen of Southern Koalaland. Already past middle age, but not yet a so-called senior citizen, he seemed older than his years, no doubt the result of constant overwork. His brownish fur was now streaked with a softer, grey-white color. Never one to fret about how he was dressed, Doctor Koala nonetheless possessed two pairs of overalls, one brown, the other a very dark green, though both had faded over time, since they had been washed so often, this being a necessary measure where a medicine koala’s apparel was concerned. His pace was slow and somewhat deliberate when he walked, and sometimes showed traces of a limp, though as far as anyone knew, he had never been seriously injured. It was almost as if he were weary of walking from one end of the grove to the other, every single day, tending to those koalas whose debilities didn’t permit them to come to the little shack at the base of his tree which he affectionately, yet rather exaggeratedly, called his “hospital”.

But tired though he often was, nothing could ever stop Doctor Koala from making his rounds. His sense of duty had formed the habit, which had long since become a veritable addiction. Despite his frequent complaints, he would most probably be visiting the sick until he himself passed on to a better world. Countless nights of study, writing, classification of

thousands of medicinal plants and herbs, and scientific experimentation had taken their toll on his vision, which he corrected with a pair of spectacles that old Mr. Johnson, the koalas' only human friend, had given to him a couple of years before.

Doctor Koala didn't have much of the diplomat in him. He could be direct to the point of incivility, and wouldn't hesitate to insult a patient outright if he saw that his orders weren't being followed. He had argued, at some time or another, with at least half the koalas in the grove, but nobody could ever hold a grudge against him, for they knew that he had dedicated his entire life to helping the sick, and to doing his best to see to it that the healthy ones stayed that way. But that in no way meant that his patients didn't quarrel with him frequently, for despite his compassion, Doctor Koala could be quite cantankerous at times.

"Sometimes I think I should just go off somewhere to an island, where there isn't a sick koala to be found," the Doctor said to the King and Granddaddy. "After all, it's like fighting a losing battle here. Take that Warooey, for instance. He came to me last week with a cut lip, and bruises all over his face, and told me he had fallen out of his tree."

"Well," Judge Granddaddy commented, "no wonder his face was bruised."

"Hah! As if I didn't know the signs of an old-fashioned fistfight!" Doctor Koala continued in a sarcastic tone. "That no-good devil got himself into a brawl, then got beat up, didn't want to admit it, and to top it off, thought he could lie to me, his Doctor. And when I told him what I thought of that, he called me an old quack!"

"What did you say that made him say such a thing?" the King inquired.

"Why, I told him that if he lied to me like that again, I might just punch him in the snoot myself!" Doctor Koala answered.

The Judge and the King laughed heartily at that. "Well, Doctor, Warooey always did get himself into trouble, and for his kind, it's not easy to admit he lost a fight," Granddaddy explained. "And no wonder he calls you a quack if you threaten to punch him!" he added, still chuckling.

Even Doctor Koala couldn't hold back a smile. "Well, maybe I did exaggerate a bit, but the truth is, I'm getting sick of having to patch up koalas, give them potions, or whatever, just because they do everything they can to damage their health. I ought to go on strike some day. Then maybe they'd wise up and start taking care of themselves for a change, instead of always running to me for the least little thing."

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