

MY STORIES FOR CHILDREN.

Balloon

Copy-write P. Audcent 2014

Willy Jordan had a birthday and his Uncle Joe bought him a very special present. Uncle Joe worked in the Climate Department and they used huge balloons to send into the high sky to check on the atmosphere. So Uncle Joe asked his boss if he could buy one of those balloons to give to his special nephew. Now Willy was one of those boys who always saved his pocket money and job about the house money that his parents paid him. So he had a good collection of toys that he bought himself and one special toy was an army parachutist.

When Willy unpacked Uncle Joes parcel and found the massive skin of the balloon he was amazed, but inside was a little note inviting Willy to come to the Climate station and bring his balloon with him and they would fly it for him. Willy thought long and hard and went to his toy box and picked out the two army toy dolls he had, they were both parachutists, one he had bought himself and the other was a Christmas present from his Granny. So he selected the one he had bought and then sat down to write a little note which he packed into a small plastic envelope bag and attached this with strong tape to the doll.

Uncle Joe picked him up a week later and when he saw the note in the envelope he asked what it was, so Willy explained he would like his balloon back again so its a note to tell the person, hopefully it would be a child, to return the balloon and receive the doll for its trouble.

When they got to the Weather field Uncle Joe explained all this to the team assembled so it was decided to only half fill the balloon, for when the weather instruments were sent up in the sky the balloon would pop and the equipment would parachute to the ground.

So Willy's toy was strapped to the balloon, half filled with special gas and Willy was handed it to release it into the air. They all held onto him tightly so he wouldn't fly off with the balloon! They counted down from ten backwards and Willy released the huge balloon and it went soaring up into the sky. Someone took a photograph so Willy would remember his special day.

Two weeks later Willy got a parcel and inside was his balloon plus a lovely printed note from the Parachute Brigade. This was also in a big plastic bag plus three of their own army dolls, and a big surprise, his original one which he had bought himself. His father and Uncle Joe said it was such a coincidence that the balloon had fallen from the sky into the very people who parachuted. So Willy sent a real letter to the kind people who had sent his balloon back thanking them for their gifts. Now if you have been counting he now have five to play with plus the deflated baloon which he and Father blew up with a cycle pump so he could keep it in his bedroom.

Butterfly.

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My name is Jonny but my elder sister Jean calls me Jonny two shoes. I don't really know why, but perhaps is because I'm always tripping over my feet. It happens often when I run or skip, I really love skipping but Jean says its a girls game but I say boxers do it all the time. But the oldest of us all except for Mum and Dad is Robby he is really old and is nearly ten. Robby has his own friends but he sometimes spends time in the garden with Jean and I playing cricket and soccer but I'm always the one in goal or wicket keeper running to fetch the ball back and sometimes tripping over my shoes. They were Robby's years ago so Mum saved them for me when I grew into them but they are too large. Robby tells me to wear two pairs of socks to make the feet fit better.

One day he showed me how to catch insects in the garden and place them into a jam jar with leaves to eat. So last week I was in the garden and looked at the tall apple tree we had and on a branch at the same hight of my nose I saw a wonderful butterfly with its long spiral tongue sipping at the nectar in the flowers. Robby said they had a tube tongue like a drink straw which they used to suck up the sweet liquid. I placed my finger close to one of the flowers and the butterfly eventually hopped onto it. I remember standing quite still as it flapped its beautiful wings in the sunlight then folded them and wound up its tongue in a spiral then went to sleep. I gently crept into the house and along the passageway to my bedroom and there I released it onto the tall cupboard and closed the door. I rushed out to find Robby or Jean to tell them of my wonderful new pet but could only see Mum in the laundry.

She told me that butterflies needed to drink often and that a saucer of sugar water would do the trick. So I carefully prepared the saucer and took it into my bedroom and placed it close to the sleeping butterfly. They I lay back onto my bed and watched, I was impatient for it to wake up, which it did after a few minutes, and it flapped its wings and circled the room until landing on the saucer it started to unwind its tongue which was black. It dipped it into the liquid and I could see it was drinking and I thought how wonderful to have your own built in straw.

So my butterfly and I slept that night in peace, but next morning bossy Maddy from next door rushed in and opened the window.'You must not keep a native animal in captivity' and before I could leap out of bed my beautiful butterfly had escaped through the window. My mother, when told, just shook her shoulders and said 'Well you want your butterfly to have children so I expect its all for the better'. But I did notice she rather pushed Maddy out of the front door so she wouldn't see me burst into tears. Still I dreamt that night about all the children that my butterfly would have and maybe another child like me would reach up and have one of them on their finger. So I was at peace with myself and slept well.

Danny.

Copy-write P. Audcent 2014

Beyond the seashore as far as one can see standing as tall as one can, there lay a small coconut like object bobbing up and down the waves. As it reached each peak of the wave the wind would drive it on until eventually, after many days, it reached the home of young Danny Tremble. He had been walking with his dog Mussels and he spotted the coconut looking object and pointed in delight, then he started to run to the water edge but Mussels beat him to it and pawed it back to the beach just as Danny arrived.

He gave Mussels a pat on his rump and picked the oblong fruit up. Now coconuts have a soft outer coat to protect the large nut inside but this one seemed different, it seemed lighter for a start and the green covering was definitely soft and spongy. So he gasped it to his chest and ran and skipped up the beach with Mussels in hot pursuit. They reached their beach shack and Danny placed his find on the outside table. Grandpa was inside the house and heard Mussels barking so he got out of his wicker chair and went outside to see what all the noise was about.

'Look Granddad what me and Mussels found in the surf, it looked like a coconut but I don't think it is!

'Well I'll be blowed Danny neither do I', Granddad prodded it with his finger,' Its definitely not a coconut but does look similar. I tell you what, just for test, we'll plant it over there in the corner by those coconut trees and see what happens!'

So they both went to the tool shed and bought out two spades, then they fetched the barrow and wheeled it over to the garden corner. Both dug the sandy soil until the proper depth had been reached and Danny bent down and lay the strange fruit into the soil. Granddad then tipped the soil from the barrow and Danny stomped on it to firm it up.

'Shall we water it?' asked Danny.

' Well I don't rightly know after all its been in the sea.'

'But that's not fresh water its salty.'

'So it is, alright Danny just a watering can of our pure water, under the outside tap just there.' Granddad pointed to the shack corner and Danny raced over, filled the can and dragged it back. Granddad picked it up in one easy movement and emptied it over the fruit they had just planted.

Three weeks later a small leaf pushed up from the soil, and unrolled. Danny had gone down every day just to check and was at last delighted to find some action has occurred so he called his Granddad to come and see. Granddad walked down and had a look.

'There are two more stalks coming up as well!' he called.

'Tell you what, lets take the next leaf that appears down to the library and see if we can identify what it might be!'

Well the second leaf appeared that same evening and by the next morning was out flat and Danny picked it and placed it in a paper bag. His mother called for him to wash his hands just in case it was harmful or toxic, so immediately Granddad was ready off they drove down to the Library.

Alas nothing in the botanical books had anything like the leaf, so they consulted Mary Johnson the Librarian and she suggested they visit Roger Handy who true to his name lived close by. Roger thought it might be from a nut tree and he had a wealth of botanical books he could search from until just before lunch he shouted that he had found it.

'Well,' said Granddad what have we got?

'First of all where did you plant it, I guess it was sandy soil.'

Granddad nodded.

'Well you'll have to dig it up again, very carefully, it needs plenty of humus and an acid soil. What you have here came from South America, probably via a river system deep in the interior then finally reaching the ocean and eventually picked up by young Danny here.

'Well thank you for the story Roger but what is it, you have not told us!'

'Wait and see and watch it grow, believe you me it will be well worth it.' and with that Roger showed them the door. As soon as they arrived back they carefully dug in moist compost and humus around the seed and watered it in.

Because it was his grandsons special tree Granddad continued watering it and feeding it with humus and compost until the various shoots grew rapidly.

Five years went by and Danny was once again staying with his Grandparents it was coming on to Christmas and he had yet to buy anything for them, he had scratched his head but Granddad seemed to have everything he needed so he got up early that next morning and sauntered into the garden to inspect his tree. There had been a storm overnight and he had heard the branches of the trees swaying against each other.

Around his tree lay three large fruits just like the one he had planted but this time he went to Granddads shed and bought out a small axe and with a firm crack he opened up the outer case to reveal a host of Brazil nuts all neatly packed together. He picked up the second casing and hit that, then the third one got the same treatment. He gathered all the nuts together and put the axe away safely then collected all the nuts into Granny's wicker basket and ran in to place the it under the Christmas tree.

When Granny and Granddad rose they came into the lounge and spotted the basket with the nuts inside and a little note inside.

It read: From Danny and the mystery tree, to Granny and Granddad Happy Christmas.

2014

It was spring at last and the children were allowed to go out and play, most chose to have a swing and to use the new slide that Dad had built in the winter, but Daniel went hunting for small things like bees and ladybirds. So he went off to the flower garden which had lovely green shoots covering every stem but alas no flowers yet. By chance he brushed through the rose bushes being very careful not to scratch himself by the thorns. After moving left and right and pushing away the long arched stems he made it to the back where Mum had planted her rambler roses so they would climb all over the back fence and make a brilliant background display.

Daniel edged along the back fence eagerly looking this way and that for his favourite insects and eventually reached a bright red rose newly opened with a silver drop of water right in its centre. He studied it closely and could see a piece of thin straw moving this way and that.

“Oh” said Daniel “I must remove that straight away otherwise the ladybirds wont be able to get a drink.”

“No you don't, leave my fishing rod alone Giant.”

Somewhat startled by the very squeaky voice, Daniel cried out “Who are you.”

“I live here just at the bottom of the fence, go away Giant.”

“I'm not a giant just a small boy, and exactly where are you?”

“I've got a brilliant red coat on to match my lovely rose”.

Daniel bent his head really low and looked looked. “Yes I can see you now and by the way its not your rose its my mothers she planted the bush, and anyhow what exactly are you doing?”

“Fishing” came back the squeaky voice.

“Fishing for what, there are no fish in that water droplet”.

“You might not be able to see them, you being a giant but if you were my size you would see thousands.”

“I doubt it, my eyes are very good and I don't need glasses like some children.”

“What are classes ?”

“No glasses.” And Daniel spelt out the word, but the little man just shook his head.

“What are you anyway?”

“I'm a sprite, I look after my plants and fish in the morning for breakfast.”

“Excuse me but they are my mothers plants, and anyway how do you cook your invisible fish?”

“You ask a lot of questions for a giant, but I lay them out on a leaf and let the sun dry them out, I have a swim in the water and when I've finished I have my dried out breakfast.”

“With milk and sugar I suppose.”

“You suppose wrongly, you really are a stupid giant, where would I get the milk?”

“I am sorry I had not thought, but I suppose you could walk under a cow and ask her to drop a few drops.”

“Yes and get drowned in the process, when you are my size you have to be very careful!”

Just then Susie called Daniel, the children had finished their swing and slide and wanted to play hide and seek.

“Don't let those other giants find me, its bad enough having you to disturb me.”

So Daniel crept down below the rose branches and stayed very still for several minutes whilst he heard his brothers and sister running around the garden trying to find him. At last they got bored and went back into the house.

“I think they have gone now, thank you for that, and now I think I will have go as well, if you could give me a lift down with your finger please.”

“Why my finger?” asked Daniel.

“I've seen you with those buggy creatures you call ladybirds crawling on you hands. Some people collect and put them into jam jars. I would not like that!”

“I always put them back carefully though.”

“Yes I've noticed, so your finger now please.”

Daniel placed his index finger carefully on the flower and felt a slight movement on his fingernail.”

“Oh its very slippery on here!”

“Well move down to the skin then you'll be much safer there!”

So Daniel lifted his finger as gently as he could and brought his hand down to the earth he was kneeling on. Then he brought his finger close close to the bottom of the fence and the sprite jumped off.

“Goodbye.” said the sprite as he disappeared into a small knot hole.

Do you know Daniel would look for that hole for ages but could never find it again. He never saw the sprite again and presumed it did not like giants even though he was such a small boy. And then there was the horror of the jam jars, no he could not blame the sprite for staying away.

Oh I wish.

Copy-write P. Audcent 2014

Jenny Crumble was one of those little people who, what ever she saw, she would instantly want one. Whether it was a television program, or in a shop, or even walking down the street with her parents, she would instantly see something she wanted. Eventually her parents got sick and tired of her constant demanding and her father said one day, 'did you ever hear the story of the East wind and the little child whose face was changed forever.'

“Yes” said Jenny “but it was only a story, it was not the least bit true.”

“Well Jenny, Mother and I are very tired of you always wanting something you cannot have. Now if it was your birthday or coming up to Christmas we could understand it, but its your constant wishing that spoils it for us. One day you will wish for the wrong thing and it will happen and it won't be a story.”

Jenny remained quite, and thought about what her farther had said, but in the end she felt he was only trying to frighten her, and she was not going to take a bit of notice. They were on holiday visiting the lakes and besides the boats and bicycles for hire, and the ponies you could take rides on. She bade her time until they came across a water cycle near a landing raft by the lake.

“Oh I wish I could go on that, please Dad and Mum.”

So her parents agreed and paid the man the fare to cover an hour of cycling on the water. First she had to put on a life saving vest and a plastic bike helmet before she was allowed to get onto the floating bike. Then off she sped with her anxious parents watching closely from the ramp. As she went further out onto the lake she came across a boy who was repairing his water scooter.

“What's wrong with it?” she called.

“I've had water on the spark plug and I've just cleaned it off, alas its the spray from the under belt that caused it, but you seem safe and secure on you water bike.”

“Yes but I'm a bit bored with it you have to keep cycling to make it move, oh I wish it had a motor on it like yours.”

“Well I'm sure mine will go now so how about we change, you can have my rented scooter and I will have your rented bike.”

“Oh what a really excellent idea, can you start it for me please and then we will exchange our machines.”

So the boy quickly started the motor and held the clutch until Jenny jumped aboard Then he showed her the clutch lever and explained what it did, then in a flash he leapt onto the water bike and pedalled away.

Jenny let go of the clutch and away she sailed, she found how to increase the speed and without another thought raced across the lake until she hit the opposite bank and was immediately thrown off. Luckily the machine had one of those strings attached to the stop switch so she was only dragged a little way up the bank but the bad news was she had been thrown into a patch of brambles. Luckily the boy had watched her and he pedalled across to rescue her.

“I think you had better have your water bike back.” He said as he dragged the water scooter back into the water. But the incident stopped Jenny's constant wishing.

A story, why the platypus looks so funny. Copyright Paul Audcent 1998

One day, last summer, two little animals were sunning themselves under the hot Australian sun, listening to the westerly wind whistling through the gum trees. It made each leaf in turn tremble in excitement. Koala and Frog, each dreamily gazing at the rainbow colours of the darting dragon-flies, were suddenly roused by a ‘scamper...scamper’ noise on the other side of the creek. So they slowly crept, that is, one crept and the other hopped, toward where they had heard the strange sound.

“There he is, THERE HE IS”, shouted Koala, so loudly that Frog, caught amid hops lost his balance and landed on his nose.

“Where?” said Frog very unhappily, “And anyway who is HE?”

“It’s a platypus,” yelled Koala greatly excited.

“Oh” said Frog in wonderment, “I’ve never ever seen a platypus.”

“And you won’t either, at least not in daytime” Koala cleaned his furry ears.

“Why not?” said Frog as he hopped under the branch of a fallen tree.

“Because...” Began Koala swelling his chest, “because he’s a little odd, doesn’t like to come out to be seen, if you see what I mean.”

“No I don’t see” replied Frog from under the branch.

“Do you want to know why?” asked Koala.

“Yes please tell me,” said Frog who was very polite by nature, so he hopped out and sat close to Koala full of expectation.

“Well I’ll begin,” and Koala began by sweeping a little pile of eucalyptus leaves together and then sitting comfortably right on top.

Frog had often tried to copy Koala’s ways, but had never mastered the actual sitting on the topmost part, often he would fall right over, so this time he lay down and lent his head on the pile.

“Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there lived a furry little creature who was VERY short tempered, and NEVER had a good word to say about anyone.”

“Was that the platypus,” asked Frog.

“Yes,” said Koala crossly, “now don’t interrupt...now where was I.” Koala cleared his throat, “As I was saying, Platypus never liked anyone and I suppose nobody liked him, as he was ALWAYS complaining. Well one day Mother Nature asked him why he was always disgruntled and Platypus replied quite nastily to her, that everybody else was much better looking than himself, and that it WASN’T fair at all. Mother Nature smiled and said it wasn’t so, Platypus was VERY handsome and was certainly a credit to creation. However no amount of flattery would change silly Platypus’s mind and he would continue to be bad tempered until something was done about his appearance. He looked a little like me in fact,” Koala sat proudly up on his leaves.

“Froggy are you listening?”

“Um,” said Frog as he tried to imagine Platypus looking like Koala.

“Very well. Now Mother Nature being a kindly person told Platypus that, since he wasn’t satisfied, he could have three special wishes to change his appearance.

Platypus was so full of himself that he dashed away to his little home on the edge of the creek without even thanking Mother Nature for the wishes she had given him. In

his home he thought over and over again how he could improve how he looked.”

“Suddenly a large flock of ducks came swooping by and landed near a pool in the creek, they sat there on the water bobbing about, noisily dipping down to chew the weed.”

‘My,’ said Platypus, what fine heads they have I do wish I could have a head like that.’ Before he could utter another word there was a puff of smoke and his little furry mouth changed into a head with a large flat beak. Just as he was about to look in the water to inspect his new face he spotted a large beaver on the bank, thumping her tail ready to swim to some branches.

‘My,’ said Platypus, ‘she has a lovely tail, so beautiful and useful too, how I wish I could have such a tail as that.’ Before you could say jumping frogs, Platypus had a huge tail exactly like the beavers. ‘Goodness me’ cried Platypus in delight, as he swished his new tail this way and that. ‘And so much larger than my old one, how fortunate I am.’

As he turned around and contemplated thumping his magnificent tail on the ground there was a knock on his door and he peeked out to see who was there. It was one of the ducks. They had lost their way and ‘Please would Platypus direct them to the North’. Just as Platypus was about to slam the door in the ducks beak, he looked down and saw the ducks webbed feet.

‘Why have you got those funny webbed feet?’ he asked.

‘To swim better with, and walk on the mud without sinking,’ said the duck.

‘My,’ said Platypus ‘I wish I could have feet like you.’ Well, you guessed it,

Platypus looked down and his little furry paws had quite changed into large webbed feet. The duck was so shaken that it flew off in fright, but Platypus still banged the door after it had gone. He even had forgot to tell the duck which way was North.

“Well what do you think of it so far,” Koala looked down at Frog sprawled on the ground.

“Um..but it doesn’t have a happy ending, I like all stories to have a happy ending.” Frog looked upset.

“Its not ended yet,” said Koala quickly, “There’s more to come. To continue, Platypus was most pleased with himself, in fact quite overjoyed, so he decided he’d go out that very day to show off to all the animals in the bush. He tried on every pair of shorts, every pair of socks, and shoes, every shirt in his cupboard but none would fit him. Determined and being very stubborn he decided to go out as he was, anyway the other animals could see his new shape all the better. So out he went his head held high and a smile on his Beak lips jauntily striding along until he reached the kangaroos in the pasture and the cockatoos in the trees above. He waved and bowed and thumped his new tail, but no one waved back. Mr. Wombat gave him a very wide berth and looked at him hard.

‘Why Platypus WHAT ON EARTH have you done to yourself?’ he asked.

Platypus ignored him totally as he paraded himself along every path.

‘Poor soul’ said the kangaroos, ‘How terrible,’

‘Oh gracious how could that good looking Platypus change LIKE THAT.’ Whispered the cockatoos.

Alas the Kookaburras were not so polite, they laughed and laughed so much that they even do it to this very day. Poor silly Platypus heard them clearly and rushed to the nearest pond to see for himself.

'Oh my', he cried, 'Oh my, I wish I was back to being my old self again,' but alas nothing happened, he had already used up all his wishes. He would now remain like this forever.

"The end" said Koala, looking pleased with himself.

"All good stories should have some sort of moral in them," Frog said a little sadly.

"Well mine did, you obviously weren't thinking hard enough."

"I was, I listened from when you started, to when you said 'the end'. I want a moral or a happy ending please," Frog was very insistent.

"Very well," said Koala slowly, "You will get the moral but the story stays as it is.

The moral is, that everybody should be happy being themselves and not being something they aren't." Koala looked down at Frog to check he understood, but Frog had fallen asleep, his croaky snores coming from under Koala's pile of leaves. In the distance Platypus had also heard Koala's story as he lay hidden in the undergrowth, and he crept out with a tear in each eye.

"Come on out Platty, and stay awhile with us," called Koala.

"Why?" cried Platypus.

"Because its good to have friends who don't care what you look like, only how you behave, that's the most important thing. So forget the silly Kookaburras and be yourself inside at least."

So Platypus ambled over to the pile and curled up to sleep in the sun, for the first time in many, many years, and Koala curled his own furry paws around Platypus's webbed feet. They all slept soundly on that pile of leaves shaded by the tall eucalyptus tree in my back garden.

And that is why sometimes you will see a platypus in daytime, swimming or padding along a creek bank, off to meet his friends.

There was a very lonely couple whose only desire was to have a child. They had everything else, a large Palace plenty of footmen and a huge kitchen and staff. But they continued to wish for a baby. Well one day it occurred and a little baby girl came into the world much to the joy of her parents and the rest of the nation who had long wanted a Prince or Princess to fill their hours with pleasure of a young child to watch from afar as he or she grew up.

Well the little baby girl was named Princess Glorious. Not Gloria but Glorious by her devoted parents and at first all went well in her upbringing as she gurgled and spat her way from nappies and bottle and being thoroughly spoilt by all who watched over her. Oh yes there were times when the little Princess could be tiresome and naughty and there were times when she was downright horrible and really naughty. Well her parents would allow no punishment until one unfortunate day a footman was damaged when a bowl of hot soup was thrown all over him by a very cross little Princess. So the Queen installed a little girl friend to stay and receive the smacks that were due to the Princess, it was hoped that Glorious would behave a little better if someone else got a swift smack for something bad she had done. But not a bit of it and eventually the little girl friend had to be sent away for a rest from all the smacks she was getting.

Princess Glorious had everything her heart desired, toys by the boxful, books by the score, any amount of toffee and sweets all beautiful packaged up then ripped open and swiftly ate. She was becoming what the staff called a right little pest so her father decided she needed to get rid of excess energy and surplus weight, so he decide a pet was needed in her life. Well a pony, the Queen suggested and the King agreed to send people into the country to buy the right animal. There had been bad times around and very few foals had been born that season, so after looking high and low a small white Shire was found, it was bought and delivered to the palace for the King and Queens inspection. The King was surprised he had wanted a pony and a small one at that, but when his daughter spotted the small Shire from her upstairs window and raced down to run and clasp the horses neck then she called him Cumberland, the situation was changed with this sudden naming so the King patted the small horse and welcomed him into the stables.

He told his daughter she had to care for the horse herself and to learn to ride him with the help of the stable lads who would fit the saddle and harness but Glorious had to keep him well brushed and healthy and well fed.

So the months past and the Princess learnt to jog then gallop throughout the countryside so people would mention how happy she had become with her own animal. But alas this did not last very long for an unhappy episode came into Glorious and Cumberland lives, and it all occurred on a simple mistake that the Princess made. She had decided she wanted to teach Cumberland to jump even though she herself had not learnt or asked someone to show her, so her first attempt astride her horse resulted in Cumberland tripping over the bar that had been set up for

him to jump over. Well you can imagine what happened to the Princess as she herself was tipped off and landed heavily on her lower arm. There was an enormous to-do about the accident and everybody pointed to the luckless horse which was immediately taken into a stall and left untended whilst Glorious was taken for treatment for a sprained wrist.

Some weeks passed and the King asked his daughter, as her wrist was mended, why she did not go riding, but Glorious replied she could not ride such a dangerous animal ever again. So the King said why did she not feed and brush the horse after all it was not the horse's fault that Glorious had fallen off, but his daughter said the horse had got too fat so she couldn't sit on it properly and so she wanted a new horse and you can sell Cumberland. 'I suppose it's not all those sweets you share with him that has made him a bit tubby?' But Glorious just shook her head and walked away.

Well Cumberland was sold to a local farmer who had been looking to buy a large Shire horse to pull his wagons and he was pleased to buy the small horse off the King for a lot less than he might have from an auction. But instead of bags of sweets Cumberland soon grew upwards not outwards with the proper food and before long he became very happy with his new master and his new home plus he had a lot of children to ride on his back when he came home.

Whereas Princess Glorious grew up too, soon learning other skills one of which was the piano and believe it or not she became very adept and her teachers said she should give a concert for the local folk. So it was quickly organised by the Queen her mother in case her daughter changed her mind. As the local hall did not have a piano in the hall it was decided to haul it in a cart behind the King's coach at the day of the concert.

Alas an early winter came the following week and the Princess would not agree to a cancellation of her concert as she really wanted to show off a little bit, to make people want to like her and so on and so forth. So an afternoon was selected and broadcast to the people of the forthcoming concert and the Princess spent hours and hours with her fingering to get the best from her new friend the piano. It took seven footmen to take the piano down to the farm cart the King had borrowed then they hitched that to the back of his coach. Then both the King, Queen and the Princess came down and entered the coach, four pure black horses were then hitched to the front, finally a crack of the driver's whip started the whole thing rolling and off they went at a gentle canter.

The early winter had come with a few drops of snow but as the coach and cart reached a hill it became harder and harder to drive the horses up as they slipped and slid on the paving which, besides getting steeper, was also getting into thicker snow. Eventually the driver called a halt to the progress. He shouted down to the King they could go no further. With that Princess Glorious leapt out of the coach and ran behind the cart and using every ounce of her body tried to move the cart up the hill.

'Excuse me little one you cannot move that fat old cart by yourself, you'll need

something like this.' It was the old farmer who spoke over the farm wall as he and his children all grinned at the Princess. 'Well I suppose the children might help we must get up this hill for my concert so please come and help now.'

'No not the children I meant this.' And a large white face of a mountain of a horse came into view. 'Now this be Tom he will help pull the cart so the coach can go free.' But something clicked in the Princesses memory, she knew that head as well as her own. 'Why' she said 'that's my Cumberland I am sure he can help.' And yes Cumberland pricked up his ears and galloped out of the farm yard to help with the cart.

Now the Princess grabbed his long neck hair and vaulted onto his back whilst the farmer attached the traces onto the cart. 'Well I never I suppose you know what you are doing young Miss.' The King had got out of the coach and watched with interest to see what was happening and he thanked the farmer for his kindness and said they would return Tom after the concert.

The concert did go very well and there were many others showing their skill on various instruments. But at the end some stayed behind to help load the piano onto the cart, but the Princess shook her head and said 'Let it stay here for you all to use. It was a gift from my parents so its mine to re-gift.'

Her mother looked surprised 'Well what will you do now. you will have no friend to play with!'

'Well Mother maybe I will go and visit the kind old farmer and re-ignite acquaintance with my Cumberland. Which she did.'

Raining.

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“Oh its raining again,” Judith sat at the bay window looking sadly outside as the window pane was drenched with water. Her mother was mixing a cake in her huge bowl and she looked toward her daughter.

“Well Judith there is always something you can do inside the house, why there is cleaning up your bedroom for a start, or playing with your tablet Grandpa gave you for you birthday or you could ask Jean next door over to play, or you can help me fill the paper cups with the mixture I am making.”

Judith thought for a while then leaped off the bay window seat and rushed to help her mother fill the cup cakes.

“Can I put hundreds and thousands on the top of each Mother.” she asked softly.

“Well on half of them the others we will cut in half once they are baked and cooled and we will fill the insides with strawberry jam and fresh whipped cream.”

“Why does the cream have to be whipped?” Judith looked up to her mother.

“Well whipping the cream makes it much firmer and wont drip when we spoon it out onto the cakes. I'll tell you what, whilst I cut the cakes in half I will show you how to use the kitchen whisk and you can whip the cream, nowadays we like to use the mechanical whisks or even the electric whisk. But my mother, your Granny, often told me that hand whipped cream tasted the best!”

And so they spooned the mixture into the paper cups leaving room for the mixture to rise and then Mother placed the trays into the hot oven to cook. It took just a few minutes and out they came all lovely and brown. Judith went to the fridge and standing as tall as she could gently lifted the cream bottle off the shelf and brought it to the table. Mother undid the lid and poured the cream into a large glass dish and started to beat and whip the cream.

“Now you see how I hold the dish firmly and did you notice I placed it on the damp cloth, that will help to stop it moving around, so come around here Judith and up you go you onto the seat and start whipping the cream like I showed you. When its ready the cream will hold onto the whisk like glue!”

Judith did as she was told and carefully started to whip the cream, but Mother said to be a lot harder.

“My mother, your Granny, used to say put some more elbow grease into it, and I will show what she did once she had finished.”

So whilst her mother cut half the cakes in half Judith gave a solid performance in hard whipping.

“I think it might be ready Mother.” said she holding up the whisk with a huge blob of cream sliding off the whisk.

Mother took the whisk and bowl and gave it a further whipping until small peaks appeared and then she placed the whisk on the table and upended the bowl above her head. Judith was so startled that she stepped off the chair to get out of the way, but the cream stayed exactly where it was.

“There,” said Mother, “Its perfect now lets fill those cake halves.”

Bridget Foster lay on a bank of grass looking at the flowers mummy had planted in the early spring. She had dug and dug the whole winter just to make this part of the garden pretty. Bridget had collected all the stones that the spade had uncovered and she piled them up over by the back door so her dad could use them in his concrete once they had been washed with the hose. And the plot had been finished and mummy was sitting in her deck chair whilst Bridget gazed at the new flowers waving in the breeze. Perhaps it was the breeze that had caught her eye, but no it was that funny little creature with a long mouse like nose that was earnestly digging by the daffodil bulbs.

“Its a bandicoot” said mummy softly. “No Bridget just stay quite and watch it from afar. Its a native animal and is doing no harm.”

“I truly thought it was a rat and I wondered how it had gotten into our garden.”

“Well I really don't know but it must have come from the woodland behind the garden fence and maybe the fence had a hole for it to come through.”

“I shall call him or her Snoops because of the very long nose. Look Mummy its eating a worm from your special patch.”

“Ah now I understand.” Said mummy softly, “Its the newly dug soil which is much looser and with the extra compost daddy put on lots of worms must have been transplanted from the compost heap.”

“Do you think I could have Snoops as a pet Mummy, its such a funny creature, I wonder if it is scared of us?” Bridget rose up onto her knees and carefully crouched moved closer to the bandicoot. It did not run away but it turned its eye towards her. “I won't scare you Snoops I just want to watch what you are eating”, she called, so strangely enough Snoops continued digging and found a delicious grub, it crunched that quickly and went on digging with its nose until another worm was pulled from the earth. Bridget had settled closer to the flower border and lay down flat completely entranced for an hour. Mummy had started to read her book again and so the two of them were very quite. But the sun was now drifting down so mummy called to say it was tea time and they both went inside. After tea when Daddy came home Bridget was full of questions about Snoops, how long was he going to stay in the garden, and should we go try to find the whole in the fence he had come through and repair it. But Daddy said Snoops was a wild animal and to just enjoy its company for however long it stayed.

Next morning immediately after breakfast Bridget dashed out into the garden and suddenly remembered to tread softly, she found Snoops over by the rhubarb and still digging with its little claws and that awesome nose.

Later she found a huge pile of last winters leaves and one evening saw Snoops dive in, it was home to the little bandicoot. What a wonderful thing to have a pet without having to feed or house it, and best of all Snoops was not a least bit afraid of her much larger friend. And then one day Snoops had seven little babies all blind and freshly born and mummy said she wondered why Snoops was so ravenous, she was growing babies!

My family and I visited a large mansion called Sharpitor House, since renamed Overbecks, and now owned by the National Trust UK in Devon. Under its staircase is a wonderful small room entirely for children, and it was this special place that made me write this story. So now to begin this story,

Father and Mother had arrived at this large house quite by accident. The house lay half way up a hill and they were keen to see the tropical garden so they parked the car and we were ushered into the house where a grand silver haired lady took our money for the entry into the garden. She told our parents that if we children got bored studying the plants we could come inside and visit the special children's room below the stairs. In fact as soon as she mentioned below the stairs we looked across the hall to see a tiny door painted white with the notice hung from a hook 'Children only'. "Later." said Mother, so we all trooped outside to walk under the tall plants and trees until we walked slower and slower until Mother relented and said "Well off you all go and please remember its that lovely ladies own house so behave and be as quite as possible" So without another thought we all rushed back to the front door and quietly strolled inside. The elderly lady smiled and beckoned for us to go across the hall to the small doorway.

Larry opened it gently and we all four of us pushed our way into the room and indeed it was quite low but very long and broad. There were tables and chairs for dining and a huge long lounge all half size. There were lovely paintings in small gilded frames on the walls and really everything was half normal size. The room was well lit with proper electric lighting and there was even hot chocolate in four steaming cups on the polished table. By each cup was a small plate and a knife besides, and in the middle was an enormous plate of sandwiches all fresh and neatly cut. Well Larry bid we all sit down but Maise said she wanted to go to toilet so we all looked around and in the corner was another little door which said 'Toilet' so Maise went over and disappeared through it. Whilst she was gone Larry put two sandwiches on her plate, then we all tucked into ones we selected as in fact they were many types, some sardine some ham and cheese. Maise came back and in between snatches of eating explained that there was another door in the small toilet without a name just a big '?' in the middle.

Well we were soon finished with our drink and sandwiches so we all dived over and scrambled into the toilet to see the mystery door. Larry managed to open it up half way so Maise and the rest could squeeze through. We came upon a sort of staircase made out of stone that led downwards though a rock tunnel so we held hands and with Larry in the lead we climbed down a fair way. It had got quite dark and then it began to get much brighter and before we knew it we had come through a hole in the cliff bottom onto a little sandy cove next to the river. Well such excitement we had there and then we found a small path wending upwards back to the garden.

Finally we all clambered into the garden and down to the car park where Father was anxiously looking for us. "Well come along." he said but Larry went over to the front door to bid the elderly lady 'a thank you'. She smiled as all our faces peered through the front door "My father built that for we children and we always had fine time

especially getting out of the way of adults!" -----

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