

The Song of the Nightingales

*a collection of therapeutic stories
for children and families
fleeing the war in Ukraine*

by Susan Perrow
and Didi Ananda Devapriya

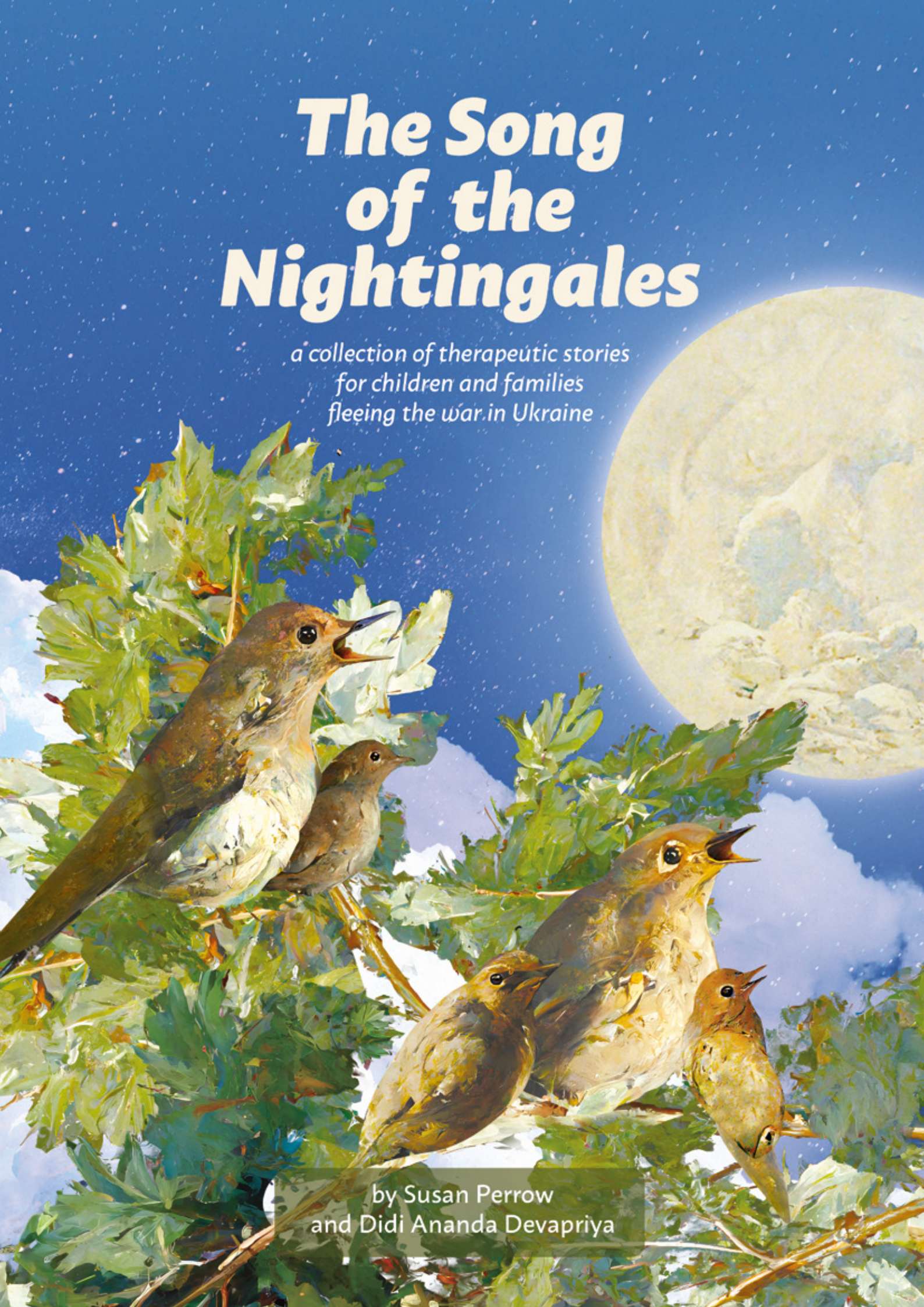


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Grief, Loss and Therapeutic Stories... a Whisper of Hope and Help

The stories gathered together in this collection were selected with great care, love and respect for the determination of the Ukrainians I have met to overcome the hardships of war and build a better future. Therapeutic stories use the magical power of metaphor to bring the light of hope, optimism and healing even after the most difficult circumstances. As the poet Leonard Cohen said:

"There is a crack in everything.
That's how the light gets in."

Having personally witnessed the strength and resiliency of the Ukrainian people as they face devastating traumas of war, it is my hope that these stories will help to provide mirrors to readers, both young and old, of their own inner resources and light pathways towards a better future. As pure gold is refined in the fire of the furnace, I hope that the pain faced today can transform into compassion and dedication to building a world of based on justice, compassion and solidarity with all.

"The world breaks everyone and afterward
many are strong at the broken places."
Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms

Thank you to all of the authors that have generously contributed their work to this collection, as well as to the wealth of traditional tales from different cultures that inspired them.

A very special thanks to Susan Perrow, a true master of the art of therapeutic story writing. She has been an inspiration, mentor and guiding star for me on my own journey with writing stories. She has a unique talent for capturing in vivid metaphors the complexity of human experiences in a way that sinks deeply into the minds and hearts of listeners, and like a philosopher's stone, transforms iron into gold.

Didi Ananda Devapriya, July 2022

Therapeutic stories are a healing medium that allow children, teenagers and adults to embark on an imaginative journey, rather than being lectured or directly addressed about the issue. By identifying with the main character or characters, the listener is empowered as obstacles are overcome and a resolution achieved. This is a gentle, easy, yet often effective means of addressing challenging behaviours and difficult situations.

As medicine is used to help restore wholeness or balance to out-of-balance physical conditions, story medicine (therapeutic or healing stories) can be an imaginative and effective pedagogical strategy. Story medicine uses metaphor and story as an indirect tool for regulation of behaviour and helping with trauma through individual and group work.

Working with a creative journey and a specific selection of metaphors, a therapeutic story approach has the potential to shift an out-of-balance behaviour or situation back towards wholeness or balance. The story may help considerably, help a little, soothe, motivate, strengthen resolve and/or sow invaluable seeds for future change.

In my first two books, *Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour* and *Therapeutic Storytelling*, a story-making model is shared in detail — a three-fold framework of "Metaphor," "Journey" and "Resolution" — to guide the writing of therapeutic stories.

In this model, the journey is the formative part of the therapeutic story construction. An eventful journey is a way to build the tension as the story evolves. It can lead the plot into and through the behaviour "imbalance" and out again to a wholesome, proactive resolution (that is not guilt-inducing).

However, in situations of grief and loss, including the current situations of trauma in Ukraine, to offer a specific framework or method for writing therapeutic stories does not seem possible or appropriate. It would be insensitive to suggest that a story journey could lead to a "wholesome proactive resolution." It would be inappropriate to claim that a story could be "healing."

A more subtle, reflective, intuitive approach is required in these difficult times. Story therapy may only give a whisper of comfort, a whisper of support, but is well worth the creative effort if it can offer such whisperings.

It is also important to note that stories don't like to be fixed into an age box. Sometimes a story written for a young child may have a transformative effect on an older child, sometimes a story written for an older child may have a transformative effect on a teenager or you, the adult. Therapeutic storytelling is a subtle yet often effective means of addressing challenging and traumatic situations and topics for all ages.

Susan Perrow, July 2022

The Song of the Nightingales

by Didi Ananda Devapriya

As nightingales are the national bird of the Ukraine, their song of optimism and hope as they rebuild their nests, is intended to reflect the resiliency and strength that our AMURTEL team has observed in the Ukrainians that had to flee from their homes to rebuild their lives in new, safer places.

Once there was a beautiful dense pine forest, the air freshly scented with the soft fragrance of the tall trees. There were many, many nightingales that had built nests safely hidden in the thickets of the forest.

Two nightingales were busily gathering twigs and leaves from the abundant forest to build their nests. Then, they carefully lined the nest with soft, sweet smelling grass. Soon the mother bird laid three tiny olive green eggs and after some time, three baby birds were born.

The family was very happy, and every day, when the moon rose, they gathered together and sang the song of nightingales to welcome the comforting safety of the darkening evening and greet the great shining moon.

"The evening moon has risen, all the birds are singing, let's sing together in tune and greet the shining moon, sing together in tune and greet the shining moon."

During the day, mother and father bird would fly off into the forest to gather berries, beetles and worms for the little ones.

Early one morning, the family of birds woke up suddenly to shouting voices and a loud, frightening, buzzing sound. There was a terrific cracking and the whole forest seemed to shudder as great trees came crashing to the ground. The air was filled with smell of cut lumber and the loud, angry buzzing of chainsaws.

Suddenly, hundreds of birds in the forest were scrambling to fly away and the nightingale family joined them. It was hard for the baby birds to keep up and there were so much confusing commotion everywhere as the flocks of birds rushed away from the frightening sounds. It was very scary for the little baby birds and they flew close under their parents' wings, afraid of getting lost.

Finally they left the forest and entered a strange new land. There were no trees, or shade and the sun was burning harshly. The bird family were all so tired from their



journey to escape the forest. They could not find a fragrant pine tree to rest in, but finally after searching they found a building with a crack in the wall just big enough for all five to enter. It was a very small space and they had to squeeze to get inside. It was uncomfortable and dirty, but they were at last safe and grateful to be together.

That evening, as the cool blanket of the evening fell over the city, and the moon began to rise over the tops of the buildings, the nightingales went outside and gathered together to sing and greet the shining moon.

"The evening moon has risen, all the birds are singing, let's sing together in tune and greet the shining moon, sing together in tune and greet the shining moon."

The angels in the sky smiled and the moon was pleased by the beautiful song of the nightingales, sending silver moonbeams which soothed their tired wings after the long, frightening journey. In the forest, hundreds of nightingales sang together to greet the moon, but here they felt so lonely. Still the nightingale family sang bravely together. As they sang, more nightingale voices appeared and joined in. They sang and let the lovely darkness absorb their sadness. They sang and let the beautiful moonlight guide them towards a new day. Their melodious song delighted the little children peering out of the windows of city apartment buildings. They ran outside to better listen to the beautiful birdsong. Then they ran back inside to find seeds to share with the birds so that they would stay and keep singing.

The mother and father bird then flew off to gather berries and beetles and look for twigs and dried leaves for their nest. It wasn't as easy to find twigs and leaves in the city as it had been in their beloved forest. But they kept gathering scraps and bits of twigs wherever they could find them and soon they had enough to build another nest. In the garden of the house where some of the children they were friends with lived, they found a bush where they could build their nest.

It wasn't the same as their nest in the dense forest thicket and they missed the big branches and fresh scent of the pine trees. But their new nest was clean and safe and they were happy to be altogether. Every evening they sang their song to the shining moon and the city was filled with the magical song of the nightingales.

"The evening moon has risen, all the birds are singing, let's sing together in tune and greet the shining moon, sing together in tune and greet the shining moon."



The Artists Palette

by Susan Perrow

A story to address the following question — "How can we stop the seeds of hatred (created by every new bomb that is dropped on Ukraine) from multiplying?"

The artist paused for a moment, paintbrush in one hand and her colour palette in the other. There was a blank canvas on her easel, and she needed some time to think before making her first brush stroke. This new painting was important — she had been asked to create a picture for World Peace.

The colours were excited. What would the artist paint, they wondered? Many birds in a tree, butterflies in a garden, a rainbow after a storm, children dancing in a circle. This last theme was their favourite... oh how they loved to share their colours in a scene of children dancing with their friends.

The colours were friends too, in an unusual kind of way, and most of the time they worked (and danced) very well together. And like friends, each had their different personalities. There was strong Red, courageous Orange, joyful Yellow, kind and loving Green, peaceful Blue, and quiet but very wise Violet. And many other colours in between... too many to count... colours of the earth and colours of the sky, colours of the night and colours of the day, colours dark and colours light.

On this particular day, the artist had paused for longer than usual, and the colours were getting a little restless. Especially Red that never liked to stay still — it liked to be on the move and use its power and strength! Red soon became impatient, then Red became annoyed, then Red became hot and angry!

As Red became hot and angry, the colour palette was also heating up.

Then something uncomfortable happened. With the heated palette the individual paint colours began to slowly soften and spread out. Slowly, around the edges, each one was losing its purity, its clarity.

The colours were not happy with Red. If you could have heard them talking, they were using hate filled words. But this couldn't help them, and soon they were merging with each other.

After some time, the artist felt the heat in her hand and looked down at the palette. She realised she needed to do something quickly, or she wouldn't be able to use these colours for her painting for World Peace!

She dipped her brush into a jar of clean water and slowly cleaned around the messy edges of each colour, rinsing between each one. Then she placed the palette

on the windowsill, where the breeze could keep it cool until it was ready to use.

After some time, all was ready. The colours were clear and bright, and the artist's thoughts were clear and bright. She lifted her brush in one hand, her palette in the other hand, and began her work.

What do you think she painted?



Uprooted

by Didi Ananda Devapriya

In this nature metaphor story, the transplanting of the tomato seedling, symbolizes being transplanted not only into a new home, but also into a new education system. It is written for displaced children but also for their parents and educators, who can be the gardeners that provide the right support for children to soon be just as full of blossoms and fruits as their peers.

A tiny tomato seed was planted in the warm, dark earth inside of a safe greenhouse. Soon, a tiny green shoot had sprouted through the earth and began reaching up towards the sunlight. It grew, and grew... And then one day, a shovel came, and roughly dug into the earth next to her and in one sudden lurching movement, the tomato seedling was dizzily free of its familiar bed of earth. A small chunk of earth clung to her tiny hair like roots. Several of the roots stung as they had been severed when the seedling had been torn from the ground.

The seedling was crowded into a tray with many other little plants. They could barely breathe. And then a motor hummed, and suddenly the earth was moving underneath them and rumbling and jostling. They fell over on to one another, and some of their fragile leaves snapped off.

A long time passed, and the little seedlings just waited, huddled together. Most mornings they received a brief shower of water from above. But a long time passed without water... They were so thirsty. The little plants couldn't keep growing towards the sun. They began to wilt. Some of the leaves were turning yellow. They cried out for water and they wanted to grow again.

At last their cries were heard. A concerned voice "Oh — these plants need to get into the ground!!! Who left them here?"

The little seedling again found herself moving through the air, and then she was settled into a carefully prepared hole, already soaked with water. The half-covered roots were then snugly covered up with earth. The little seedling was happy — but so exhausted that she just slumped over on to the earth. She didn't even have the strength to stand up straight — especially with the rays of sun beating down as the sun rose high into the sky.

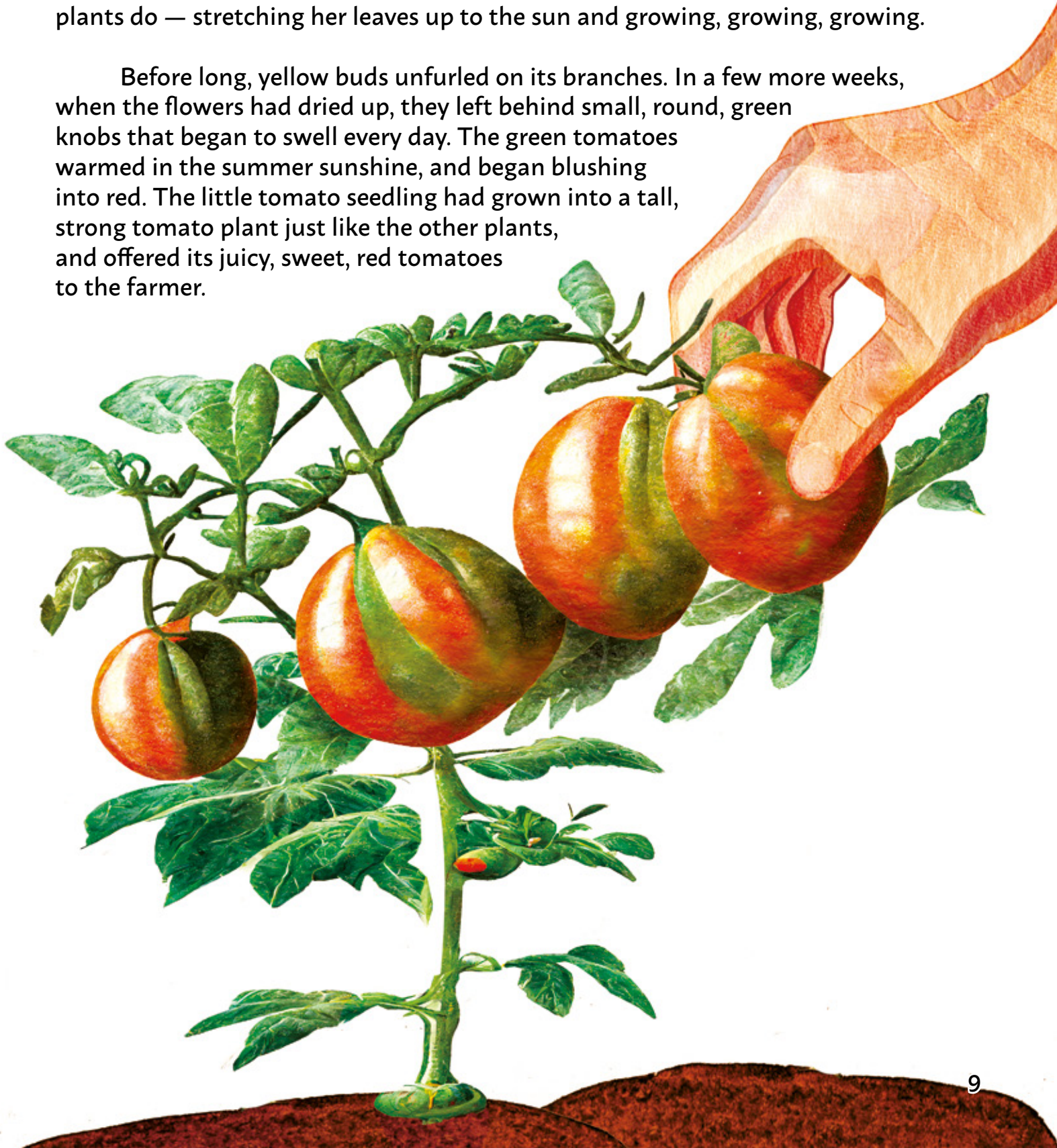
There were other tomato plants nearby — strong and tall. They seemed to be laughing at the sadly wilted newcomers. Already they had yellow flowers brightly decorating their branches that would ripen into red tomatoes in a few more weeks. That night when the hot sun set behind the stony mountains, a cool moon rose in the sky and gently shone its healing light on the little tomato seedling. The moon told the seedling, "You are safe now and can let your roots stretch into the ground again. I will send morning dew for you to drink and grow strong,



and soon you will catch up with the other plants, and you too will have beautiful yellow flowers and lovely juicy tomatoes!"

The next morning it wasn't easy, and the little seedling had to struggle, but already she was standing up a bit straighter. The farmer came and planted a strong pole next to her and gently tied bits of string to her stem to support her to grow nice and tall. Though she was smaller than the others and had to work hard to grow, day by day the little plant was climbing higher and higher thanks to the pole. The farmer took extra care to give her steady showers of rain and a little bit of extra fertile black compost so she could catch up. Soon the tomato plant was doing what tomato plants do — stretching her leaves up to the sun and growing, growing, growing.

Before long, yellow buds unfurled on its branches. In a few more weeks, when the flowers had dried up, they left behind small, round, green knobs that began to swell every day. The green tomatoes warmed in the summer sunshine, and began blushing into red. The little tomato seedling had grown into a tall, strong tomato plant just like the other plants, and offered its juicy, sweet, red tomatoes to the farmer.



Flour power

by Didi Ananda Devapriya

This story was written for a project with Romanian kindergarten children to encourage openness to diversity, and to overcome the stereotyping and marginalization of minority groups. The story shows how common bonds can form when we work unitedly, and transcend the apparent differences that divide us.

Near to the farmhouse was a field of wheat where two families of mice lived. In one family, all of the mice had golden coats of fur, the color of the wheat when it was ripe and ready for harvesting. The other family of mice were all grey, like the color of smoke billowing from the chimney in winter.

The golden mice didn't like the grey mice. Golden mice mothers told golden mice children that grey mice were dangerous and mean and not to play with them. This wasn't true, but whenever grey mice were busying collecting grains near to the house of the golden mice children, they would squeak and run away and hide. Golden mice all thought that grey mice are not as fast and not as smart as golden mice. All the golden mice knew that golden mice are the best!!!

As the winter ended, all of the mice had almost finished their stores of wheat grains. The springtime arrived with rainy days. It rained and rained and rained. Soon the burrows where the mice lived were flooded with rainwater, and the last few grains of wheat washed away.

The golden mice were hungry and so they crept into the farmhouse while everyone was sleeping. They didn't like going to the farmhouse because it was guarded by a large black cat who ate mice. So they crept inside carefully trying not to make a single sound. In the kitchen their sensitive noses could smell delightful things. Stewn on the floor they found delicious breadcrumbs, which they hungrily gobbled up.

Up on the counter, the farmer had set out the ingredients for making a pie... there was a basket of apples, a bag of flour and stick of butter left to soften. But something was moving on the counter. Grey mice!!! The grey mice were eating the butter!! The golden mice quickly climbed up the counter and tried to grab the butter away from the other mice.

"What are you stupid grey mice doing here? Can't you see that the butter is golden — it is ours!!!" The grey mice said, "No way — can't you see that we were here first?"

The golden mice grabbed one end of the butter stick and the grey mice grabbed the other end and each started to pull!!! But the butter was soft and slippery and the mice fell back onto the bag of flour which all of the sudden, tipped over, and falling right on top of all of the mice and covering everyone head to toe in white flour!!!



The mice scurried away — angry and blaming each other! "You stupid grey mice — this is all your fault!"

"No it's not — you are the ones that knocked over the flour!"
But wait, which are the grey mice and which are the golden ones? Everyone is white!!!

"Easy," said the golden ones, "we are the best!!!"
"Oh no you are not!" said the grey ones.

And the mice began throwing flour and butter and bread crumbs and anything they could find on each other to chase them away.

"We won!!! See, we are the best!!! We get to eat all of the butter!"

The mice had completely forgotten to be quiet... the winning mice were shouting with joy and dancing as the losers scurried away.

Just then, a flash of black fur pounced suddenly in the middle of the butter celebration to catch a fat mouse covered in white flour and butter, but its paw slid off of the buttery, slippery fur. Then the cat angrily skidded on the buttery mess on the counter as it swiped at the mice with its paws.

In an instant all of the mice squeaked "Cat Attack!!!" and ran fast as they could towards the wall, where there was tiny crack too narrow for a cat, but big enough for a mouse to squeeze through. They had to pull each other through the crack as it was so narrow, and everyone had to pull together to help the last fat mouse to pass through. At last they were all safely outside in the field! They were so relieved that they began hugging each other, laughing and happily dancing together in the lovely, cool rain... But as the rain washed away the sticky white flour and slippery butter... there was a surprise!!!

The mice that had saved each others lives, were both golden and grey. The mice that had lost the butter fight, were also golden and grey.

Some brown mice called out to the golden and grey mice! "Are you hungry? Look what we have!!! Come and eat!" The brown mice had found a big slice of bread on the kitchen floor and had carried it outside just before the black cat had appeared. The bread was big enough for everyone to eat. So golden mice, and brown mice and grey mice all sat side by side and feasted together.



The Knight and the Priest

by Didi Ananda Devapriya

This is an adaptation of a traditional Japanese samurai story. It is an elegant reminder that each of us has the opportunity to "be the change" we want to see in the world, and that real, lasting peace starts within, as we gain mastery over our own reactive emotions.

Once, a long time ago, there was a kingdom that had been at war for many long years. One day, one of the knights, rode up to the gates of a peaceful monastery on his horse, his armor and sword glinting in the sunlight of early morning. There lived a wise, aged priest, who was known in the entire valley as a source of deep wisdom and profound compassion.

The priest was in the garden, tending to the roses, when the knight arrived. He opened the gate and warmly invited him inside. The knight descended from his horse, removed his helmet and knelt down humbly beside the priest. He said, "I am so tired. It seems this war is never ending. So many lives are lost, so much suffering and pain. It has been going on for years. Will it ever stop?"

The priest looked at him silently for several long minutes. Then all of the sudden, he slapped the knight hard on his face. The knight jumped up in shock and anger, his hand immediately flying to his sword. His face was stinging and turning red in rage. His mind was racing with thoughts: "How dare he slap me? What an insolent, crazy old man! I will just kill him!" But then, he thought "But everyone says he is wise, perhaps he is trying to teach me something, but why would he slap me? He is a holy man, I cannot kill him." He lowered his hand away from the sword.

The priest, who had continued looking at him steadily and without flinching, suddenly smiled. With twinkling eyes, he said, "You just stopped the war."





The Rabbits and the Bush Fire

by Susan Perrow

A story to help soothe anxious behaviour

Back story: *This story was written many years ago for a four-year old boy. One day at pre-school, a normally very settled little boy arrived like a whirlwind. Matthew proceeded to knock things over and tip things upside-down, and playtime was extremely challenging for all concerned.*

His mother, while putting her son's bag into his locker, explained that the previous evening a fire in the home had burnt half their house down. Matthew and his family had escaped to the garden and watched all the bedrooms burn to the ground. His mother had tried to explain to her son that the house was covered by insurance and they would be able to re-build soon, but of course Matthew had been deeply affected by the whole experience. That morning at school Matthews behaviour was like the flames of a fire!

Finally, it was lunchtime followed by our daily rest, and Matthew fell fast asleep, totally exhausted. While the children were resting an idea for a story came to me, a story that I thought might help Matthew understand, in a more imaginative way, the traumatic event of the previous evening.

Rabbits were Matthew's favourite animals, so I chose a rabbit family for the main characters in the story. My message, through the use of metaphor, was twofold: the rabbit children were safe, and slowly their environment was returned to normal. This story proved to be an example of the powerful effect of using an imaginative versus a rational explanation for a young child.

I waited until Matthew had woken up, and then gathered the whole group of children for a story time on the veranda, just before the arrival of the parents. Even though there was no time to "polish" the story, it was loved by the whole group and for the next two weeks they asked to hear it again — Matthew was especially keen to hear it over and over again.

The story had a remarkable effect on Matthew. When his mother arrived to pick him up on this first day of the story, he ran to meet her at the gate and patted her on the arm and said, "Don't worry Mummy, everything's going to be alright!" She looked at me and said, "What have you done, Susan?" I suggested that she call me later that night when her children were asleep and I would tell her a story. Which I did!

Other uses of this story: I posted the above story online during the terrible bushfire season in Australia in the summer of 2019. One positive response came back from a mother with a seven-year old — here is an excerpt from her email: "I did some adjustments to the Rabbits and Bush-fire story using native bracken and a native 'New Holland' mouse. Your story has been so healing to my youngest daughter."

"The world is going to be full of bracken," she claims on our morning walk. She is referring to life after the fires. To the re-growth that comes back and how bracken shoots are an important part of fire ecology, helping some endangered species like the New Holland Mouse. It made my day!

In the midst of the adult conversations about the extremely high chances we have of losing our home in the coming weeks, about re-locating temporarily because of my health and considering if anything we own is of value, my youngest is thinking about bracken shootings, re-growth and little baby mouse having a good time."

There was once a mother rabbit who lived in a hole in the ground in the middle of a green grassy field. This mother had many babies, and every day the baby rabbits would enjoy playing, running and jumping in and out the long grass around the edge of their home.

One day, Mother Rabbit had to go away on a short journey. She left her babies sleeping, safe and snug in their rabbit hole, and set out across the field and along the dusty track. While she was away a bushfire started up in a nearby gully, and was given an extra push by the hot summer wind and swept across the green grassy fields.

Later that day when Mother Rabbit was travelling back home, she saw to her horror that a fire had travelled before her. The green grassy field was now blackened stubble, and the ground was too hot for Mother Rabbit to walk on. "Are my babies still safely asleep in our home?" she wondered.

Mother Rabbit had to wait till the cool of the evening before the ground was ready to step across. In the light of the twinkling stars, she made her way carefully to the edge of her rabbit hole and peered down.

What a relief to find that her babies were still sound asleep, safe and snug in their home. Mother Rabbit was so happy. She joined her babies down in the rabbit hole and they all slept till the next morning.

Every day the little rabbits watched their green, grassy playground slowly grow back. It started first with little green shoots peeping out of the blackened ground. Taller and taller the little shoots grew, until the field was full of tall green grass once again. And once again, as before, the baby rabbits would enjoy playing, running and jumping in and out the long grass around the edge of their home.



Prince Carp

by Susan Perrow

This story was written for a Japanese collection of stories entitled Stories to Grow the Hearts of Children. It was published after the 2011 tsunami. Children and adults alike can be comforted and strengthened by the metaphorical message within this simple tale about a broken doll that is rescued from the mud and makes a new friend. An obstacle is overcome, a difficult task achieved, a character transformed.

Prince Carp was a warrior doll that used to live in a little child's bedroom. Prince Carp used to be the most admired toy of all the toys in the bedroom. He was strong and handsome, and he wore a warrior dress that was made with little pieces of metal that looked like shining fish scales.

But now things were different. When bombs came and destroyed the apartment building where he lived, Prince Carp was thrown out of the bedroom window and then left lying in a great pile of broken cement and metal and glass. One leg was missing, and both arms and most of his body were cracked in many places. And the warrior dress, made from shining metal scales like the carp fish, broke into a hundred pieces and scattered around.

Prince Carp did not feel like a Warrior Prince any more. For many days he lay squashed in the rubble pile, his head and one leg poking out from the mess of cement and rocks and wood. Prince Carp thought his wonderful life had come to a terrible end.

Then one day a little boy came walking by. The little boy saw the doll sticking out of the messy pile and excitedly climbed up to pull it out of the debris. He carried it back home and washed it clean. Then, with his father's help he glued up the cracks in the arms and body.

The little boy's mother found some scraps of leather, and with needle and thread she stitched together a patchwork warrior dress, and a leather cap.

Prince Carp was not so happy with his cracked ugly body, and he was definitely not happy with his patchwork leather dress and cap. And he felt so ashamed to only have one leg — who ever heard of a one-legged warrior doll?

But the little boy didn't seem to notice that his new doll had only one leg. He didn't mind about the cracks in the arms and body. He didn't mind about the warrior dress stitched up from patches of leather.

This little boy had lost all his toys when the bombing started. This little boy was so excited to have a new toy to play with again.

When Kodomo no hi (Japanese Boys Festival) came around, the little boy took

his new doll to the festival. He found a coloured feather in his garden, stitched it on to the doll's leather cap, and called his doll "Prince Feather Cap."

The warrior doll was happy to hear his new name. Over time, the name was shortened to "Prince Cap," which sounded almost the same as the doll's original name.

Slowly Prince Carp grew used to his cracked body and patchwork leather dress.

Slowly Prince Carp grew used to having only one leg.

Slowly Prince Carp grew to love his new owner, and for many years they lived happily together.



The Princess Doll

by Susan Perrow

This story is an adaptation of the Prince Carp story with a beautiful Princess doll that will find healing through friendship and love after unexpected losses. Kvitka means "flower" in Ukrainian.

Kvitka was a princess doll that used to live in a little child's bedroom. Princess Kvitka was the most adored toy of all the toys in the bedroom. She was so beautiful it seemed the sun shone out of her face, and her yellow and white dress radiated warmth and joy.

But now things were different. When the great storm came and flooded the land, Kvitka was washed out of the bedroom window and swirled around in a fast river. She was then left lying in a great muddy pile of tin and rocks and wood. One arm was ripped out of its socket, both legs were cracked in many places, and the Kvitka's beautiful princess dress was now in shreds.

Kvitka did not feel like a princess doll any more. For many days she lay squashed in the muddy pile, her face and one arm peeking out a little from the mess of bricks and rocks and wood. Kvitka thought her wonderful life had come to a miserable end.

Then one day a little girl came walking by. The little girl saw the doll sticking out of the messy pile and excitedly climbed up to pull it out of the mud. She carried it back home and washed it clean. Then, with her father's help, she glued up the cracks in the legs.

The little girl's mother found some scraps of cloth, and with needle and thread she stitched together a patch work dress.

Kvitka was not so happy with her cracked ugly legs, and she was definitely not happy with her patch work dress. And she felt so ashamed to only have one arm — who ever heard of a one-arm doll?

But the little girl didn't seem to notice that her new doll had only one arm. She didn't mind about the cracks in the legs. She didn't mind about the dress stitched up from patches and rags.

This little girl had lost all her dolls when the great storm came. This little girl was so excited to have a new doll to play with again.

On the first of June, when Children's Day came around, the little girl took her new doll to a special festival. She picked some wildflowers and made a crown for the doll's head, and called her "Princess Kvitka." Kvitka was delighted to hear that her

new owner was calling her by her real name!

Slowly Kvitka grew used to her cracked legs and patch work dress. Slowly Kvitka grew used to having only one arm. Slowly Kvitka grew to love her new owner, and for many years they lived happily together.



The Freedom Bird

by David Holt

"In 1971 I was on a music tour of the Far East for the U.S. State Department. We spent several days in Chiang Mai, Thailand performing and meeting the people. At this time the Thai people were afraid the Vietnamese were going to overrun their country and everyone was on edge. I heard this simple yet powerful story from a young boy who was our unofficial guide around Chiang Mai. He said, 'The story gives us courage.' The song in this tale is a melody the children in Thailand use to taunt one another."

Once a long time ago there was a hunter walking through the woods. Far off in the forest he heard the faint sound of a bird singing a very strange song:

"Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah."

The hunter walked and walked until at last he came to a tree with a beautiful golden bird sitting in the top.

He said, "Why does such a beautiful bird like you have such an ugly song?"
The bird looked down at the hunter and sang:

"Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah."

The hunter said, "If you don't stop singing, I'm going to shoot you with my bow and arrow!"

The bird just looked down and sang again in a mocking voice:

"Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah."

The hunter put an arrow in his bow and shot... and he missed. The golden bird sang again:

"Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah."

The hunter put another arrow in his bow and shot again. The arrow went right through the bird's heart. As the bird began to fall, the hunter rushed under the tree and caught it in his sack. He pulled the sack tight and started to walk home. But from down inside the bag, he heard the muffled singing of the bird:

"Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah."

The hunter took the bird home, pulled it out of the sack, put it on the chopping block and plucked all the feathers from it. When he turned around to get a knife to cut the bird up, he heard over on the chopping block:

"Brr, brr, brr, brr, brr, brr, brr."

The hunter took the knife and cut the bird up into a hundred small pieces, and then scraped them into a large pot full of water and put it on the stove to boil. When the water began to boil, he heard from down inside the pot, the bird singing:

"Gurgh, Gurgh, Gurgh, Gurgh, Gurgh, Gurgh, Gurgh."

Now the hunter was starting to get mad. He took the pot outside and put it on the ground and found himself a shovel and started to dig a deep, deep hole. When the hole was way over his head, he climbed out and poured all the parts of the bird into the hole and covered it with dirt. And as he turned to go back into the house, he heard from deep down in the ground the bird singing:

"Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah."

Now the hunter was furious. He grabbed his shovel and dug up every piece of the bird and put them in a little wooden box, and tied a large rock across the box with some rope. He went down to the river and threw the box as far as he could out into the water. It splashed and went straight to the bottom. He stood on the bank waiting to hear the sound of the bird. He heard nothing, so he went home. At the bottom of the river, the water loosened the rope around the box. The rock fell off and the box floated to the top of the water. It drifted along the river for three days. On the third day, the box floated by some children who were playing on the banks of the river. They saw this beautiful wooden box passing by and they wanted to know what was in it. They waded into the water and brought the box to shore.

When they opened it, out flew a hundred golden birds all singing in a full voice:

"Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah."

About a year later, the very same hunter was walking through the woods. And far off in the distance, he heard the strange sound of the bird singing. He walked and walked until at last he came to the same tree where he had first seen the strange bird. But this time when he looked up in the tree, instead of seeing one bird, he saw a hundred golden birds. He raised his hands and hollered out, "I know who you are now. You're the Freedom Bird, for you cannot be killed."

And all the birds looked down and sang to him at the same time:

"Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah."



The Brave Little Parrot

by Rafe Martin



In this mythological Jataka tale from India, a brave parrot tries to put out an enormous forest fire with only the few drops of water that she can carry. Her bravery and persistence in a seemingly hopeless situation is fueled by her conviction that she must continue to do "what I can". Those, who in the face of great adversity, find ways to help others are no longer helpless and frozen. By finding active ways to contribute, such people are often far less affected by long term emotional scars. As Fred Rogers said "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

One day, a storm broke upon the forest home of a little parrot.

Lightning flashed, thunder crashed, and a dead tree, struck by lightning, burst into flames. Sparks leapt on the wind and soon the forest was ablaze. Terrified animals ran wildly in every direction, seeking safety from the flames and smoke.

"Fire! Fire!" cried the little parrot. "Run! Run to the river!" Flapping her wings, she flung herself out into the fury of the storm, and, rising higher, flew towards the safety of the river. But as she flew she could see that many animals were trapped, surrounded by the flames below, with no chance of escape.

Suddenly, a desperate idea, a way to save them, came to her.

She darted to the river, dipped herself in the water, and flew back over the now raging fire.

The heat rising up from the burning forest was like the heat of an oven. The thick smoke made breathing almost unbearable. A wall of flames shot up now on one side, now on the other. Crackling flames leapt and danced before her. Twisting and turning through the mad maze of fire, the little parrot flew bravely on. At last, over the center of the forest, she shook her wings and released the few drops of water which still clung to her feathers. The tiny drops tumbled like jewels down in the heart of the blaze and vanished with a hsssssssss.

Then the little parrot once more flew back through the flames and smoke to the river, dipped herself in the cool water, and flew back again over the burning forest. Back and forth she flew, time and time again, from the river to the forest, from the burning forest to the river. Her feathers were charred. Her feet were scorched. Her lungs ached. Her eyes, stung by smoke, burned red as coals. Her mind spun as dizzily as the spinning sparks. But still the little parrot flew on.

At this time, some of the Devas, magical beings living in a happy realm, were floating high overhead in their cloud palaces of ivory and gold. They happened to look down and they saw the little parrot flying through the flames. They pointed at

her with perfect hands. Between mouthfuls of honeyed foods they exclaimed, "Look at that foolish bird!" She's trying to put out a raging forest fire with a few sprinkles of water! How ridiculous! How absurd!" And they laughed.

But one of those magical beings did not laugh. Strangely moved, he changed himself into a golden eagle and flew down, down towards the little parrot's fiery path.

The little parrot was just nearing the flames again when the great eagle, with eyes like molten gold appeared at her side. "Go back, little bird!" said the eagle in a solemn and majestic voice. "Your task is hopeless! A few drops of water can't put out a forest fire! Cease now and save yourself — before it's too late."

But the little parrot only continued to fly on through the smoke and flames. She could hear the great eagle flying above her as the heat grew fiercer, calling out, "Stop, foolish little parrot! Save yourself! Save yourself!"

"I don't need a great, shining eagle" coughed the little parrot, "to give me advice like that. My own mother, the dear bird, might have told me such things long ago. Advice! (cough, cough) I don't need advice. I just (cough) need someone to help." And that great eagle, seeing the little parrot flying through the flames, thought suddenly of his own privileged kind. He could see them floating high up above. Yes, there they were, his carefree friends, still laughing and talking while many animals cried out in pain and fear from among the flames below. Seeing that, he grew ashamed, and a single desire was kindled in his heart. Magical though he was, he just wanted to be like that brave little parrot and to help.

"I will help!" he exclaimed, and flushed with these new feelings, he began to weep. Stream after stream of sparkling tears poured from his eyes. Wave upon wave they washed down like the cooling rain upon the fire, upon the forest, upon the animals, and upon the little parrot herself.

Where those tears fell, the flames died down, and the smoke began to clear. The little parrot, washed and bright, rocketed about the sky laughing for joy. "Now that's more like it!" she exclaimed.

The eagle's tears dripped from burned branches and soaked into the scorched earth. Where those tears glistened, new life pushed quickly forth—shoots, stems, and leaves. Buds unfurled and blossoms opened. Green grass pushed up from among still-glowing cinders.

All the animals looked at one another in amazement. Washed by those tears they were whole and well. Not one had been harmed. Up above, in the clear blue sky, they could see their friend, the little parrot, looping and soaring in delight. When hope was gone, somehow she had saved them. "Hurray!" they cried. "Hurray for the brave little parrot, and for this sudden, miraculous rain!"

The Rainbow Horses

by Susan Perrow

Susan Perrow lived many years in South Africa and witnessed the fall of apartheid in the 1990s. While many people were braced to see the country descend into violence, as the oppressed majority finally came into power, instead a miracle occurred. Through Nelson Mandela's visionary leadership, and realisation of the importance of multiculturalism for the long term peace and well being of the entire nation, the nation began a complex process of healing that has rarely been seen in the world. Innovative processes, like the Peace and Reconciliation Commissions found ways to bring justice without revenge.

Susan says "When I was living and working in Cape Town in the late 1990s I wrote this story for the children of the new South Africa (the "Rainbow Nation"). An anti-discrimination story, it was inspired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu's naming of South Africa as 'the land of the rainbow people'".

Nelson Mandela also affirmed this metaphor, a metaphor that applies to every nation with ethnic, linguistic or racial minorities: "Each of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld — a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world." Nelson Mandela

In the land where the rainbow ends, there once lived many horses; and each horse had a beautiful mane of a different colour. Their flowing colour manes were the prized possession of these horses, and because each horse was so proud of its chosen colour, they lived together only with others of the same, and wanted nothing to do with anyone else.

The purple horses lived in the mountains, the green ones lived in the forests, the red ones lived on the rocky plains, the blue ones lived by the river, the yellow ones lived on the coastline, and the orange ones lived in the desert.

For many years the horses had lived in their own colour groups, but there came a time when the younger horses longed to wander and explore the land. As they did so, the horses with different-coloured manes began to meet and mix with each other... and then fights would often break out to prove whose coloured silken manes were better and more beautiful than the rest.

Until this time, the golden sun had always shone brightly on the land where the rainbow ends, but now each new conflict between the horses created a new, tiny, grey cloud in the sky. At first these tiny, grey clouds could hardly be noticed — they were just dots in the blue sky. But as time went on and the different-coloured horses spread throughout the land, conflicts grew worse until the tiny grey clouds started to join together. At last, one day, the whole sky was full of great grey clouds. Now the golden sun could no longer shine down on the land where the rainbow ends and the land grew very dark and cold. The grey clouds started to rain on the land; and it rained and rained for so many days that the rivers overflowed, and the plains and valleys were flooded with water.

As the water rose higher and higher, this forced all the horses of the land, of every colour, to retreat to the high slopes of the tallest mountain in the centre of the plains. This great mountain was so high and cold that no grasses grew here and the sides were very rocky. There was nothing to eat so the horses grew very hungry and

weak, and began to huddle together in the rocky caves just to keep warm. Because keeping warm was now so important, it didn't seem to matter what colour of mane each horse possessed, and the conflicts slowly calmed then stopped.

At the same time that the conflicts ended, the rains also stopped. A gap appeared in the dark clouds above the rocky mountain slopes, and a ray of sunlight shone through. In this ray of light a shining angel appeared, and slowly descended on the golden beams to a slope close to where the horses were sheltering from the cold. As the angel came to rest on the ground, the horses could see that she was holding a golden loom in her arms. She put the loom down beside her and spoke to them: I have come from the Sun King with a message of help. In his garden in heaven there lives a golden horse and this golden horse has the power to bring light back to your land and rid your sky of these dark clouds. But for it to journey from its heavenly garden down to your land, it needs a pair of wings, and these wings must come from you. On my golden weaving loom I can weave such a pair of wings, but I will need the silken hair from all your silken manes for the threads.

Now this was a very difficult request. All the horses had been so proud of their beautiful, coloured manes. But they knew there was no other way! So one by one, they stepped up to the angel and bowed their heads, allowing their silken manes to be shorn off. When all the horses had taken their turn, a great pile of coloured, silken threads lay upon the ground. Then they watched as the angel sat at her loom and started to weave from side to side, backwards and forwards, side to side, backwards and forwards, side to side, backwards and forwards... until a pair of beautiful rainbow wings lay stretched across the loom.

Taking the silken wings carefully in her arms, the angel rose up again on a ray of light and disappeared back through the gap in the dark clouds. She journeyed with the wings all the way to the Sun King's heavenly garden; and there she attached them to the golden horse. The winged golden horse then flew up and out of the garden and across the sky, down to the land where the rainbow ends. His golden light was so bright that the grey clouds scattered in his path, and the waters flooding the land dried up.

Now the horses could go back to their homes and once more live in warmth together and find food to eat. In giving up their silken, coloured manes they had overcome their vanity and pride, and now they could easily live in harmony. Peace once again reigned over the land.

As for the winged golden horse, he made his home at the foot of the rainbow. To this day he has lived on in our world, ready to be there when needed to drive away any dark clouds that try to hide the golden light of the sun.



The Creator Woman and the Dog

Traditional

This Native American story, referenced to the Apache and Sioux Tribes, has been told around the fire and in homes and cultural gatherings for thousands of years. With the theme of "how trouble becomes transformation" it is possibly more relevant today than ever before; and with deep respect to its origins, a summarized version is included in this section.

It is an extraordinary tale, with the journey a constant cycle of creation and unravelling and new creation. According to cultural understanding of its meaning, this is a good thing, for if the black dog ever fails to unravel the rug and the rug is finished, the world as we know it will come to an end. Chaos has happened to the world before. And it has always recovered from its unravelling. The Creator Woman knows what will happen when she leaves her weaving to tend to the pot. The Creator Woman knows that she will have to begin her task anew when she returns.

There is a cave, a special cave, in the side of a mountain — no one knows which mountain or which cave. It is the home of the knowledge of the wonders and workings of the world.

Inside the cave lives a wise Creator Woman.

Although everyone knows the Creator Woman is there, no one has ever seen her. With an old black dog as her only company, she sits in front of a roughly made loom spending all her days weaving. She is working on a beautiful rug, using pine needles and porcupine quills and other things of beauty from the forest.

She rarely stops her work, only leaving her weaving to stir the great clay pot that hangs over a fire in the back of the cave. The fire is so old it might just be older than time itself.

The stew in the pot is also very old... and very important. It contains the roots and seeds of all the herbs and plants and grains in the world.

If the woman fails to tend the pot, the stew may burn, and the Creator Woman knows that this must not happen.

Every so often the old woman rises, looks at the black dog, and then slowly moves to the clay pot at the back of the cave.

This gives the black dog time to get up and go to where the weaving lies on the floor by the loom. The dog takes one loose thread after another in his mouth and begins to pull on them. While the old woman continues to slowly stir the stew, the dog slowly unravels the rug to its starting point.

When the Creator Woman returns and sees the chaos that her companion has done, she sighs a big sigh. Then she sits down to begin her work all over again.

As she weaves, she sees new visions and thinks of new patterns, and her old

hands begin to give them shape and form. She has now forgotten the rug she was weaving before.

Thus, down through the years the Creator Woman and the dog have continued their ritual of weaving, unravelling and reweaving, but the rug is never completed. This is a good thing, for if ever the rug is finished, the world as we know it will come to an end.



Credits

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