

THE MAGIC BOX

John was having his ninth birthday next week. Unfortunately it fell on a Saturday this year. He had hoped it would be any other day of the week, as his mother always went to market on a Saturday morning. John knew his mum would bring home lots of useless rubbish as usual. She would say to John,

“Look, isn’t this a beautiful doll. I got it at a good price because it has only one arm.” Sometimes it would be another cracked vase or a broken toy.

John was hoping he could have a new toy for a change, one that really worked. He didn’t want an expensive toy, but simply a bright new one that he could show to his friends at school.

They always seemed to have great toys. John's mum did the best she could for him, as his dad had left home after John was born. In fact he really never knew him. His mum worked hard cleaning the houses of rich people while John was at school. Three nights a week after dinner she looked after an old lady whose son worked abroad. Poor John had to invent his own games, as his mum had very little money. The other children's parents didn't allow them to play with him.

John woke shortly after eight on Saturday morning. He could smell bacon and toast cooking. He decided to go down and have breakfast with his mum. John liked crunchy nut cornflakes with lots of cold milk. He went into the kitchen shouting,

“Hi mum, can I get myself some breakfast please?”

“Of course you can John,” and then she added, “You can even have two bowlfuls today seeing as it is your birthday.”

“Thanks mum. Are you going to market today?” he inquired, secretly hoping she would come home with a really good present for his birthday.

“I am,” his mum told him, “I will be leaving soon and I will look out for something nice for you John.”

John finished his breakfast and went back upstairs to play in his room. He looked through all his bits and pieces of broken toys, while others needed expensive batteries. John picked up an old steam train. It had a front wheel missing but he still tied it to a carriage with a piece of string and pulled it around the room making a puffing noise, Choo, Choo, Choo, puff, puff. The steam engine was on a

long journey - all the way around the room, through the hall, around the bathroom and then back to the station. “Choo, Choo, Choo, puff, puff,” went John as he pulled the cord. In the corner was an airplane with only one wing, but that didn’t matter. John had a great imagination. To him the wingless plane was a jet fighter which swooped down from the sky and shot all its bullets at the train. It was now an enemy held train in some far off land. John was so engrossed in his imaginary war that he never heard his mum coming back from market.

“John, John,” she shouted from the hall. “Come down to help me carry this box. “



John ran downstairs, hoping the box was for him - a real birthday present.

“What’s in it mum?” he called excitedly
“You needn’t worry about what’s in it because it isn’t a present for you. It’s called an ottoman and it will be going into your room. It will be for keeping the blankets for your bed. I bought it at the market for only £2.00, and it already has three blankets in it.”

“Did you find anything for my birthday?” asked John

“I found a lovely chess set for you. Only a few pieces are missing. You’re a very lucky boy to have a chess set of your own you know.”

“Thanks Mum,” said John as he took the set upstairs to his room. John sat on his bed and looked at his present. What was the use of a chess set with lots of pieces missing? After all, it was a game for two people. Tears started to run down his face. John was really disappointed. Still, he didn’t want his mum to see how he felt. He wiped his eyes and came back downstairs.

“Now,” said his mum, “Help me upstairs with this box for your room.”

John lifted one end of the box and struggled up to his room with it. His mum placed it at the end of his bed.

“Doesn’t it look well there?”

But John didn’t agree. It was a horrible brown colour and had strange markings down one side - xxx777xxx. Before long he began to imagine that it could be a pirate’s chest, filled with gold. Maybe it had been buried on a strange island somewhere at the far end of the world, and that’s why it was such a strange brown shade.

His mum broke through his thoughts saying,

“Well! You’ll be really comfy with all those new blankets in the ottoman. Put them on the bed if you feel cold.”

That evening, before going to work again to care for the old person, she made John a special dinner of chicken and mash with lots of gravy. For a special treat he then got some lovely ice cream.

“I have to go to work now, so be a good boy and go to bed early. You can play with your new chess set, or some of your other toys for a while before you go to sleep. I don’t want to find you still awake when I come home.”

“Yes Mum,” said John, as he climbed the stairs again. He got into bed after saying his prayers and soon fell asleep. He woke just before midnight. His mum had come home, closing the door loudly. He felt a bit cold, as there was no central heating in the house. John got out of bed and opened the ottoman. He needed one of the blankets to help keep warm. But instead of blankets in the ottoman he was absolutely

amazed to find it was full of toys, lots of shiny new toys. John stood back a little and rubbed his eyes. He thought he must be dreaming. He took a step forward and put his hand into the ottoman. He touched a ship and suddenly John was transported to the bridge of an ocean liner.

“Well captain, in what direction do you want us to sail?” he heard someone calling. The man was dressed in a sailor’s uniform and was waiting for John to give the orders. John looked around the room in amazement. There were four other men also waiting for his reply. He was now Captain John.

“Turn to starboard. Full turn now,” John heard himself saying.

“Aye, aye Captain,” said the first sailor.

The huge liner began to turn. Within an hour a terrible storm broke out some distance from the ship.

“Well done Captain!” the men shouted.

“Without your advice we would have been shipwrecked. You took the right decision about the ship’s course.”

Suddenly John was being shaken awake by his mum.

“Wake up young man. Time for church, it’s almost nine o’clock. You can’t sleep all day, there’s work to be done.”

John gave himself a shake and slowly got out of bed. He was thinking about the dream he had had last night. Imagine being the captain of a big ship like that. He looked at the old brown box and opened the lid half hoping that it would be full of shiny new toys. But as he

expected there was nothing there except the three grey blankets.

“Come on slow coach,” he heard his mum shout, “I have your breakfast ready. I don’t want you to be late for church again. Hurry now.”

John washed his face and came downstairs. He had put on his best jeans, the ones he wore when going to church. His mum had made scrambled eggs on toast. John ate as fast as he could without choking, and ran all the way to church. He arrived just in time. When the service was over he met some of his friends from school.

“Well John. What did you get for your birthday?”

John wasn’t sure what to answer. He didn’t want them to know he only received a useless

chess set. John thought for a moment and then said,

“I got a ship, a huge liner with hundreds of people on board who were all going on holiday.”

“Wow,” said one of his friends, “That’s a super birthday present. I wish I had a ship!”

“That’s strange” said someone else, “Because I was listening to the news with my dad this morning while we were having breakfast. They announced that an ocean liner narrowly missed a whirlwind at sea last night. There were two thousand people onboard and they would all have drowned if it wasn’t for the captain. He ordered the crew to turn the ship around before the whirlwind came their way. John was speechless when he remembered the strange dream he had last night.

He went to bed early that night, telling his mum he was tired, and that he wanted to be up early for school next morning. However, what John really wanted was to have another look into the strange box at the foot of his bed. He closed his bedroom door and looked at the clock on his bedside table. It was eight o'clock. Usually John didn't go to bed until ten o'clock. He moved closer to the ottoman and slowly lifted the lid, hoping to see lots of toys, but yet again there was nothing there except three grey blankets.

"Oh well. It WAS a dream after all. I knew it was too good to be true." John got into bed and lifted one of his reading books. It was the story of a pirate called Black Beard, and how he was the terror of the high seas many years ago. John thought it was a great story, but if he had been the captain of a huge liner he would have

rammed Black Beard's wooden ship and sunk it along with all its evil pirates.

John was settling down to sleep when he saw a faint light coming from the box. He sat up immediately and rubbed his eyes. Yes, he wasn't dreaming, the light was still there. John moved towards the box and slowly lifted the lid again. This time it was full of sparkling new toys, same as before. John looked for the ship, but it wasn't there anymore. He studied each toy carefully before making up his mind about which one he would like to play with. A football was lying in the corner, a black and white one, and he thought he might like to play with that, and maybe bring it into school tomorrow. John reached in and lifted it out.

Suddenly he heard the roar of a crowd - a crowd of five or maybe even ten thousand people all shouting at once.

“Go on John! You can do it! Put it into the back of the net.”

John hesitated and looked all around him. He was no longer in his bedroom but on a real football pitch. He had a penalty kick to take to win the match and the world trophy. Yes, it was all down to him now to score the goal which would clinch the match. John looked into the eyes of the other players standing around him. They needed this so much, and John knew it.

“Come on John,” they shouted, “You’re our only hope and you can do it.”

John looked at the ball and then at the net guarded by a fierce looking goal keeper dressed in black. He was determined to stop this ball going into the net at any cost. John took a few steps back and then ran at the ball,

kicking it as hard as he possibly could. The ball flew through the air and straight towards the net. The big goalie tried to grab it but it was travelling at such a speed he just couldn't stop it. It slammed into the back of the net, almost ripping the cloth.

"What a goal!" the crowd yelled. "You are the best footballer in the world John. Hurray, hurray." They all cheered and clapped. John woke up at 7.30. It was his alarm clock ringing in his ears. He dived out of bed and opened the lid of the chest. Nothing there except the old blankets.

"Where is it? Where is my football?" he shouted loudly in frustration. His mother came running into his room saying,

"What's all this noise about John? What football are you talking about? The only

football you have is the old one in the back yard, and it's punctured. Now hurry up and get ready for school, or you'll have no time for breakfast."

John got dressed as quickly as he could, still thinking about the football and the goal he scored last night. "Oh I'm so confused," he thought to himself, "It all seemed so real, but I suppose it was just another dream after all."

John finished his breakfast and went to school. His teacher, Mr Henshaw, was in a very happy mood. He was whistling and singing to himself all day, and when it came time to go home he told the class that he wasn't giving them any homework because he was so delighted that his football team had won the trophy last night. He told the class that the match had all depended on the last goal, and that John, the

expert striker, had certainly done them all proud.

John raised his hand to ask a question,

“Yes John what is it?”

“What was John’s surname please sir?”

“John is his second name. Although everyone calls him John, his real name is Robert John Peters. He’s the best player the team has ever had. Imagine the feeling he must have had when that ball went straight into the back of net. That’s something none of us will ever have the privilege to experience. It must be a wonderful sensation,” sighed Mr Henshaw enviously

“We would all love that,” shouted the rest of the boys. John knew exactly what it felt like because he had been there, and taken that

famous shot. “I could tell them,” he thought, “But they would only laugh at me.”

One of the nasty older boys interrupted his thoughts. “Well John, what are you going to do after school today? Play with some of your broken toys, or maybe even your flat football.”

John ignored him completely. At one time taunts like that would have hurt him. Especially as those boys all had new toys: but none of them would ever have the feeling of excitement that he had had aboard the ship and on the football pitch, even if it was only in a dream. He was the happiest boy in the whole school. He had all the toys he could ever dream of now. All he simply had to do was lift the lid of his box at night and play with any toy there, allowing him to be whisked away to a wonderful new world of make believe.
(OR WAS IT???)

**THE SNAILS THAT COULD NOT
AGREE**



**ON A VERY LONG BEACH IN
IRELAND**

**LIVED TWO FAMILIES OF
SNAILS.**

ONE WAS THE GRAY FAMILY

**THE OTHER WAS THE BLACK
FAMILY.**

**IN THE PICTURE YOU CAN SEE
THE GRANDDAD
FROM THE BLACK'S FAMILY.**



**WHILE HERE YOU CAN SEE THE THE GRAY
FAMILY GRANDAD.**



**THESE TWO GRANDADS REALLY DID NOT LIKE
EACH OTHER
THEY WOULD FIGHT IF THEY
MET ON THE BEACH,**

**EVEN THOUGH THERE WAS
PLENTY OF SPACE AND FOOD
FOR BOTH OF THEM.**



**ONE DAY THE TWO GRANDADS MET ON
THE BEACH**

WHILE GATHERING SOME FOOD.

“GET OFF MY BEACH!”

GROWLED GRANDAD BLACK.

**“THIS ISN’T YOUR BEACH, I HAVE A RIGHT
TO LIVE HERE TOO” GRANDAD GRAY
SHOUTED BACK.**

**THEY BEGAN TO FIGHT AS TO WHO
OWNED THE BEACH.**

**THEY TOSSED AND THEY TUMBLED IN
THE SAND.**

**UNTIL BOTH OF THEM FELL INTO A DEEP
HOLE**

**NEITHER OF THEM COULD GET BACK UP
AGAIN.**

**“WE WILL BE HERE FOREVER,” THEY
CRIED.**

**IF WE HAD NOT BEEN FIGHTING WE
WOULD HAVE SEEN THE HOLE AND
AVOIDED IT.**

**THE TWO OLD SNAILS HAD TO STAY
TOGETHER FOR MANY DAYS.**

**THEY WERE TOO TIRED TO FIGHT
ANYMORE,**

SO THEY DECIDED TO BECOME FRIENDS.

BY NOW THEY WERE VERY HUNGRY.

**THEY MADE LOTS OF NOISE TO
ATTRACT SOME OF THE OTHER
SNAILS.**

**HOWEVER THEY ONLY ATTRACTED
THE BIRDS.**

**THE BIRDS PUSHED THEIR BEAKS
DOWN THE HOLE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE
TO REACH THE SNAILS AND EAT
THEM.**



BUT LUCKILY FOR THE TWO SNAILS THEIR BEAKS WERE NOT QUITE LONG ENOUGH.



AFTER FIVE LONG DAYS A STRONG NORTH WIND

BLEW AND SWEPT THE SAND BACK.

**THE TWO SNAILS WERE FINALLY ABLE TO CLIMB
FREE.**

HOME THEY WENT TO THEIR FAMILIES,

AND TOLD THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

**And that the TWO OF THEM HAD
DECIDED TO BECOME FRIENDS.**

**“WE CAN ALL LIVE ON THIS BEACH.
THERE IS PLENTY OF SPACE AND FOOD
FOR EVERYONE, AND NO NEED TO FIGHT.**

**THE GRAYS AND THE BLACKS MET THE
NEXT AFTERNOON AND HAD A
CELEBRATION PARTY.**

**TWO OF THE YOUNG ONES FELL IN LOVE
AND WITHIN A MONTH HAD TWO BABY
SNAILS.**

**BEFORE THE GRANDADS HAD EVEN TIME
TO SEE THE BABIES THEY WERE ABOUT
TO START ARGUING AGAIN.**

**ONE SAID “THE BABIES WILL BE LIKE OUR
FAMILY, A LOVELY BLACK COLOUR.” THE
OTHER SAID, “NO WAY! THEY WILL BE A
BEAUTIFUL SHADE OF GRAY.”**

**BUT NEITHER OF THE BABIES WERE
BLACK OR GRAY.**

INSTEAD THEY WERE A STUNNING



PINK AND GREEN COLOUR.

**“OH DEAR,” SAID THE GRANDFATHERS,
“WE WERE BOTH WRONG.”**

“THAT’S TRUE,” SAID THE REST OF THE FAMILY, “TO THINK YOU WERE ALMOST GOING TO FIGHT OVER IT. HOW STUPID YOU BOTH ARE.”

“FROM NOW ON WE ARE NEVER GOING TO FIGHT AGAIN. ALL OUR FAMILY MEMBERS WILL LIVE IN PEACE WITH EACH OTHER.”

SAID THE GRANDFATHERS.

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND AND THE SNAILS OF IRELAND IS THAT THE SNAILS HAVE MORE SENSE.



**ALL THE LITTLE SNAILS LIVED
HAPPY EVER AFTER.**

WRITTEN BY

Malcolm Abbott 2013 ©



THE SAD LEPRECHAUN



***ONE DAY DEEP IN THE
FOREST, SOMEWHERE IN THE
MIDDLE OF IRELAND,***

***SAT A SAD LITTLE
LEPRECHAUN.***



***HIS NAME WAS
LEONARD.***

***ALL THE OTHER
LEPRECHAUNS AND
FAIRIES IN THE***

***FOREST DID THEIR
VERY BEST TO MAKE
HIM HAPPY.***

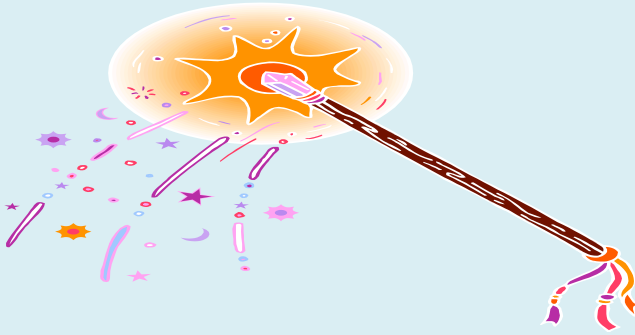
ONE DAY

A

LEPRECHAUN

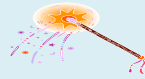
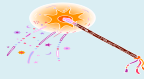
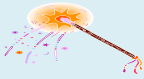
CALLED

***GREENHUE
BROUGHT
A BIG POT OF
GOLD TO HELP
CHEER HIM UP.***



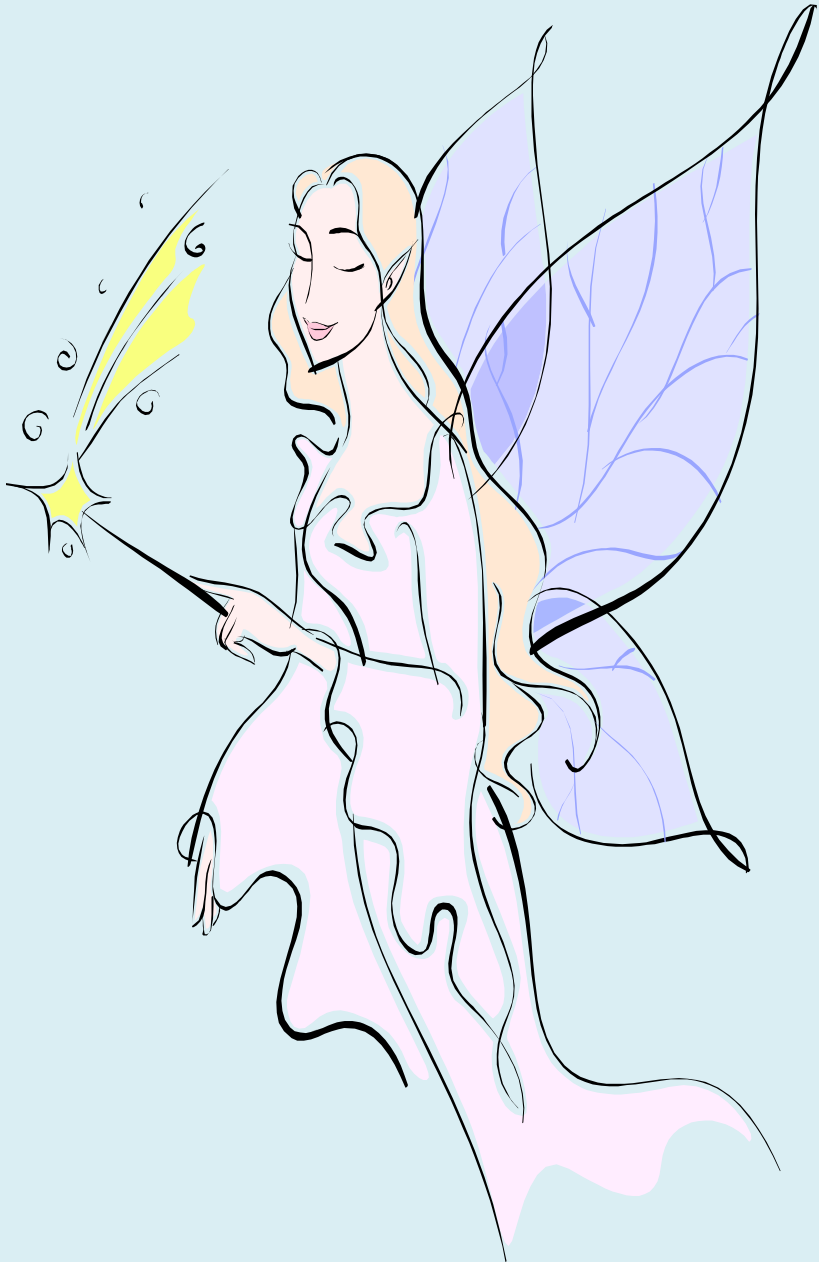


***EVEN WITH
THAT, LEONARD
REFUSED TO SMILE OR
LAUGH.***



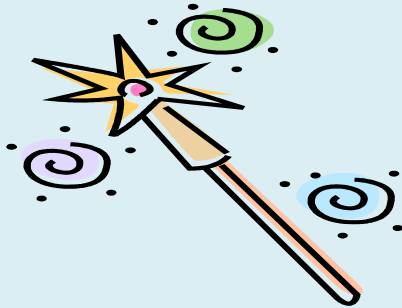
***“WHAT ARE WE
GOING TO DO?”***

***THE OTHER
LEPRECHAUNS AND
FAIRIES ASKED EACH
OTHER***





***THEY ALL SAT
ROUND IN A CIRCLE
AND THOUGHT OF
WAYS TO MAKE
LEONARD LAUGH***



***ONE OF THEM DANCED
A MERRY GIG.***



***BUT THAT DIDN'T
WORK.***

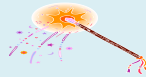
***ONE OF THE OTHERS
SAT ON THE GROUND
AND STARTED TO
SING, AND TELL LOTS
OF SILLY JOKES.***



***BUT THAT DID NOT WORK
EITHER.***



***THE NEXT
LEPRECHAUN TRIED
TO MAKE LEONARD
SMILE BY PLAYING
WITH A RAINBOW.***



***HE TOSSED IT OVER
HIS HEAD AND
JUMPED OVER IT.***



***ALL THE OTHER
LEPRECHAUNS
LAUGHED AND
LAUGHED BUT POOR***

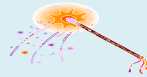
***LEONARD REMAINED
VERY SAD INDEED.***



***FINALLY THEY ALL
GAVE UP.
ONCE AGAIN THEY SAT
IN A CIRCLE
WONDERING WHAT
TO DO NEXT.***



***“LET’S ALL GO TO THE
ZOO,” ANNOUNCED
JEPPO – ONE OF THE
OTHER
LEPRECHAUNS.***



***“GREAT IDEA,”
THEY ALL AGREED.***

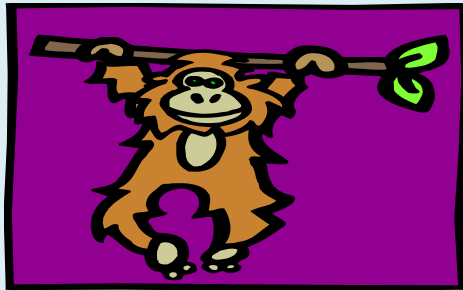
***“LEONARD CAN COME
ALONG TOO IF HE
WISHES.”***

***THEY WENT TO THE
ZOO WHERE THEY ALL
LAUGHED AT THE
MONKEYS CLIMBING
UP AND DOWN
AMONG THE TREES***

***JUMPING FROM ONE
TO THE OTHER.***

***ALL EXCEPT GRUMPY
OLD LEONARD OF
COURSE!***

***THE MONKEYS PLAYED ON AND
ON AMONG THE TREES.***



***SUDDENLY THEY HEARD A
STRANGE SOUND.***

***A SOUND THEY HAD NEVER
HEARD BEFORE.***

***SOME OF THE LEPRECHAUNS
EVEN RAN TO HIDE IN THE
FIELDS NEARBY.***

***OTHERS STOOD STILL, TOO
FRIGHTENED TO MOVE.***

***ONLY ONE VERY BRAVE
LEPRECHAUN LOOKED AROUND
THE CORNER TO SEE WHERE***

***THE SOUND WAS COMING
FROM.***

***TO HIS SURPRISE IT WAS
COMING FROM LEONARD!
HE WAS ROLLING OVER AND
OVER ON THE GROUND
LAUGHING AND LAUGHING
LOUDLY.***

***THE OTHER LEPRECHAUNS
LOOKED INTO THE CAGE BESIDE
LEONARD AND THERE THEY
SAW A LAUGHING HYENA. HE
WAS LYING ON HIS BACK***

***LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY AT
LEONARD, AND LEONARD***



***COULDN'T STOP LAUGHING
BACK AT HIM.***

***IN FACT NONE OF THEM COULD
MAKE HIM STOP.***

***WHEN THEY RETURNED HOME TO
THE FOREST LEONARD WAS STILL
LAUGHING.***

***TWO MONTHS PASSED.
THE OTHER LEPRECHAUNS IN
THE FOREST WERE TIRED OF
LISTENING TO LEONARD'S
LAUGH.***

***NOW THEY ALL WENT ABOUT
WITH SAD FACES TRYING TO
MAKE HIM STOP.***

***“WHY, OH WHY DID
WE COAX LEONARD TO
LAUGH?” THEY
WONDERED.***

***“IT WAS SO MUCH
BETTER WHEN HE
DIDN’T.”***



LEONARD

***NEVER STOPPED LAUGHING AND
PEOPLE SAY HE IS STILL LAUGHING
TO THIS DAY.***

*So if you are walking in the forest and hear strange laughs,
look all around carefully. It could very well be Leonard.*



by Malcolm Abbott ©

***THE MORAL OF THE STORY IS,
SOMETIMES IT'S BETTER TO LEAVE
THINGS AS THEY ARE.***

BIG OAKY

“Good morning Oaky,” whispered Ash.

“Oh, good morning to you too Ash. It looks as if it’s going to be another fine day.”

“Indeed it does and you know what that means,” replied Ash

“I do,” said the big oak tree.

“Lots more visitors to the forest today - dogs barking and children shouting and piddling on my roots. I am getting too old for all this now days.”

“Yes indeed Oaky, you must be four

hundred years old soon.”

“Well let’s see, I was first rooted in the year 1613 on the first day of May. This is the 1st of June 2012 that means I have only eleven months to go until I am 400 years old. I hope we can have a big party that day.”

“I am sure we will. I have heard Beech, Hawthorn, and Elm talking about a special party for you then. I’m not supposed to tell you of course, as it’s supposed to be a surprise.”

“Then say no more, because I do like surprises.”

“That was a great party we had last year for Norman. Do you remember the dog that joined us? Rocky I think his name was. He couldn’t believe we could talk to each other by rubbing our branches together and twitching our leaves,” said Ash.

“Yes, and humans think it’s just the wind,” laughed big Oaky.

This was the month of June in the forest. All the trees were dressed in their best summer clothes. Many beautiful wild flowers and heathers covered the landscape and lots of small rodents were scurrying around

looking for breakfast. A lake deep in the forest was home to ducks and swans who kept dipping their heads in and out of the water also searching for food. On the banks were the bigger animals. There was Snotty the stoat. Snotty was very cross most of the time, so all the animals stayed away from him. On the opposite bank lived old Beaver. Beaver and all his family loved cutting down small trees with their sharp teeth and make a dam across the river which ran into the lake.

Big Oaky looked around and said to Ash,

“Isn't this so much better than winter?”

“Of course it is, and I don't mind the boys and girls playing and making a little noise sometimes.”

Ash answered.

SNOTTY STOAT & OLD BEAVER



Just then two boys came past, one was saying to the other. “I would like to build a camp fire and cook some sausages.”

“OH dear, did you hear that?” said big Oaky.

“I did, and I remember what happened last time two boys set fire to some wood. Lots of our friends were burnt down when the fire got out of control,” said Beech. Beech had just woken and had been listening to big Oaky. Beech had a beautiful coat of reddish brown. He always stood out among the other trees. But he was not as tall or as strong as big Oaky.



BIG OAKY



ASH



BEECH AND HAWTHORNE



“I am sure you must remember lots of things that have happened in the forest Oaky, as you are here almost four hundred years,” chirped in a little bird sitting nearby.

“Yes you must have lots of stories to tell. Please tell us one,” asked Beech.

“Well maybe later,” replied Oaky.

“Ah go on, tell us one now please. We have nothing to do all day and would love to hear a story about the forest long ago, said Ash.

“OK then, but it will have to be a short one,” said big Oaky.

Oaky started to rub all his branches

and leaves together just like a person clearing their throat ready for a long speech. “Well I remember about two hundred and fifty years ago I saw an old wooden boat coming towards the island. There were not so many tall trees then in the forest, so I was able to see over them all although I was only one hundred and fifty years old.”

“What happened to the old boat?” interrupted Hawthorn.

“You will have to wait until I tell the story, so please do not interrupt me again,” said Oaky.

Oaky continued, “I saw the boat

come to land on the south side of the island.

Four very small people got out and carried a large brown box up to the sand dunes. There they started to dig a deep hole and buried the box.”

**“I wonder was it stolen treasure?”
said Beech.**

“You will find out in good time now don’t interrupt me again please. It’s very bad manners.”

Big Oaky scorned.

“After they had hidden the box they went back to the old boat and headed off in the same direction from

which they had come. About a week later I saw a large ship dropping anchor just off the coast. Six rowing boats were lowered with ten men in each. They started towards the shore. I could see that they all had spades. When they reached the sand they started to dig holes everywhere. They must have been looking for that box. They tried for days to find it but it was too well hidden.

Finally the men gave up. I heard one of them say, “This is a nice island, lots of trees with many birds and animals. We can use the wood from the trees

and eat the birds and the animals. Let's make this home for a while until there is nothing left."

I was really frightened. Remember I was only one hundred and fifty years old. I had many years of life left in me. My dad lived until he was over 600 years. These men were going to cut me down, along with all the other trees for fire wood or to build wooden huts and boats. How awful would that be? Not only that, they were going to eat all the birds and the animals in the forest."

"I am glad no one has eaten me,"

whispered the little bird, who was listening intently to the story.

“Yes,” said Beech, “I am glad I am not a hut or something. I like being simply myself.”

Oaky continued, “The men started to cut down some of the trees at the other side of the forest. All the birds and animals were terrified.

The birds were lucky. They all got together and flew away to another place. However they did promise, before they left, that they would try to find someone to help us. As for the animals they had to hide all day, and

only come out at night. That's why you will never see too many small animals in the forest during daytime, even now days.

The others who could swim also hid during daylight and came out again at night.

As for we trees, we could do nothing. Many of us were lost. We discovered that these people were called "The Brigands." They came from the mountains of far off lands and destroyed every place where they settled."

"How did you fight back and win your

forest again?” asked Ash.

“We couldn’t fight them on our own. We had to wait for help. We waited for almost two years. By that time most of the trees were cut down, and the animals had either been eaten or had left the island. Then one day, I think it was a cold October morning, I saw a huge flock of birds in the distance. They were not just ordinary birds, but massive ones, with long sharp beaks, and big claws. They looked very strange indeed. None of the trees had ever seen anything like them before. Behind them came

more birds, a little smaller, and behind them even smaller ones again. I could see lots of boats coming to the shore full of tiny men like the ones who buried the box years ago. There must have been one hundred boats with ten men in each.

The biggest birds had now reached the island, and started to attack the brigands, using their long beaks and claws. The brigands were running around, not knowing what to do. They had their hands in the air to defend their heads, but to no avail. The next lot of birds attacked, and

then the third wave came along. The brigands knew they were defeated, and started to run towards the beach to board their boats. But awaiting them were all the tiny men I now know to be Gnomes.

The Gnomes fought with the brigands until there were only a few of them left. They managed to scramble into the boats that were still there.

The big birds were going to chase after them, until I heard a voice shouting.

“Let them go and tell their friends never to come back to this island

again. We will be prepared for them.”
The voice belonging to one of the Gnomes who wore a special kind of hat and a scarf went on giving orders. He was their leader, and I met him next day. He told me that the birds, which left the island when the brigands invaded it, had come north to his land. They told him what had happened and had asked for help. “It took us a long time to gather all the eagles and hawks together for the attack which saved your island. Don’t worry, we are a peaceful people. We will help look after the island and all your trees, and wild life.”

I asked him his name and he told me he was called Norman. “Yes, I’m the same Norman you invited to the party last year when the dog found my scarf on the beach!”

“Wow,” said Beech, “That was a great story. Can you tell us another one sometime soon? Please Oaky.”

“Of course I will, I have lots of stories to tell about the forest.”

“What happened to the brown box? Who left it, and what was in it?” asked Ash.

“I wondered when someone would ask about that,” said Big Oaky. “I told

Norman about it and he dug it up. Inside were indeed lots of jewels. The same jewels which had been stolen from the Gnomes northern kingdom. The king's crown was among them," announced Oaky.

Norman was so happy he jumped up and down with joy. "These have been missing for years. We can't have a king without a crown. By coming here to help you, we were well rewarded."

Norman thanked me many times and I thanked him and the Gnomes in return for saving our island. Big Oaky

finished the story by saying,
“It’s always good to help others,
because you never know when **you**
might need their help.”

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THE KING’S CROWN

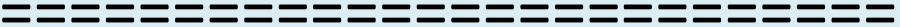


The fearsome eagles which came
to the rescue

THE GNOMES IN THE FOREST



SNODDY THE SILLY LITTLE SNAIL



**SNODDY WAS ONLY ONE YEAR OLD WHEN HE
DECIDED HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE WORLD.**

**“DON’T BE SILLY,” WARNED HIS MUM AND
DAD**

**BUT SNODDY WAVED GOODBYE SAYING
“DON’T WORRY, I’LL BE BACK SOON.”**



**HIS TWO SISTERS SHOUTED “BYE
SNODDY. PLEASE TELL US WHERE YOU
ARE GOING.”**

**BUT THE TWO SISTERS WERE SO WARM
AND COSY THEY DIDN’T COME OUT OF
THEIR SHELLS TO HEAR HIS ANSWER.**

**“I AM GOING FAR AWAY TO SEE THE
WORLD.”**

SNODDY SHOUTED BACK TO THEM.



**SNODDY HAD NOT GONE VERY FAR BEFORE
HE MET A DOG.**

“WHAT’S YOUR NAME?” ASKED SNODDY

“MY NAME IS LUCKY, WHAT’S YOURS?”

**“MY NAME IS SNODDY, AND I AM OFF TO SEE
THE WORLD.”**

**“YOU SOUND A BIT SILLY TO ME,” BARKED
LUCKY, “BUT I WISH I COULD COME TOO.”**

**“WHY NOT COME ALONG WITH ME? I HAVE A
LONG WAY TO GO AND DON’T HAVE MUCH
TIME TO CHAT.” SNODDY ANNOUNCED.**





THEY MET A YOUNG PONY IN A FIELD NEAR THE BEACH.

“WHERE ARE YOU TWO SILLY BILLYS GOING?” THE PONY ENQUIRED.

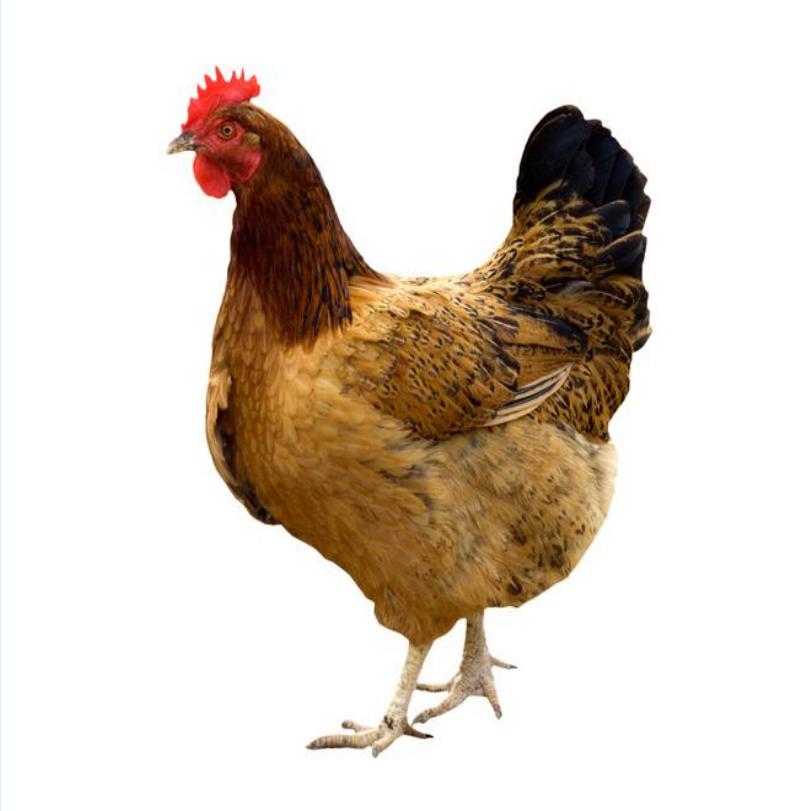
“WE ARE GOING TO SEE THE WORLD.”

SNODDY AND LUCKY TOLD HIM.

“CAN I COME PLEASE I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO SEE THE WORLD?”

“OF COURSE YOU CAN, WHAT’S YOUR NAME?”

“MY NAME IS PETER”



**“HELLO YOU THREE. WHERE ARE YOU
GOING?”**

THEY HEARD A HEN ASK.

**“WE ARE GOING TO SEE THE WORLD,”
SHOUTED SNODDY.**

**“I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE WORLD TOO,
BUT I DO THINK THIS IS A SILLY IDEA.”
ANNOUNCED THE HEN**

“WHERE IS THE WORLD?” HE ADDED

**“IT MUST BE SOMEWHERE AROUND
HERE,” SAID SNODDY, “WHY DON’T YOU
COME ALONG AND WE CAN FIND IT
TOGETHER?”**

**“GOOD IDEA,” ANSWERED THE HEN, “MY
NAME IS PEN.”**



**A LITTLE FURTHER ON THEY MET A BLACKBIRD
PULLING A WORM OUT OF THE GROUND FOR
BREAKFAST.**

**WHEN THE BLACKBIRD OPENED ITS BEAK TO
ASK WHERE**

**THEY WERE ALL GOING THE WORM SLID BACK
INTO THE GROUND AND ESCAPED.**

**HE HEARD THAT THEY WERE GOING TO SEE
THE WORLD, AND THOUGHT THEY WERE ALL
REALLY SILLY.**

**EVEN SO, HE ASKED IF HE COULD JOIN THEM
AS HE ALWAYS WANTED TO SEE THE WORLD
BUT WAS TOO AFRAID TO GO ALONE.**

**“OF COURSE” THEY ALL SAID AT ONCE
“PLEASE COME WITH US.”**



SOON AFTER THEY MET A CAT,



THEN A RABBIT

-



AND A HEDGEHOG

WHO ALL WANTED TO SEE THE WORLD TOO.

SUDDENLY IT STARTED TO RAIN.

**“I HATE THE RAIN,” BARKED THE DOG,
“I AM GOING BACK TO MY KENNEL.”**

**“SO DO I,” NEIGHED THE PONY,
“I’M GOING BACK TO MY STABLE.”**

**“ME TOO,” SAID THE HEN,
“I’M GOING BACK TO MY HUT.”**

**“I’M GOING TO MY NEST I DON’T LIKE
THE RAIN EITHER,”
CHIRPED THE BLACKBIRD.**

**“I’M OFF TO MY NICE WARM, DRY
BASKET I CAN’T STAND RAIN.”
MEOWED THE CAT.**

**THE RABBIT SAID NOTHING BUT QUIETLY
HOPPED OFF TO HIS BURROW
UNDERGROUND.**

**THAT ONLY LEFT THE HEDGEHOG AND
THE SNAIL.**

**“I AM GOING TO FIND A NICE THICK
HEDGE TO HIDE UNDER,”
SAID THE HEDGEHOG.**

**“WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO
SNODDY?”**

**“WELL IT SEEMS I’M THE ONLY ONE WHO
BROUGHT HIS HOUSE WITH HIM. I’M
NOT SO SILLY AFTER ALL.**

**I’LL GO BACK INTO MY HOUSE UNTIL THE
RAIN IS OVER. THEN I’LL GO ON TO SEE
THE WORLD.**



**SNODDY CURLED UP IN HIS NICE WARM SHELL
THINKING, “YOU SHOULD ALWAYS BE
PREPARED FOR WHATEVER MAY COME
ALONG.”**

**THEN HE WENT OFF TO SLEEP UNTIL THE RAIN
WAS OVER.**

Written by

Malcolm Abbott ©

SANDY



THIS IS A STORY OF A VERY BRAVE RESCUE DOG CALLED SANDY.
HE HAD RETIRED AFTER MANY YEARS OF HARD WORK IN THE SWISS
ALPS BUT HIS EXPERTISE WAS NEEDED ONCE MORE.

High in the mountains the snow was falling. The wind was fierce and had driven the snow into deep drifts. It was almost winter time in the Swiss Alps. Two men struggled through the terrain. They were well prepared for the trek with heavy fur coats and hats that covered not only their heads but most of their faces as well. Although they wore long leggings and proper snow boots they could still feel the biting cold. Walking along side them was a large dog with a coat as thick as ten blankets.

“Almost there now Sandy!” announced one of the men, his breath almost freezing in the air. Sandy did not need to be told. He knew exactly where he was, and how far it was to the shelter.

Sandy had been on the mountains many times in extreme weather conditions. He was a huge

St Bernard, a mountain rescue dog. Over the last seven years of his working life Sandy had saved many lives - people who were stranded in snow or who had had an accident while climbing in the mountain. This time it was a man who had fallen while skiing. He had broken his leg. In those days (almost one



hundred years ago) the only way to bring him back down from the mountain safely was to lay him on a stretcher and drag him downhill on a sleigh. It was a rough journey for the patient and hard work for the dogs. Sandy was very strong, as he had been since a pup. His dad had also been a mountain rescue dog. He had taken Sandy on some of his rescue missions, and shown him the secrets of the mountains. He was taught him what to look out for, things like checking when there may be an avalanche of snow. Many rescue dogs in those days were killed while coming to people's aid.

Sandy knew to watch out for the certain signs that humans never noticed. He could smell things, even if they were buried under snow. His senses were very highly tuned. Sandy had

always been champion rescuer, but now he was getting a bit too old for this type of work.

The man turned again to Sandy saying,

“Well old chap you and I have worked closely together over the years. I am going to miss you a lot when you retire. This will be our last mission together. You deserve a good long rest after all your years of hard work.”

Sandy understood what he was saying, as they had been on many rescues together.

Luke had lived in the mountains since he was a boy. Like Sandy he knew all the signs and the trails. While other folk thought it was

going to be a nice day, Luke would look at the sky and think to himself,

“I hope people don’t go up into the mountains today. The weather is going to turn stormy later.” He was always right and Sandy respected his knowledge.

They could see the shelter now. It was only an hour’s journey away. Sandy took the easiest path down the mountain to cause the patient as little discomfort as possible. When they reached the shelter the doctor took charge. The injured man was carefully lifted onto a bed and his leg was attended to. Luke and Sandy went into a little room at the back of the shelter to rest, and have some hot food and something to drink.

“Well done Sandy,” Luke praised. Quickly he looked away, pretending to watch something

through the window. He did not want Sandy to see his tears. Luke knew how much he would miss his friend, now that the day had come for Sandy to retire. Luke walked over to him, and gave Sandy a huge hug, while stroking his thick fur.





“You are the best dog, and you will always be the best. Although now you must have a different lifestyle, you will make somebody a great companion. I hope they will look after you for many years to come. Good luck my old partner and may God protect you I must now say goodbye.”

At that Luke turned and left the room. Sandy lay down on a rug beside the big log fire. He didn't know what was going to happen to him now that he had finished working as a rescue dog. At this moment he was just too tired to think about the future. He closed his huge brown eyes and was soon fast asleep.

Sandy woke early next morning. It had stopped snowing, the sun was shining, but it was still very cold outside. He stood up and gave himself a good shake. The fire was still lit beside him, but now there were only a few

smoldering logs. “I wonder what I’ll do today? No climbing in the mountains any more. I think I will miss my work.”

Sandy was still deep in thought when the door opened. There stood the doctor.

“Well, how are you today my big fellow? I felt you would like to know about the patient you brought in yesterday. He is going to make a full recovery. If it wasn’t for you he would have died on those mountains.” The doctor continued, “I hear there are some good kind people coming to see you today. Peppe and his son Jon from the west side of the mountain. They live in one of the most beautiful valleys. I have been to see them a few times, as young Jon is never too well, or too strong. He has a damaged leg, and has had breathing problems ever since he was born. That’s why his parents brought him to

live here. They thought the mountain air would improve his health. Anyway, I should get you some breakfast now Sandy.”



THE DOCTOR'S SHELTER.



THE DOCTOR AT THE DOOR OF THE SHELTER



THE DOCTOR MENDS THE BROKEN LEG.



SANDY BY THE FIRE



SANDY ENJOYS A GOOD BREAKFAST

The doctor lived at the shelter. It had been his home ever since he came to the mountains ten years ago. Before that he worked in a big city. He loved the mountains, and said he would never want to be in a city again. The doctor offered his services to the people who lived in the many scattered little villages. These mountain folk eked out a living by keeping a few sheep and goats. Some grew whatever hardy vegetables they could in the harsh climate. Others would earn a better living by taking men on skiing trips, or teaching people how to climb the mountains.

Sandy ate a hearty breakfast of meat, potatoes, and gravy. It sounded more like a dinner time meal, but this is what he enjoyed at any time of day. Sandy finished eating and was about to lie down again by the fire, when he heard voices. Sandy looked out through

the tiny window. There were two people, a man with a boy who had ginger hair, standing outside.

“This must be Peppe and his son coming to see me!”

The doctor brought both of them into the shelter, and signaled for them to sit beside the log fire burning in the kitchen. The doctor told them he would serve hot drinks, and then bring Sandy in to sit with them.

“I am sure we will love him,” said Peppe, “He will be good company for Jon.” The doctor brought in the hot drinks, and offered biscuits he had made himself that morning. He was an expert cook and baker. He had many years of experience while fending for himself in the mountains.

“Not too many cafés or shops up here,” he would say laughing, “So we must be able to look after ourselves.”

When they had finished their drinks the doctor left the room to fetch Sandy. Peppe and Jon stood waiting.

Jon was full of excitement.

“My own dog,” he kept saying, “And a really brave rescue dog at that!”

Sandy entered the room.

“Woh,” was Jon’s lips first cry, then “He is simply perfect”.

“O you like him?” asked his dad.

“I sure do,” answered Jon, “Yippee,” he shouted again.

“Well, he seems to like you too,” chuckled the doctor.

Sandy had moved slowly closer to Jon. It was as if he knew he was going home with them. Jon put his arms around Sandy's huge neck and hugged him tightly.

"I love you Sandy. You and I will be best of friends forever and ever," Jon whispered into his ear. Sandy was not exactly sure what he was saying, but his instinct told him it was something good. He felt this young boy could be trusted. Peppe turned to the doctor.

"I can't thank you enough. He looks to be a wonderful dog. How much do I owe you for him?"

"I don't want anything. All I need is to know that you will look after him well. If you like, you can donate a small amount to the mountain dog fund. They do such important work here. Any gift will be very welcome."

Peppe reached into his pocket and gave a generous donation towards the shelter for rescue dogs. They waved goodbye to the doctor, and thanked him for giving them such a wonderful dog. Then they left for their own village. Sandy looked back at the doctor as he walked away. He didn't look sad. He knew he had to rest more now days, after so many years of hard work. Sandy could tell already that he was going to be happy with Peppe and Jon.

The village was about 20 kilometers away. They stopped half way to have tea and eat some bread and cheese. Peppe's wife Maryann had prepared this for them that morning.

Sandy noticed that after five kilometers Jon was getting very tired. His father Peppe kneeled down to lift him on to his shoulders.

Sandy moved in closer and lay down beside Jon.

“What are you doing Sandy? We have to keep going. We can’t stop now to lie down. It will be dark soon,” said Peppe.

“Maybe he wants me to climb on to his back,” said Jon. “I do hope so.”

Peppe agreed and lifted Jon onto Sandy’s back.

Sandy stood up, as if Jon was as light as a feather, and then he set off again. They arrived at the village four hours later. It had been a long day for Jon, first getting there, and then walking the whole way back.

Everybody was exhausted. After having some hot soup they all went straight to bed. Sandy slept beside the fire; on a special rug that Peppe’s wife had prepared for him.



SANDY CARRIED JON EVERYWHERE ON HIS BACK

Next morning Sandy was first to waken. He stood up and walked towards the window. There were lots of little log cabins dotted around the hillside. Although it was early morning Sandy could see that some men had already started working on the mountainside. He looked up at the mountain top, and noticed it was covered with snow. “This might not be serious”, he thought, “But I have seen signs like this before when I was out with Luke. That blue tinge in the snow makes it look as if it is melting. It will be winter soon and snow should not be melting now.” Sandy turned his head as he heard a noise behind him. It was Jon. He was up early too. “Hello Sandy”, he said. “I will fix you some breakfast. Would you like sausages and eggs?”

“Oh no, you can’t do that!” came another voice from the hallway. It was Jon’s mum Maryann. “You’re too young to be working with hot pots and pans. Go and play with Sandy for a while and I will cook breakfast for you both.” Jon took Sandy into another room in the cabin. This was Jon’s bedroom. Jon lay on the bed and Sandy jumped up beside him. Jon stroked his long furry coat. “Today, after breakfast we will go for a walk on the mountain. I can ride on your back and let all my friends in the cabins nearby meet you.” Sandy thought again about the mountain.

“It may be nothing,” he told himself, but deep down he was a little worried about the weather.

“Breakfast is ready you two. Come to the table.” Jon’s mum called. He got up from the bed and went into the kitchen, with Sandy

following behind. On Jon's plate were scrambled eggs with sausages and beans.

"Yummy, yummy," cried Jon, "What is Sandy getting to eat?"

"Oh he will be having some meat and potatoes," answered his mum.

"Meat and potatoes for breakfast! That's strange."

"Well," explained his mum, "You have meat in the sausages, and sometimes you eat potato bread with your breakfast." Jon thought for a minute, "You're right mum. I do have meat and potatoes for breakfast sometimes." Jon looked down from the table. Sandy had finished his food and was now drinking some water. Jon quickly finished his and then he asked his mum if it was ok to go

out with Sandy for a while, as he wanted to show his new dog to his friends.

“Of course you can,” she agreed, “But don’t go too far away or for too long. Be back here by twelve. That will give you almost two hours play.”

“Ok mum, I promise.” Jon answered.



SANDY AT THE VILLAGE

It was after ten when they left the cabin. Jon felt very proud to be sitting on Sandy's back. He held on tightly to Sandy's fur as they made their way along the snowy tracks towards the other cabins. At the first cabin Jon asked if he could see his friend David. David was eight years old. He had been living with his parents on the mountain since he was born.

"He's not in Jon," said David's mother. "His dad and both boys have gone to the early church service, and then to check on the sheep." David's brother was called Daniel and he was seven, the same age as Jon. Their mother felt that the boys were much too young to go up into the mountain. But their dad was adamant that they had to learn to manage the sheep at an early age. Jon thanked their mum, and showed Sandy the

way to the next cabin. It was about a kilometre further on.

They were now about four kilometres from home when Sandy suddenly stood still. He had felt a tremor in the ground and looked up again at the mountain peak. He was shocked by what he saw. The tip of the snow peaks were beginning to slide. Slowly at first , and then rumbling loudly as they gathered speed. Lots more snow came down. This was an avalanche, and a big one at that! The biggest Sandy had ever known. He started to run quickly.

“I do hope Jon can hold on,” he thought. Sandy was not running back to the cabin but towards the shelter. He knew it was pointless to try rescuing the village folk. The snow would be on top of them in minutes.

“All I can do is get help quickly. There were still sixteen kilometers to go along the track. Sandy saw another way. “It will be a rough journey, but a lot quicker.”

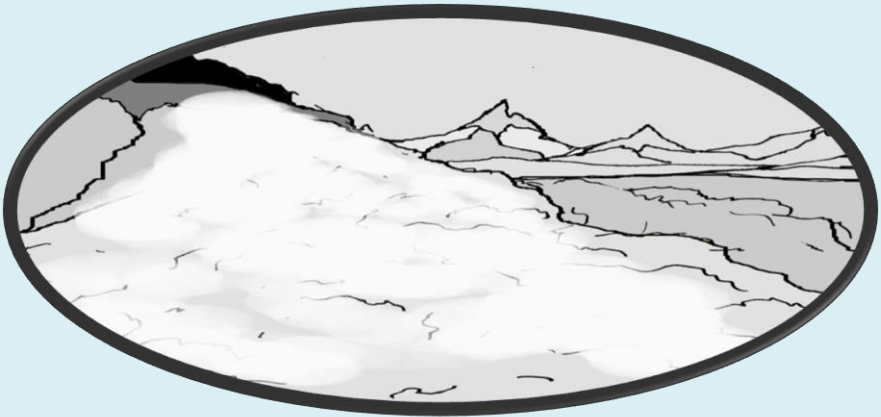
Jon was holding on as tightly as possible. He was frightened, but at the same time he was also enjoying the excitement. Jon never imagined that a dog as big as Sandy could run so fast or jump so high when he came across fallen trees or anything else in his path. The big dog covered the distance to the shelter in less than an hour.

Luke and the doctor were standing outside talking to each other. They saw Sandy dashing towards them.

“What’s wrong old fellow?” Luke asked. Sandy jumped up on him. He pulled Luke’s coat in

the direction of the village. Jon then announced,

“There has been a terrible avalanche. Our village is covered in snow. The very roofs of the cabins have disappeared. Everybody will be dead.” He started to cry, worrying about his mum and dad.



THE AVALANCHE



**Jon started to cry, thinking about his mum
and dad.**

Luke and the doctor knew that each cabin had a shelter under the floor in case of such a disaster. It was possible that many - or all of the villagers could still be alive. They also knew that the fresh air would only last so long. They had to get volunteers and all the rescue dogs to the village as soon as possible.

There was a siren at the shelter to summons the rescue crew. It didn't take the men and their dogs long to reach the emergency station. Luke explained what had happened. He warned them about how serious the incident was. Some of the men had sleighs with husky type dogs to pull them. Others were on skis, while their dogs ran alongside carrying the picks and shovels necessary to dig out any people who were trapped. The smaller dogs carried medical bags for the injured. Sandy and Jon were at the front of

the team leading the way to the village. It took another hour before they reached the avalanche site. It was totally covered. Luke glanced at Sandy with a look of despair. He had seen avalanches before, many times, and so had Sandy, but none of them had been as serious as this. Sandy shook his head. He understood what Luke was saying.

“There isn’t much chance of anybody being found alive now.”

Sandy ran ahead down the slope to the village. He began digging furiously through the snow with his front paws. After a few minutes the roof of a cabin began to appear. Sandy never stopped digging. He pushed his head into the snow, and when he came out again he was carrying a little boy by the collar. The boy was alive!

“What are you all waiting for?” shouted Luke, “There are people alive under here, and we have to get them out right away.” The whole team cheered as they ran down the slope to the village with their picks and shovels. Everyone worked as fast as they could. No one took time to rest. They just wanted to keep digging. Soon, one by one, the trapped people were rescued out of the snow. All together forty six people lived in that village. After many hours of night searching, they could only find forty three persons.

“Does anyone know who is missing?” Luke asked the survivors. It was David’s mum who answered.

“I can’t find my husband or my two boys. They went onto the mountain to attend to the sheep just before the avalanche started.” As she spoke her husband arrived into the

makeshift shelter set up by Luke and the rescue crew. Her husband was carrying their youngest son Daniel in his arms.

“It’s terrible,” he cried, “I think David has been killed. We were attending the sheep when the avalanche struck. The force was so powerful that we were all thrown down the mountain side. David went over a cliff and we couldn’t save him.” His father held his head in his hands and wept uncontrollably. Daniel had escaped with a few scratches and bruises on his arms and legs. His dad had a deep cut in his forehead which needed immediate attention.

Sandy instinctively knew what was needed. He caught Luke’s eye. Luke recognized that look.

“No!” he said firmly to Sandy, “You are retired now. This is a very dangerous mission.”

Luke looked around the room at all the other dogs. They were either too young or too inexperienced. Some were maybe not even strong enough. Luke was in despair. He knew there was no time to lose.

“Sandy it’s going to have to be you and me. I hope and pray you are still as strong as you used to be.”

Before leaving Luke took time to pray to God to keep them safe and to allow them to find David alive.

The other dogs knew Sandy was the best dog for the job. On this mission only the most powerful and clever dog would succeed. Luke and Sandy went outside with David’s dad, who was showing Luke where they had been

on the mountain when the tragedy happened. “Right,” said Luke, “We will start the search at that point.” The two headed off in the direction they had been shown. Others followed at a safe distance, watching carefully for deep snow drifts. Sandy took the lead. He had an uncanny sense for sniffing out danger ahead.

After two hours of struggling through deep snow, some of the men and dogs had to turn back. They were exhausted. Sandy and Luke were still in the lead. Peppe followed behind with Jon. Jon had insisted on going, against his mum’s advice. Peppe only allowed him to come because David was his best friend. Jon promised he would sit on one of the sleighs and not move away. Sandy suddenly stopped and held his head high, sniffing the air. He turned right and headed towards the cliff

edge. As he got closer he stared at Luke. The look told him to stop and not come any closer. There was imminent danger ahead. Luke understood what Sandy was warning him. He had been on so many missions with Sandy that he knew the signals that passed between them.

Sandy was right, it was very dangerous at the cliff edge. He approached slowly and cautiously. Some of the snow started to fall over the edge. Sandy dug in deep with his claws. Even with his great strength he began to slide towards the drop. Luke panicked and shouted,

“Stop, Sandy! Stop! Come back or you’ll fall over too.” Sandy managed to regain his balance. He was at the cliff edge. When he looked over he could see David lying on a thin ledge about seven meters below. He was lying

on his side and it looked as though his leg was broken. He was unconscious. Sandy looked back at Luke. He was on his stomach, crawling slowly towards the edge to see what Sandy had seen. When Luke looked over he knew it was going to be impossible to reach the boy. "The snow is too loose for anyone to attempt a rescue, and the ledge is too high to climb up to from the bottom."

Luke knew that Sandy could reach the boy, but that would be no use if David was badly injured. He would not be able to climb onto Sandy's back. Someone had to go with him. He also knew that although Sandy was very strong he could not carry the weight of a fully grown man on his back. Ropes were no use either in this situation. The snow was too soft and deep at the top, and there was nothing to tie the rope to. Luke wondered what to do.

Eventually he crawled back to the others. They had formed a group 30 or 40 meters away. He explained what he had seen.

“I am very sorry. I just don’t know what to do,” he told David’s dad.

“I do,” called a voice from behind the group.

“I heard what you were saying. A man is too heavy to go down, but I am only a boy and not very heavy. Besides I really want to help my friend.” Jon was offering to go down on Sandy’s back. Luke looked questioningly at Peppe. He instantly shouted, “No! You are not going down there. You will be killed. I don’t want to lose you, my only boy who I love very much.”

“Please, please Dad. I am the only one who can ride on Sandy’s back. He would be strong enough to bring us back up together after I help David.”



LUKE LOOKS OVER THE CLIFF

Everyone was looking at Peppe. No one spoke. Peppe broke the silence by turning to Jon and saying,

**“If you think you can do this I will let you try.
You must hold on to Sandy tightly.”**

“I will Dad. I promise. We can trust Sandy.”

And we can trust God added Luke.



“I CAN DO IT,” SAID JON.



Sandy found David on a narrow ledge.

Luke and Jon crawled along towards Sandy who was waiting at the cliff edge. Sandy knew what to do. He lay down to let Jon get onto

his back. When he felt the tight grip on his collar he started to move down the cliff face. It was almost vertical. Sandy was very sure footed and tested every inch before he took the next step. Jon was really frightened now. He was sitting on a dog's back, staring down a cliff face into nothing but mountains of snow. Sandy moved slowly and steadily down towards the ledge. Little by little he came closer to David. Suddenly the snow slid from under him, almost making him lose his footing. Jon fell over to one side, but managed to cling on and straighten up again. Another few meters and they reached the ledge.

David had moved onto his back. This was a good sign. It proved he had been conscious again, although he still looked really weak. Sandy came alongside him, and nudged David

gently with his nose. There was not much response. Sandy now lay down. They had very little room for manoeuver on this narrow ledge. Jon climbed off and touched his friend's face. He rubbed his cheeks and shouted,

“David, David. Waken up! It's Jon and Sandy.” He kept on shouting, until after a while David opened his eyes.

“What's happened?” he asked.

“You have had a fall, but you are safe now. Sandy and I are here to help you back up the mountain. Come on David help me get you onto Sandy's back.” David cried out with pain, but even so he kept trying his best to pull himself up.

“One more try and we will have you on.” Jon finally got David onto Sandy's back. He could hear cheering. When he looked up he saw Luke staring down at him.

“Good lad! You are doing well,” shouted Luke.

Jon climbed on behind David, putting his arms around him and then gripping Sandy’s collar tightly.

“Let’s go Sandy. You can do it,” Jon whispered in Sandy’s ear.

Sandy looked up at the steep slope they had just come down. There was more snow falling on the path than earlier.

“I had better take a safer route back,” thought Sandy. The ledge was narrow, but long enough for Sandy to pick a different route. One he felt might be safer. Sandy slowly edged along, one paw at a time. He came to a place where the path was not quite so steep. Sandy started to climb. Everyone above them held their breath. They knew this was the most dangerous part of the rescue. If Sandy

were to slip now they would all be killed in the deep snowy ravine below.

“Easy, boy! Easy.” they could hear Luke warning. Then, “Come on boy you are nearly there.” Sandy glanced up. He could see the top very clearly now. The weight of the two boys on his back was beginning to tell. When he was younger he could meet any challenge with ease, but now he was seven years old. That might not be old for humans, but to a dog it’s almost fifty years old, especially as Sandy had worked very hard all his life.

“Steady boy! Steady. Only another metre and you will all be safe.” Luke encouraged. They heard another rumble in the distance. Sandy could feel the ground trembling under his paws. “Oh no, not now! We are nearly there,” he thought. “If there is another avalanche we won’t make it.” The ground settled again, and

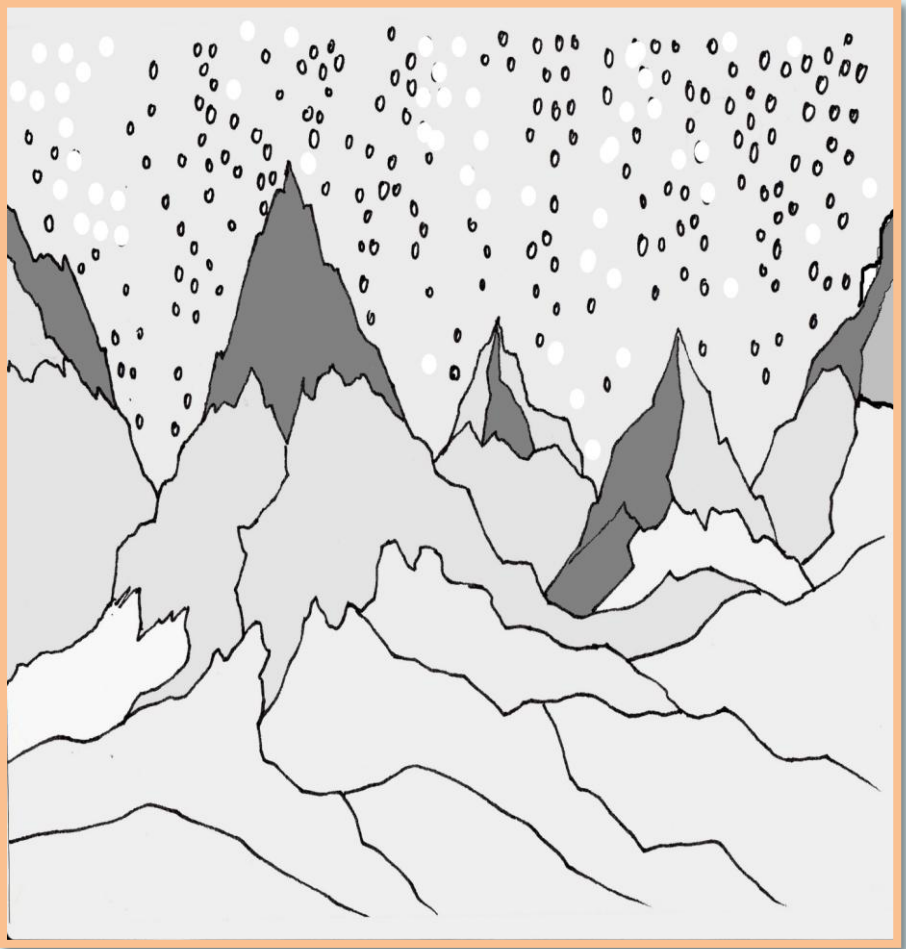
Sandy made a huge effort to climb that last metre. There were cheers of delight when he finally reached the top. Sandy made his way across the deep snow with the two boys still on his back. He brought them to the safety of the others. The boys were transferred onto a sleigh and taken back to the shelter. The doctor set David's leg into a cast.

"You will be running about again in no time," he assured David. Thanks to Sandy and Jon everybody survived the avalanche. They were both awarded a medal for their bravery by the mayor of the nearby town. The village was rebuilt by the local people. The cabins were made a lot safer and stronger. As for Sandy and Jon they played together for many more years, and never forgot their adventure.

Luke also remembered to thank God for answering his prayer that David would be found alive, and they would be safe.



SANDY IN THE ALPS



FROZEN SNOW

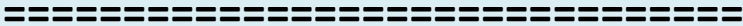


SANDY CARRIED JON ON HIS BACK

You can read the true story of (Barry) on the internet. He was a St Bernard and was used for rescue in the Alps by the monks about 100 years ago.

Barry was a very brave dog and rescued many.

Written by—Malcolm Abbott ©



TIMMY

THE LITTLE LOST KITTEN



Timmy was only six months old. He was a loving cuddly kitten and everyone in the family adored him, most of all Ellie who was the youngest daughter of John and Mary Mc Alpine. Elle was almost six and would play with Timmy every day after she came home from play school. One day her father and mother told her that they would have to move house to another part of town.

“It is to do with daddy’s job” her mother explained. Ellie thought this might be quite exciting, she did not want to lose the friends she had made at school, but she did realize that it would be good to make new friends.

“Can Timmy come with us? She asked.

“Of course Timmy will come with us. We wouldn’t leave him here on his own.” said Ellie’s mum.

The day came when the family had to move. They packed all their clothes into cardboard boxes and Ellie helped the removal men carry the boxes out to the van until they were ready to go.

“Where is Timmy?” asked Ellie.

“He was here a few minutes ago,” answered Ellie’s mum.

“Yes I saw him playing on the grass,” said her dad. They looked around the house, then in the garden; they even went next door and asked their neighbours if anyone had seen Timmy. But no one had.

“We will have to go,” announced the van

driver, “I have another family to move soon and I don’t want to be late.”

“Come on Ellie, we can come back tomorrow to look for him,” said her dad.

Ellie was not happy. She shouted and cried but knew she had to get into the van with the rest of the family.

“Promise me we will come back tomorrow and every day until we find Timmy.” Ellie demanded.

“Yes we will! We’ll look every day for a week or maybe more,” said her mum.

“You can have another kitten if we can’t find her,” her dad assured her.

Ellie settled down, and after about two hours they stopped at their new home.

Meanwhile Timmy had come back to the garden. The big van had frightened him so he had run away and hid. He went to the back door as usual to be let in, but nobody was there to open it.

Timmy jumped onto the window sill, he looked into the kitchen,

“Strange,” he thought, “Nobody about, and all the shelves are bare. Where has everyone gone? Have they all moved house and left me alone.” He started to feel frightened and hungry. “I have never had to look for food before, so now what *will* I do, and where *will* I go?”

It was starting to rain and night was falling fast. This was now November and it was also getting very cold. “I will hide in the shed until morning,” thought Timmy. “Tomorrow I will

find some food, and I am sure Ellie will come back for me.”

Timmy tried the shed door. Normally it was left open for him to run into if it was raining, but this time it was closed. Timmy thought, “I will have to sleep under the hedge for tonight.” He found an old paper bag and lay on it because the ground was very rough. The rain was getting very heavy now and soon Timmy was soaking wet, cold and miserable.

Timmy never slept that night. He was so hungry. As soon as morning came he crawled out from under the hedge and gave himself a big stretch. He looked around,

“What can I eat? I have never eaten anything but the food Ellie gave me.” He started to wander from garden to garden. A large dog chased him from one of the gardens so Timmy

ran as fast as he could but he was getting weak from the lack of food. He managed to get away from the dog by climbing a tree. The dog lost interest and soon went away back to its own house. Timmy could see a bowl of food in the next yard. It looked like cat food or maybe it was dog food - but he was so hungry he didn't care.

Timmy looked all around. From the high branch he could see into most of the gardens round about. He was sure it was now safe to come down. Timmy climbed slowly down the tree. He ran as fast as he could to the hedge and then into the next garden where he had seen the bowl of food. Cautiously he made his way towards it. In fact he was so quiet that a little Robin landed close by without realizing Timmy was under the hedge only a few metres away. Timmy stood very still and

watched the bird peck at a few bits of bread lying on the grass.

“Will I or won’t I?” wondered Timmy, “I think I could catch that bird, but there isn’t much meat on a Robin. If I make a noise catching the bird it might alarm whoever owns that bowl of food. It might belong to a big dog. In that case I might end up as his dinner, along with the little bird.” Timmy took another few cautious steps. The Robin heard Timmy and flew off immediately, thinking how lucky he was. He didn’t know that Timmy had passed him by, looking for a better meal ahead.

Timmy reached the bowl of food and leaving all caution to the wind he gobbled it as fast as he could. It was a mixture of fish and meat with some potatoes. Timmy ate all the fish and the meat but left the potatoes. He was

not a greedy cat, but because he was so hungry he ate as much as he could.

“Now I had better get back to my own garden incase Ellie has come to look for me. He turned around just in time to see a huge black Alsatian glaring at him from the other side of the garden.

“You have eaten my dinner!” the Alsatian barked angrily, “Now I will have to eat you.” The huge dog ran towards Timmy, teeth bared and ready for revenge. Timmy took off, like a racing car. He jumped over gates and crawled under hedges, running faster than he ever had before. He had a lot more energy this time because he had some food. Timmy never looked back. He was so frightened he ran until he was exhausted. When he did stop the big dog was nowhere to be seen, but now he was

totally lost. He looked around everywhere, but he could see nothing he recognized.

“What will I do now? Ellie will be looking for me and I don’t know how to get home?”

Sure enough Ellie and her mum were at the old house looking for Timmy. They called and called, and searched everywhere they could think of, but without success. They left disappointed. After a week of coming back every day to search for him they had to give up.

Timmy was learning to hunt for food and to find shelter at night. It was not easy. Many nights he would go hungry and have to sleep under hedges, or in old boxes that people had thrown out.

Months passed and Timmy was shaggy and by now very thin. He tried to get people to give

him some food but most of them chased him or threw stones at him, shouting, “Go away you dirty old stray cat.” He felt as if no one loved him anymore. After all it wasn’t his fault that he was now a stray. He was only doing his best to stay alive. Because he was dirty and had lost some of his fur he looked shabby, but he was still the same friendly cat as before. People couldn’t see that.

Timmy had not found food for three days. He was lying beside some bins in a back yard, when suddenly he could not believe his luck. A huge blackbird landed right beside him. Timmy summoned up all the energy he had left and jumped at the bird. But either the bird was too fast or Timmy was getting too slow, as it took off into the air and escaped. Timmy did not see the steps close to where the bird had been, and so as he jumped he

landed on the steps and fell down them. Over and over he tumbled. Timmy hit his head and knocked himself out at the bottom.

He awoke about an hour later, to find himself in a strange house.

“Where am I?” he meowed, as he saw a man coming towards him. Timmy tried to jump out of the basket, but his leg hurt so much he had to stay where he was.

The man stroked Timmy’s head gently, saying “It’s ok little cat. We will look after you until you are well again. You had a bad fall down those steps and have hurt your leg. Luckily it’s not broken. After a few days rest and some good food you will be on your paws and running around the garden with the other cats.”

“What other cats?” wondered Timmy? He was able to see a little bit of garden through the glass door. There were other large cats playing and jumping in the garden at the back of the house. Timmy looked up into one of the many trees that surrounded the property and saw a huge black cat with one white spot right on its nose. It was a lot bigger than the rest, and seemed to glare down at the others playing in the garden.

One of the cats was trying to get the big one to join in their play. But the big cat hissed, “You know I don’t play with you cats. You and your friends are much too stupid for me to play with. I am the biggest and strongest cat in the neighbourhood. I can even chase dogs away. You can only run and hide”

“Oh dear,” thought Timmy, “He does sound a nasty cat. The others look quite friendly. As

soon as I am better I'll be able to play with them."

Later that day was feeding time. The cats came in to the house, and the man set five bowls of cat food down in the kitchen. Timmy had his brought to him, and set into his basket, so that he didn't have to walk on his sore leg. The big cat walked in first and started to eat. When he had finished all of his food he pushed one of the other cats away and ate most of his as well. The poor cat was too frightened to say anything.

"That cat is a real bully. I hope he doesn't try to do that with me!" thought Timmy. After the cats had eaten they all came over to see Timmy.

"What's your name?" asked one of the cats. "It's Timmy. I was lost, and this kind man

helped me and brought me here.” “Yes,” said one of the cats. “His name is Richard and his wife is called ----- . They are very good people who love cats. Richard and his wife have helped many stray cats. They both feed and look after us until we are well again. Then they bring food to all the lonely cats around Whitehead”.

“I’m glad to know his name, and that I am now in a place called Whitehead,” said Timmy. “What are your names?” “I’m Rascal,” said the white and gray one. “And I am Robo” said another, who was black and tan. “I’m Lilly,” said another, “And my sister is called Pinky.” “What’s the name of that other big black cat with the white spot on his nose?” asked Timmy.

“I know what I would call him,” said Robo, “But I’d better not. His name is Spot, because

of the white spot on his nose. He hates it, because he wanted to be black all over. So don't mention the spot or he might scratch you with his long claws."

Timmy did as he was told and rested in the basket. Spot walked arrogantly passed him a few times, and although Timmy said hello, Spot just looked at Timmy and walked on.

After three days Timmy was able to walk again, slowly. Richard allowed him to go outside for a few hours and play with the other cats. Apart from Spot they all played happily together. He sat in the tree and hissed at them all. Later the food was placed outside along with some water and milk. All the cats ran over but none of them dared to touch the food until Spot came down from the tree and ate and drank as much as he could first. Only then were the other cats allowed to eat

theirs. Timmy did not think this was very fair. He was such a bully.

“We might have to teach Spot a lesson in manners.” pondered Timmy. Later that day he rounded up the other cats and told them what he was planning to do.

They all giggled and meowed together. Richard and -----wondered what on earth was going on. What a noise those cats were making. Next day the cats put the plan into action. One time Timmy licked some mustard off the floor at home by mistake, and it had burned his tongue for two days.

He had seen Richard using it on his sandwich, and watched where he set it in the cupboard. He had also seen Ellie making bubbles with washing up liquid and water. She used to dip a little round plastic spoon into the mixture

and blow. Then there would be lots and lots of coloured bubbles floating into the air. Ellie had found it to be great fun, and Timmy enjoyed seeing her so happy. That evening the cats watched carefully while Richard prepared the cats' dinners. As usual he put out the biggest dish for Spot, as he was the biggest cat. Timmy attracted Richard's attention by looking at him and meowing. When Richard turned to see what the matter was, one of the other cats put some mustard into the big bowl and mixed it up. Then another cat caught Richard's eye, and when he turned around Timmy put some washing up liquid into the water bowl. The trap was set, now all they had to do was to wait. Sure enough at six o'clock Richard set out the bowls. The cats all sat around the bowls as usual until Big Spot came down from his tree.

“It’s just as well you didn’t touch anything before I came!” he hissed at them. “If you had I would have scratched you.”

Big Spot went straight to the biggest dish, saying, “After I eat this I think I will eat all of yours too, as I am feeling a little hungry tonight.” Big Spot took a huge mouthful of the meat with the mustard in it. At first nothing happened, until the food was half way down his throat. Then he jumped into the air and tried to hiss. He rolled over in the grass, putting his paws up to his mouth, but he could not stop the mustard burning. “Water, water,” he started to hiss and ran to the bowl. Big Spot took at least six mouthfuls without stopping. That’s better he was about to say, when all these bubbles started coming out of his mouth.

Big Spot didn't know what was happening to him. He ran round and round the garden in a cloud of bubbles, all the colours of the rainbow. Timmy and the other cats laughed until their tummies were sore.

"That will teach you a lesson for being so greedy and selfish." Well it certainly did. Big Spot was never cheeky to any of the cats again. In fact he even let them all eat their food first! But he still wouldn't play with them in the garden. He felt he was just a little too old for all their rough and tumble games. Richard and -----are still in Whitehead looking after all the little stray cats, and helping the injured ones. One little stray cat called Bluebell would never go near anyone else except Richard and his wife, because he would trust only them. Later that week Richard helped Timmy find where Ellie's family had moved. He was able to bring Timmy home to them in his car. The family

was delighted to see Timmy again. They thanked Richard many times and gave him many tins of cat food to help feed the strays. As for Ellie and Timmy, they simply hugged and hugged each other all night.

DIG-DIG THE DIGGER



At the railway station Choo-Choo and his friends were getting very worried. There were lots more passengers than ever

before, all wanting to go to different parts of the country. Some wanted to go to the seaside; others wanted to go to big cities on business trips. But there were not enough tracks to take them where they wanted to go.

Choo-Choo puffed at the station master and told him the problem.



CHoo-Choo

“Yes, I know,” he said, “I’m going to tell the railway owner to have more lines built so as we can take everyone.”

The railway owner agreed, and phoned Dig-Dig.

“We need more tracks built Dig-Dig. Can you please help?”

“But of course sir. I will ask some of my friends, and we should be able to start tomorrow morning.”

The railway owner told Dig-Dig that he wanted the first new line to go directly from Belfast to Castlerock, as most people wanted to spend their holidays there.

“Ok!” answered Dig-Dig, “We shall start to dig in Belfast.”

Dig-Dig called his friend Thumper the dumper truck, because he knew that someone had to take all the mud away and dump it as soon as he started to dig to make way for the new tracks.

“Will you please help?” asked Dig-Dig.



THUMPER THE DUMPER TRUCK

“Of course I will. I have just finished a big job at the docks and so I will be free for the next few weeks. I’ll meet you in Belfast tomorrow morning at nine o’clock sharp.”

Dig-Dig then called Crammer. Crammer was a huge and very posh crane.



CRAMMER THE POSH CRANE

“I’m not so sure about carrying railway tracks,” said Crammer. “I’m normally used for carrying materials to big and beautiful buildings in city centres - not old railway

tracks through muddy fields where I will probably get my wheels dirty.”

“Please?” asked Dig-Dig, “We need you to lift all the heavy tracks. None of us are strong enough to do it without you. Besides it’s to make a new railway line to carry lots of children, and let them play by the seaside.”

“Very well, but only for a few weeks. I have a very important job starting soon. It’s to build a new house for the lord mayor,” said Crammer.

Dig-Dig thanked Crammer and then phoned Larry. Larry was a long lorry who was used to carrying new railway tracks from one place to another. When tracks

were made at the steel works, Larry would



LARRY THE LONG LORRY

collect them and carry them to where Dig-Dig and the others were working. Then Crammer the crane would lift the heavy tracks, one at a time, from Larry and lay them on the ground. Dig-Dig would use his big shovel and push all the earth to one side, until it was flat and even. Then Crammer would once again lift a track and

position it in the right place. Meanwhile Thumper would take all the mud to the dump and then come back for more.

Larry would go and collect more tracks from the steel works, and so it would go on all day, until all the tracks were laid for Choo-Choo to run on.

It was a lovely day when they all met again in Belfast.

“Now,” said Dig-Dig (who had put himself in charge of the work) “You go to the steel works Larry and bring us some tracks. Meanwhile I will Dig some of the mud and put it into Thumper’s loader, so that he can start taking it to the dump. Crammer will have to wait until Larry comes back with the heavy tracks.”

“I am very important,” said Crammer. “I’m not used to having to wait for Lorries let me tell you.”

“I understand,” said Dig-Dig, trying to appease Crammer. “You are the best crane in the world, and it is very good of you to help us.”

Soon the work started. Dig-Dig pushed and pushed with all his might. He was very strong and it didn’t take long for the earth to move to either side as Dig-Dig made an even and straight passage for the tracks.

Suddenly they all became very excited. They could see Larry the Lorry coming along the road. He was coming very slowly as the huge steel tracks were really heavy

on his back. “Phew,” they heard Larry moan as he came closer.

Larry stopped as he reached the others. “What a load! I have brought six big tracks to get us started,” he panted.

“Thank you,” answered Dig-Dig. “Now would you be so kind as to lift them down Crammer.”

Crammer switched on his powerful engine. There was a mighty roar, (it sounded like ten lions) and then the powerful crane lifted one of the tracks and placed it into the space that Dig-Dig had prepared. Crammer went back and forth lifting all the tracks and laying them correctly.

“Well done,” announced Dig-Dig. “Larry you can now go back to the steel works and collect some more.” They all waved to Larry as he roared off down the road.

Dig–Dig was just about to clear the next load of earth when he noticed that one of the tracks was broken. It had a large crack right down the middle.

“That will never do. Choo-Choo will not want to run on a broken track. Crammer will have to lift it and wait until Larry brings the new ones.”

“Well, he’d better bring an extra one this time,” said Thumper, “Or the tracks will be uneven.”

“Yes, I’ll phone,” agreed Dig-Dig, “I’ll ask him to bring an extra one from the factory.”

Larry wasn’t too pleased when he heard that he was to carry an extra track. He had thought the first load was heavy enough with six big steel tracks, but now Dig-Dig wanted him to bring a seventh!

“Ok Dig-Dig, I’ll try,” he answered

The crane at the factory loaded six onto Larry’s back. He then asked Larry if he was sure he could carry another one.

“I don’t know, but I am going to try.”

The factory crane added another steel track to the top of the six.

“Oh, that hurt,” groaned Larry, his wheels almost buckling.

Off he went down the road towards the others. He still had about two miles to go and part of this was up a steep hill.

“I’ll never make it,” panted Larry. When he arrived at the bottom of the hill he changed gear to get ready for the long haul. His engine started to groan and make funny noises.

“Come on, come on.” Larry was willing himself to reach the top. Then he heard a loud bang, and wondered what had happened. Larry soon discovered what the matter was. One of his tyres had burst due to the heavy load.

“Oh no,” shouted Larry, “Now what am I going to do? I will have to phone Dig-Dig and tell him what has happened.”

Dig-Dig was having a nice drink of cold water when the phone rang. Larry told him what had happened.

“I am stuck here on a hill, and can’t move either up or down, because one of my tyres has burst. Can you help please?”

“Don’t worry Larry, I will send Thumper to the rescue. He can attach a rope and pull you into a garage.”

Dig-Dig then told Thumper to follow the road to the factory, and when he found Larry, to pull him to a garage and have his wheel changed.

Ok, I'll go immediately." answered Thumper, who then thundered down the road to rescue Larry.

It didn't take long until Thumper found him by the side of the road. He was very upset that his tire had burst. Some cars had stopped to cheer him up a little, but poor Larry couldn't stop crying.

"Don't worry Larry. I will have you to a garage in no time." Thumper was trying to sound as cheerful as he could.

He tied a strong rope on to Larry and started to pull. He pulled and he pulled, but he could not move the heavy lorry with all the steel tracks on its back. Thumper tried again and again, but

although his engine roared, his wheels could only slide round and round and never moved one little bit.

“Oh dear dear. We do have a problem here. I’ll have to phone Dig-Dig and see what he can arrange.”

Dig-Dig was waiting at the site looking at his watch. Time was moving on and they needed to lay a lot more tracks before nightfall. Then the phone rang again.

“Hello,” said Dig-Dig,

“It’s Thumper here. We have another problem! I am not strong enough to pull Larry, and all the steel tracks up the hill. What will we do?”

“Don’t worry. I will ask Crammer to go and pull you both up the hill.”

Dig-Dig told Crammer what had happened and asked him to help Larry.

“Oh well, I suppose I will have to, as I am one of the strongest machines here. This won’t be a problem for me.” At that he trundled off down the road towards the other two.

Crammer arrived at the scene.

“Would you please tie that rope on,” he asked Thumper. “I’ll have you two back at work in no time!” he announced, with a cheeky grin on his face.

Thumper tied the rope to Crammer, who started to pull, and pull, and pull. He

pulled so hard that the rope broke, and Crammer slid off the road into a ditch. To make things worse one of his wheels was off the ground.

“Oh fiddle sticks. Now we really are stuck,” sighed Crammer.

Larry and Thumper started to laugh. They found it was very funny that Crammer - who was so prudish, should be stuck in a dirty ditch with one wheel in the air.

“Don’t dare laugh at me, or you will be in serious trouble when I get out of here!”

Larry laughed even more. “How are you going to get out?”

“I will have to phone Dig-Dig, and I am sure he won’t be too pleased to hear what has happened.”

Crammer phoned Dig-Dig, and told him that he was now stuck too.

“My goodness, I will have to come myself and pull you all out.”

Dig-Dig started up his engines and drove along the road until he met the other three. Larry and Thumper were still stuck on the hill, and Crammer was in the ditch.

“Right Crammer, I will pull you out first.”

Dig-Dig tied a chain to Crammer and pulled. Dig-Dig was the strongest of them all, and soon Crammer was back on the road. Then Dig-Dig tied another chain

from Crammer to Thumper, who was in turn tied to Larry.

“Now, when I blow my horn everyone is to start at once.”

Dig-Dig blew his horn loudly, and they all switched on their engines at once. There was a roar which shook all the trees, and the four big engines all started to move together up the hill. The farmers watched as they drove to the top of the hill, and down the other side. What a sight they made. The cows and sheep in the fields were so frightened they ran to hid.

Before long Larry had a new wheel and everyone got back to work laying the new tracks.

“Let’s hope all goes well this time,” they all shouted.

About three weeks passed and they were getting on very well with the new track, when suddenly Dig-dig’s phone started to ring.

“Hello, can I help you?”

“I hope you can,” a voice croaked. It was Choo-Choo. “I have had an accident. I have come off the line on a very bad bend, and I need you and the team to help me back on track again. I have almost one hundred passengers aboard, and they all need to get to work. So please hurry.”

“Where are you Choo-Choo?”

“I am outside the station, at the signal box, about one mile away from you. Oh please hurry my passengers are getting angry!” pleaded Choo-Choo.

“We’re on our way,” shouted Dig-dig, who really loved to feel important.

Dig-dig gathered the others. Crammer, who was busy lifting tracks, groaned and asked if he really did need to go.

Thumper the dumper was glad to be of assistance, and Larry was also pleased to help – although he wasn’t too sure what he could do.

They all trundled down the road to the signal box, where they spied Choo-Choo with his front wheels in the ditch.

The passengers were all out of the carriages, milling about talking and grumbling to each other.

“What if this had been an express train? We all would have been killed.” Luckily Choo-Choo had been going very slowly at the time, but a fault with the points at the signal box had caused the problem.

“Don’t worry everyone. We will soon have Choo-Choo back on the tracks, and you can all continue your journey.”

Crammer was first to come forward. He put a rope around Choo-Choo and started to pull, but Choo-Choo was much too heavy for him.

“I will push from the front wheel,” announced Dig-dig, “And Thumper, you pull from the other side.”

“What about me?” asked Larry, not wanting to feel useless. “What can I do to help?”

“You can count to three, and then shout GO!! When you do we will all pull, push, and lift together at exactly the right time.”

Larry was very proud to be one of the team. When he shouted, “GO!” all the machines did what they were supposed to.

Choo-Choo was very heavy, but slowly he started to lift back onto the tracks.

“Thank you all ever so much. Now I must be going quickly, to get all my passengers to the station on time. Good bye,” he puffed, as he roared off along the line.

The team then went back to work building the new line, which was to take everyone to the seaside.

It took another six weeks to finish the new line, which went all the way to Castlerock.

Dig-dig and the others were very proud when Choo-Choo was the first train to set off on his journey, with all the children on board.

Dig-dig, Larry, Thumper, and Crammer were all waiting at Castlerock station.

Everyone cheered as Choo-Choo stopped beside the beach.

All the children thanked Dig-dig and the team for building this great new line. It didn't take long for them to find the beach and run down to play in the sand.

CROSSPATCH THE GOAT

Once upon a time many years ago there was an old Billy goat whose name was Crosspatch. He certainly was an old crosspatch, and everybody stayed well clear of him. If anyone was to come into the field he was in, Crosspatch would charge at them with his head down and horns at the ready. He often wondered why he was so lonely all the time. He didn't seem to realize that the other animals, and some of the farm hands, were simply trying to make friends with him.



Crosspatch.

One day he felt so alone in the field that he charged at the gate and broke it down. He then began to run down the farmer's lane, and on towards the village. Crosspatch wasn't too sure where he was going, but he did stop when he reached the village. There he saw all the local people running away, and hiding in houses and racing into shops. "Go home Crosspatch!" shouted one man, "We have heard all about you - how you like to charge at people to frighten them. You are not a very nice goat at all."

Poor old Crosspatch felt very sad. He just could not stop himself from chasing people and animals on the farm, or anywhere else for that matter. Crosspatch ran up a lane way and into a field. At the top of the field was another goat. Crosspatch ran all the way up the field with his head down and his horns in the air.

"What do you think you are doing?" he heard the other goat shout. "You have missed me

completely, because you simply can't see anything with you head down."

"Well, I can't charge towards you to scare you with my head up."

"Why do you want to do that?" asked the other goat, whose name was Gerty



"I don't know. I always charge at anything and everything."

"Do you have any friends that you don't charge towards?" asked Gerty.

Crosspatch thought for a few minutes. “No,” he announced, “I don’t have ANY friends at all.”

“Well, that’s why you are always so cross. You have no friends to play and have fun with.”

“Will you be my friend, Gerty?” asked Crosspatch.

“I will, if you promise to stop chasing and frightening others.”

“I promise I will. In fact I will stop right now.”

At that moment a young cow came into the field. Crosspatch lowered his head and was about to charge.

“Stop right now!” Crosspatch remembered that he had promised not to frighten anyone, and that included all cows, horses, rabbits, ducks and anything else that moves.

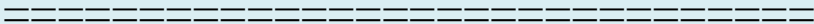
“Oh, indeed I did. I made a promise.” said Crosspatch. “I had forgotten already. I will try not to do it again.”

The little cow came up to Crosspatch and licked his nose. “Would you like to play with me?” she asked.

“Yes please,” shouted Crosspatch.

“Do you understand now?” asked Gerty. “When you are friendly towards others, they will be friendly with you. It’s much better to play with each other than to charge and frighten them away.”

“I have learned my lesson. I will try not to be cross anymore. Call me Patch the goat from now on please.”



IGOR THE TRACTOR

“Come out of your shed and start working It’s now five o clock in the morning. I like tractors to work hard for long hours.” shouted farmer Hardnut.

Little Igor struggled to waken up. He had been working until 12 midnight the night before, and was still very tired. Igor was one really unhappy little tractor.

“Oh dear,” he muttered to himself, “I used to be such a happy, clean tractor until my owner Mr. Farmer Brown retired, and the farm was sold to Mr. Hardnut, who seems to work all day and all night. Look at me now! I am covered in hay, grass, weeds and all sorts of other muck and dirt. I haven’t had a shower

for weeks now. I am so unhappy” Igor said again, as he started his engine with a roar from the exhaust pipe.



Igor

“Come here! I will give you a drink of tractor diesel. That will have to keep you going all day,” shouted Mr. Hardnut. “I can’t afford too much of this stuff. It’s very expensive you know, and I don’t want to waste it on any lazy tractors.”

Little Igor shook off as much of the straw he had been lying on as he could, and came out into the farmyard.

“Well Igor. I hope you are ready for a hard day’s work. We have lots to do today in the top fields. We have to cut all the grass to make hay for the animals, and we will have to dig furrows in the next field to plant potatoes.

“OH NO! Not furrows again,” thought Igor.

Igor hated furrows. He had to pull a very heavy tiller behind him, to dig up the earth, for the potatoes to be planted. It was really hard work.

It was not the right sort of work for little tractors like Igor. That was the sort of work for big heavy duty tractors like Samson. He was the biggest and strongest tractor Igor had ever seen.

Samson was only called into use when big trees, heavy gates or other really large items needed to be moved around the farmyard. Mr

Hardnut thought Samson needed too much diesel when working, so he kept him in the shed most days.

Later that night, when all the work was completed, Igor crept into Samson's shed.



SAMSON

“Are you still awake, Samson?” Igor whispered, trying not to be heard by Mr. Hardnut, who would have had Igor working day AND night.

“Yes I am. I’m never tired enough to sleep, because Hardnut won’t give me any work.”

“Well I have been working all day long, since five o’clock this morning, and I am always exhausted. I have been thinking of running away from here, because I really hate this farm, and its nasty owner,” Moaned Igor.

“Where would you go?” inquired Samson.

“I don’t know yet. I would have to set off across lanes and fields, until I met a nice farmer, who needed me to help him.”

“Sounds like a good idea,” said Samson. “I would love to come along with you. Both of us would make a good team for any farmer. We could work well together. I could pull the plough and till the ground, and you could cut the grass and hedges.”

“Right then,” shouted Igor, forgetting to keep quiet in all his excitement. “Let’s go straight away.”

“Yes, let’s do that. But first we must fill our tanks with tractor diesel.”

They both filled their tanks up to the brim, and then turned their wheels towards the open countryside.

By dawn they had travelled many miles across laneways and fields. The birds were beginning to sing their morning chorus and the two tractors felt free and happy.

“We had better start looking for some work soon, if we want to get more diesel. We can’t go much further without it.”

“Ok,” answered Igor. “We’ll stop at the next farm, and ask if they would like some hard work in exchange for diesel.”

They crossed another lane, and there was a farm straight ahead of them.

“How lucky is that!” exclaimed Igor. “We’ll ask and see if they need help here.”

They drove up the lane towards the farmhouse, when suddenly, from out of nowhere, came two vicious looking dogs, barking and snarling at their arrival.

One of the dogs ran towards little Igor’s front wheels, snapping madly. The other thought he might try the same thing at Samson’s wheels. Igor was very frightened, but Samson wasn’t having any of it. He revved up his engine until it reached full power before releasing all the gas through his exhaust pipe. It caused one

very loud bang. The smoke, the fumes and the noise were very frightening. The two dogs were terrified, and ran off with their tails between their legs, whimpering as they went.

“Well done Samson!” congratulated Igor. “I thought we were in deep trouble this time.”

Just at that an old man opened the door of the farm house.

“What do you think you are doing here? Get off my land! I have a horse to pull my plough. I don’t need greedy diesel tractors.”

Igor turned to Samson. “I think we had better go somewhere else. We are definitely not welcome here.”

Off they drove for another few miles. Igor then checked his diesel tank.

“O goodness,” he exclaimed. “My tank is almost empty.”

“So is mine.” agreed Samson. We had better find some work quickly.”

At that moment a farmer was walking past on the other side of the lane.

“Hello there, are you open for some work in my fields? I’ll give you both some diesel.”

“We certainly are,” answered Samson and Igor together.

“Then follow me. I have grass that needs cutting, and some trees taken away and dumped.”

The two followed him into a large field, and immediately set to work. They worked hard all day, until it was starting to get dark. They really had done a very good day’s work.

When they called the farmer he was very pleased at the amount of work he saw finished in his field.

“Well done! Now come over here, and I will give you some diesel, as I promised.”

The farmer put a tiny drop of diesel into both tanks.

“Hey there!” shouted Samson. That’s not very much diesel for such hard work.”

“Well, I promised you some diesel. I didn’t say how much, but if you work for me another day, I’ll give you a little more.”

The two tractors worked and worked all week for the crooked farmer, until finally they had enough diesel in their tanks to travel a little further. They left the farm the next morning looking for work in other places.

On their journey however no one needed two tractors. Some would take Igor, while others would be willing to take Samson. They were now best of friends, and didn't want to be separated. The next field they came to was in a terrible mess, and there was a notice on a board which read.

THIS FIELD BELONGS TO THE TOWN COUNCIL.

***ANYONE WHO IS WILLING TO TIDY IT CAN
HAVE FREE OWNERSHIP.***

PERMISSION GRANTED BY THE MAYOR

Joe Jonson.

The two tractors looked at each other, in total amazement. They switched on their headlights, flicking them up and down with delight. "Our very own field!!!" they shouted together. "Let's start working right away. "

They worked day and night, digging the ground, cutting grass, trimming hedges, and of course ploughing the field.

Next morning the mayor arrived to view how much work the tractors had done. He was delighted with the result. What a great improvement they had made! He signed over all the rights off the field to the tractors immediately, saying, “It’s all yours now. I hope you will look after it well.”

All of a sudden Samson looked very sad.

“What’s wrong?” asked Igor. “How come you’re not happy?”

“Look down at my wheels. This field is no use for me.”

Igor looked down at Samson’s huge tyres. Sure enough, they were sinking into the mud,

into a black oily liquid that seemed to be coming up out through the soil.

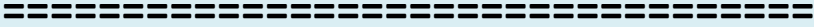
“It must have been caused by all the digging we did last night,” said Samson. “We could have disturbed something underground.”

“You sure have!” Came a voice from behind. It was Tommy, one of the farmer’s sons. “You have found a diesel supply! You can now both retire from hard work, because you have enough diesel to last you forever. You will even have some left over to give to other tractors.

Little Igor and Samson couldn’t believe their luck.

Oh how wonderful it would be to drive through the fields and the lanes, admiring the beautiful country side, without having to worry about diesel again. They both flashed

**their headlights in delight and spun around
and around on their back wheels.**



Stories by Malcolm Abbott.

Edited by Muriel Abbott.

For my wonderful grandchildren

Bobby, JulieAnn, & Michael.

2015