



# TOUGH GUY



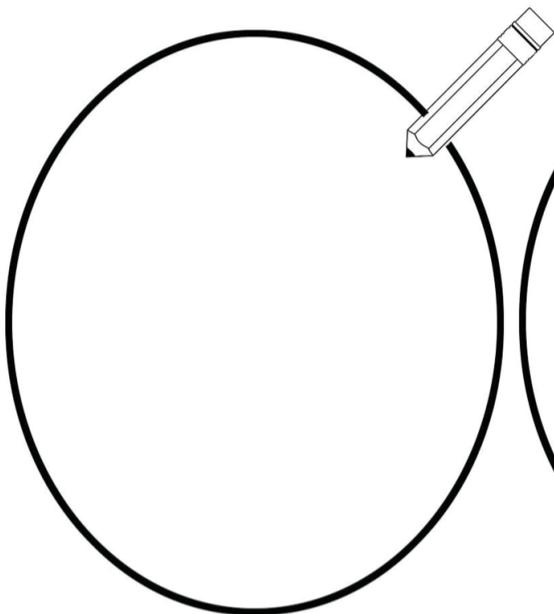
Written by **Erin O' Connor**

**Illustrated by** Mike Goldstein





**Author**  
Erin O'Connor



**Reader**  
This book  
belongs to:

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**Illustrator**  
Mike Goldstein

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## **TOUGH GUY...A MESSAGE TO MY READERS**

***To my readers...young and old, big and small, I begin with a Thank You for taking the time to check out my 10th children's book, TOUGH GUY.***

***Writing children's books has never been a goal, a hobby or a career choice. I am motivated by a desire to inform children, validate children and inspire children. Having been a teacher for 10 years in the 70's, I am quite aware that children are capable of so much more than most adults imagine.***

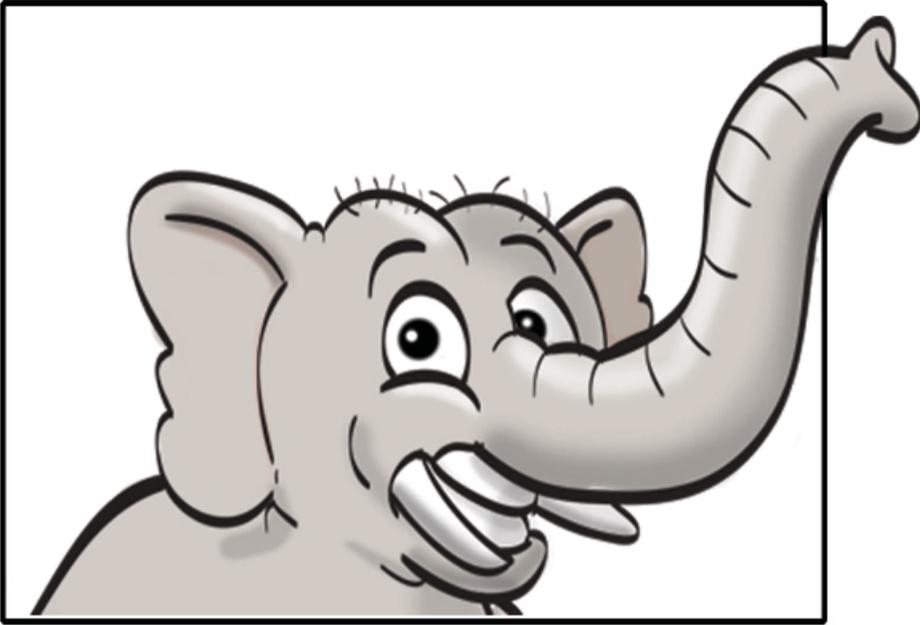
***TOUGH GUY, and all its characters, exemplify the best our world has to offer. It was a challenge to write for many reasons and, I must confess, I quit several times. But, a nudging from deep within gently forced me to keep going ...for the sake of this magnificent breed of mammals, The Elephant.***

***Erin O'Connor***

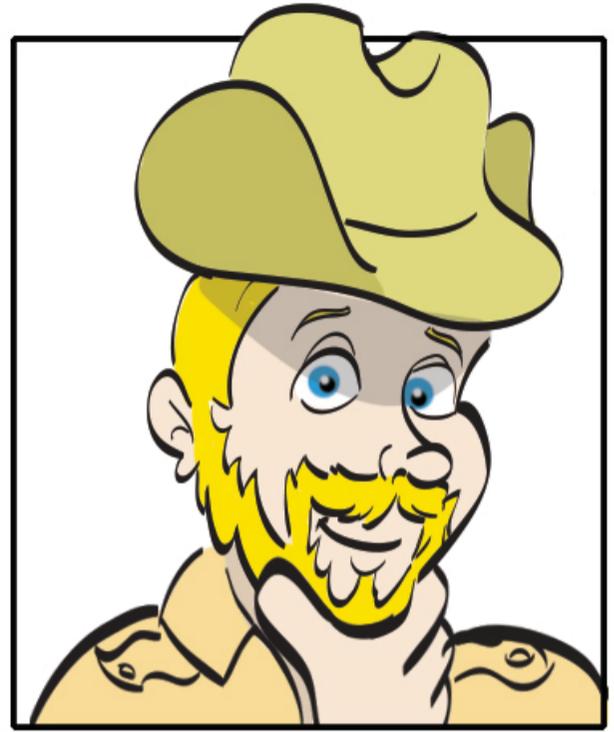
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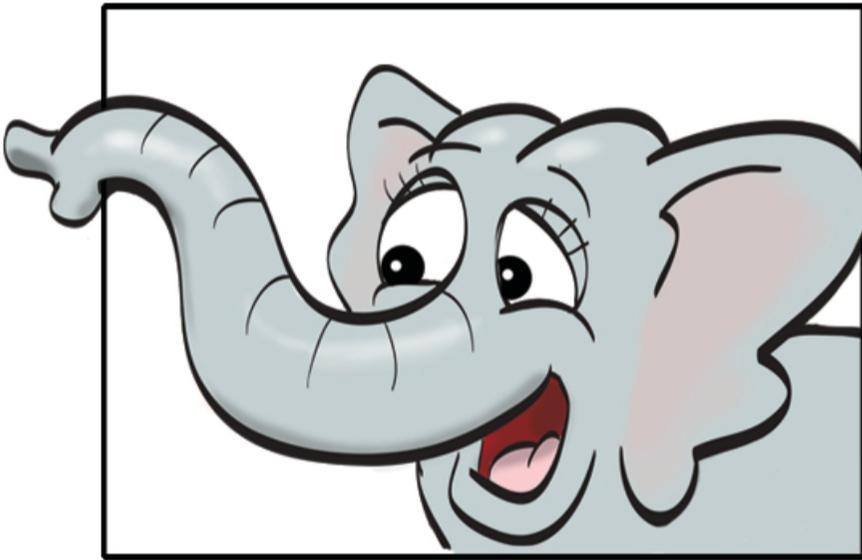
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**Tough Guy**



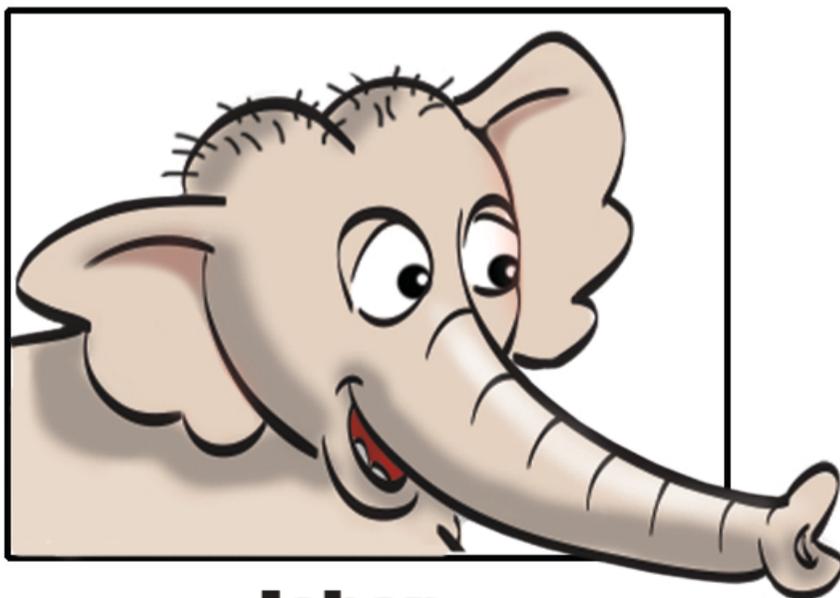
**Teacher**



**Elsa**



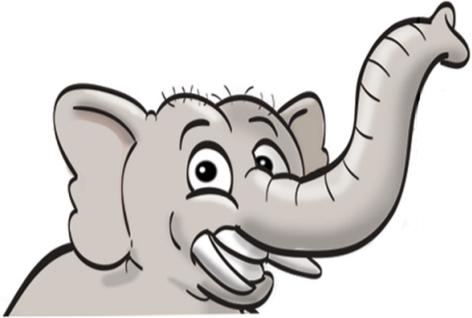
**Brother**



**Johan**



**Sister**



## TOUGH GUY SPEAKS

I was born 2 years ago on the continent of Africa, in the country of South Africa, in an area known as Zululand. For the first 6 months of my life I lived with my herd of 9 elephants. We spent our days looking for grass to eat, water to drink or bathe in while constantly playing with and talking to one another.

My life was wonderful, and I was a happy baby until one horrible day when terrible rains came and swept me away. This is my story...



## BROTHER SPEAKS

My name is Bao Jian (which means “keep strong”) Lee. I was born on the continent of Asia in the country of China. I have lived my first 10 years of life in the city of Shanghai. My family is very lucky because my father works hard and is a very rich man. We have a palace for a home and enjoy many luxuries that most people cannot afford. I have had a wonderful education as well.

Eighteen months ago my family, teacher and I went to South Africa. There, I was changed forever because of an incredible storm, which brought Tough Guy into my life. This is my story...



## SISTER SPEAKS

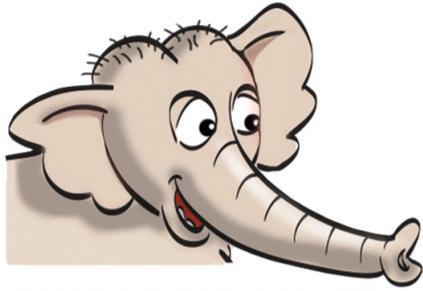
My name is Mei Ling (which means “beautiful and delicate”) Lee. I, too, was born on the continent of Asia in the country of China. My birth parents were very poor and could not raise me.

I spent the first year of my life in an orphanage. Great fortune came my way when the Lee family, looking for a girl child, found me and adopted me. That was 9 years ago. My life is filled with opportunities, unique experiences and love. But, I have become a deeper and better person since that fateful day Tough Guy came into my life. This is my story...



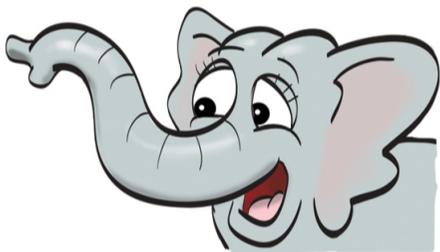
## TEACHER SPEAKS

My name is Samuel L. (which stands for Lawson) Gold. I was born on the continent of Australia and was raised in the city of Sydney. Because I love to teach and am a travel bug, I applied for the job as private tutor for the children of Yu Wen (which means “rich in knowledge”) Lee and Lin Fang (which means “flower in the forest”) Lee of Shanghai, China. For the past 3 years I have enjoyed educating the Lee children regarding all things. It was, however, our fabulous excursion to Africa, and our stay at Shepherds’ Sanctuary for Endangered Wildlife that my life as a teacher became a destiny I never imagined. This great fortune was because of my friend, Tough Guy. I hope you enjoy my story...



## JOHAN SPEAKS

Three years ago, my sister, Elsa, and I were born in the country of Ethiopia on the continent of Africa. My family, a herd of eight elephants, was force to leave our country because of very bad people called poachers.



## ELSA SPEAKS

Happily, and because of many miracles, our herd was saved from a frightening fate. After a long and difficult journey, we arrived at our new home...Shepherds' Sanctuary for Endangered Wildlife. When Tough Guy came to stay at the Sanctuary with Johan and me, I became fulfilled. This is our story...

# Chapter

# 1



# MEI LING SPEAKS

"Bao Jian! Wake up, Bao! We have a plane to catch!" I demanded as I tried to awaken my brother.

"So tired...too early...later!"

"No, not later, brother. Don't you want to go to Africa today?"

And, just like that, my brother was out of bed. In record time he dressed, brushed his hair and teeth, (multitasking is Bao's favorite thing), and ate a big bowl of Cheerios.

"I am so ready for this," he mumbled, a mouthful of cereal barely staying where it should.

At that moment, Mr. Sam Gold, teacher extraordinaire, joined us in the kitchen. I love Mr. Gold for so many reasons. He has taught my brother, my parents and myself a million and one things about our planet and our world. He is a genius and is very generous with his knowledge. Best of all, he and I share 2 things in common...our love of fashion (we are always creating new style trends), and our love of photography (we are shutter bugs, for sure!).

"Mr. Gold, you look so amazing today." He was very handsome in a white linen suit, black Tee shirt and black canvas loafers with no socks.

"Thank you Mei Ling. And it looks like you, too, have given today's outfit a lot of thought."

This was true. I like to be comfortable when I fly and we would be on my parents' plane for 12 hours or more. I had chosen lavender and white zebra striped leggings, a soft white sweatshirt sprinkled with pink baby elephants and cozy, pink fur ankle high boots.

"Mama and I went shopping yesterday. My whole vacation wardrobe is 'mix and match'," I said proudly!

"Do you fashionistas approve of my outfit? Yesterday, Father and I went on a shopping spree of our own," Bao said, modeling for us.

I have to admit my brother looked less messy than usual. He was wearing a light green Tee shirt, camouflage khakis, and brown rubber hiking boots. A broad brimmed hat hung from his neck. He was holding three backpacks which he leaned against the table. They were filled with many protective lotions...sunscreen, insect repellent, zinc oxide etc., along with various protein bars, dehydrated camping snacks and stainless steel water bottles.

"You are very stylish brother, as well as being very prepared... for anything and everything!" I laughed and Mr. Gold did too.

"Laugh all you like... You won't think my preparedness so silly when we are in Africa," Bao responded as he handed us our own well-stocked backpacks.

"Thank you Bao," I said and meant it. Mine was a silk backpack with several zippered pockets and a variety of African animals embroidered on it. It was really pretty.

"This is terrific!" Mr. Gold loved his dark green canvas pack with black zippered pockets. "And here are some additional products to keep you safe and well." He said as he handed us water purification systems (the size of golf balls) and personal first-aid kits.

My brother and I added these goodies to our backpacks. We were all very excited and were talking about what we might see in Zululand when Mama and Papa joined us.

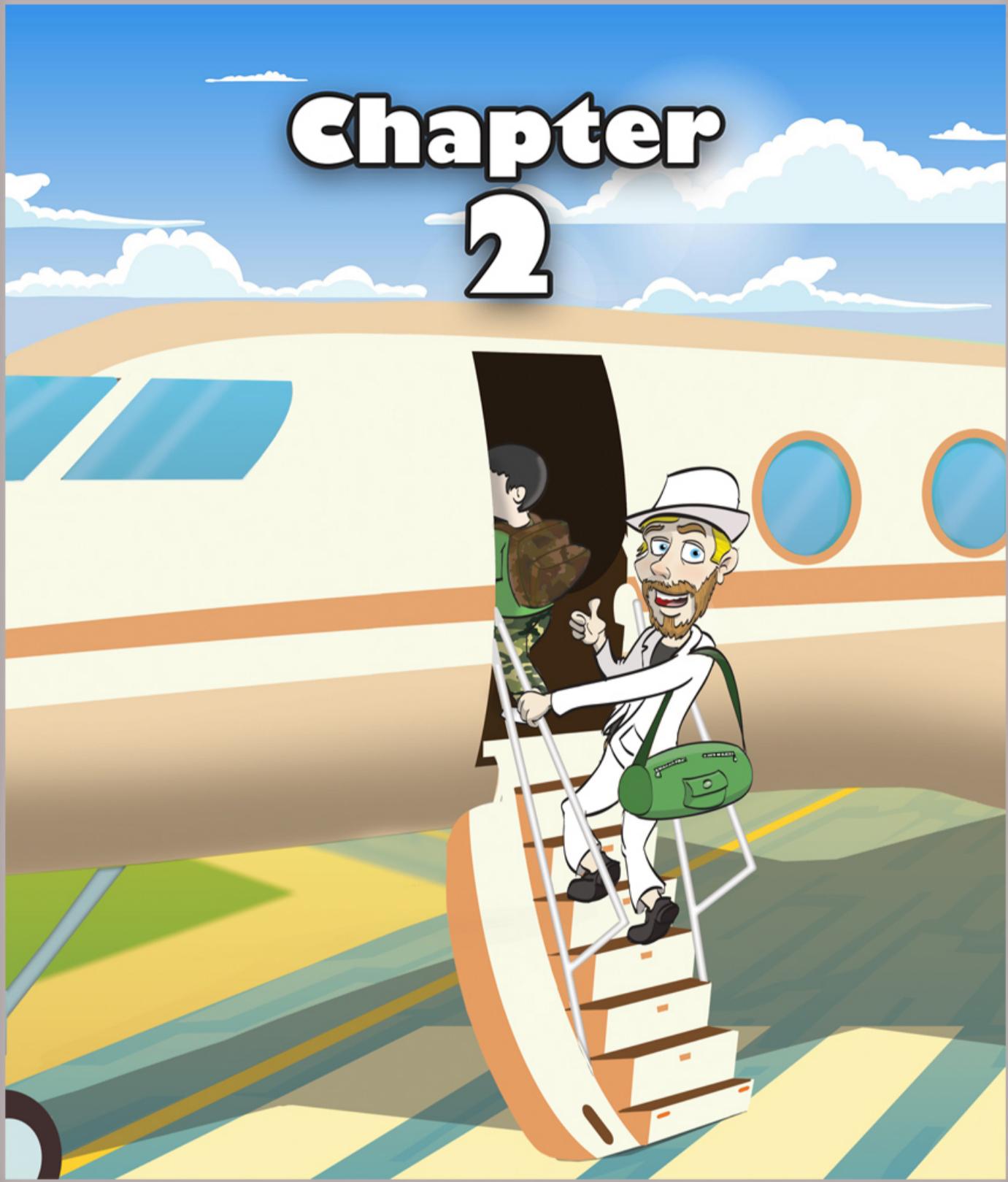
"Happy to see we are all ready to go," Papa said as Bao and I ran to greet our parents with our usual morning hugs.

"Mr. Gold, do you have all of our necessary papers?"

"Yes, Mr. Lee. I have triple checked Mrs. Lee's list and nothing has been forgotten." (Mr. Gold is a very well organized person and I am happy to follow in his footsteps).

"All right everybody. Our car is waiting. Hurry! Hurry!...I do hate being late!" But no one needed coaxing as we rushed out the door.

# Chapter 2



# MR. GOLD SPEAKS

"Alright, up you go kiddos," I said as I herded the 2 excited Lee children onto the medal staircase and into the Lees' private 777 jet airplane.

"Climbing these stairs with 15 pounds on my back isn't that easy Mr. Gold!" Bao panted.

"Use those muscles you always brag about," Mei Ling teased.

"What's this I am hearing from my 'some day famous' soccer playing son?" Papa Lee joked.

"Brave and strong!" I coaxed everyone as we trudged up the steep stairs.

I have been the Lees' private teacher for three years now. We have gone on many excursions during this time. We crossed Canada by way of a wonderful train. We toured Iceland on a photography adventure (gorgeous). We did a one month stay in Japan where we took Japanese immersion language classes and cooking classes. Then, Argentina, where we stayed on a Gaucho ranch for 6 weeks learning all things cowboy. Last year we went to the Antarctic, traveling across rough seas to the coldest spot on the planet...incredible. We have been on luxurious trains, yachts, and now this brand new and spectacular plane. Having come from a working class family, I do believe I am the luckiest thirty-years-old man alive. Added to all of these perks, I love my job because I love learning and I love teaching.

"Mr. Gold, you and the children may sit in the classroom my wife has designed. It should meet all your needs!"

I looked in the direction Mr. Lee was pointing. It surpassed my needs. As for the children, they had already unloaded their backpacks, taken their seats and were beginning to read the information I had prepared for them regarding South Africa, Zululand and the incredible Sanctuary where we would be staying. I believe that if all children were raised with a love of learning like the Lee children, teachers would call their jobs "paradise".

"Are your seatbelts fastened children?" Mrs. Lee, carrying Mylo, the family's Papillon dog, inspected her children's seatbelts, making sure they were buckled correctly.

"Mama, please let Mylo sit with us," Bao Jian begged.

"Yes, please Mama?" Mei Ling echoed. The children loved Mylo. He was rescued from the streets of Shanghai and was very ill when Mrs. Lee's seamstress brought him to the family. That was 2 years ago and we have all played a part in saving Mylo's life. He has expanded our love and has given us happiness and joy in the process.

"But children, you know how much comfort Mylo gives me during take-offs and landings," Mrs. Lee was sounding nervous.

"Don't give it another moment's thought," I said coming to Mrs. Lee's defense. "Mylo definitely wants to be with you!"

"Lin Fang...come...sit...the captain is ready for take off," Mr. Lee said as he escorted his wife and Mylo back to their seats.

It was a 12-hour plane ride but time passed quickly. We studied, exercised, ate and then studied some more.

"Take out the questionnaires I have prepared for you, children. It is time to discuss Zululand," I directed.

"May we join you Mr. Gold?" Asked Mrs. Lee.

"Of course...the more the merrier. Five brains are always better than three!" I responded.

This was not uncommon. The Lees love learning as much as I do, and Mylo, now sitting on Mei Ling's lap, seemed to love learning, too.

"Bao Jian, what continent are we visiting?" I asked.

"Too easy, Mr. Gold! The answer to your simple question is... Africa."

"Mei Ling, what country in Africa?" I continued.

“South Africa, Mr. Gold.”

“In what township of South Africa will we be staying, Mrs. Lee?” I tricked them and we all laughed.

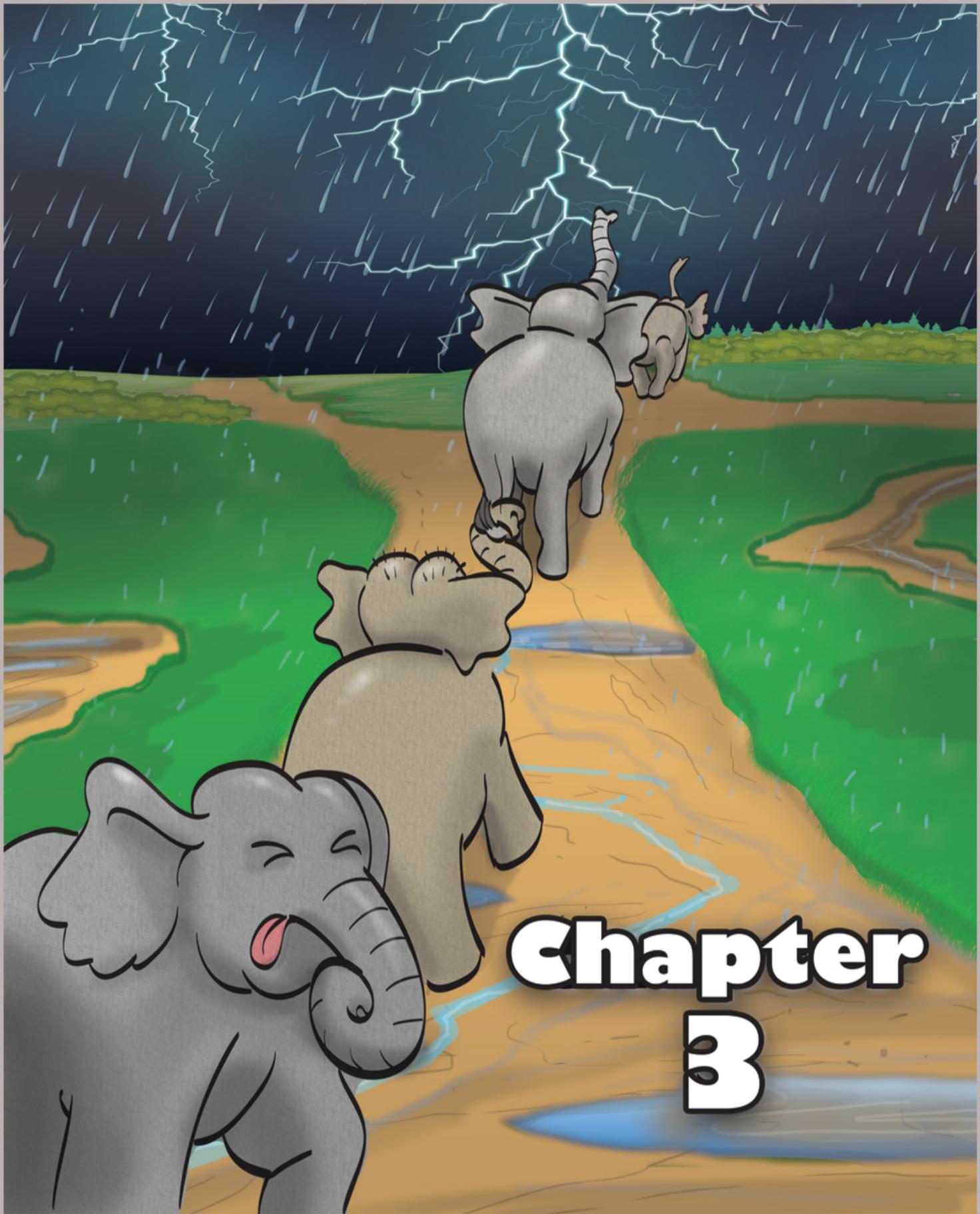
“Another simple question since it was I who made the arrangements, Mr. Gold. We are going to Zululand and will be staying at the Shepherds’ Sanctuary for Endangered Wildlife... and I am very excited about this!” Mrs. Lee was finally relaxing.

“Who lives in Zululand, Bao Jian?” I expected Bao would have trouble with this question, but...

“ Many different people and animals, as well, Mr. Gold. Since South Africa used to be an English colony, you will find people of English descent. There are also Australians, Americans, Chinese. Actually, you can probably call South Africa a melting pot because people from all over the world have made homes there. The indigenous people of the region are mostly from the Zulu tribe. They have lived there before anyone else... for hundreds of years in fact.”

“Very good, Bao Jian! And the animals you mentioned...Mei Ling, perhaps you can finish...” I saw how excited she was to tell us about them.

The questionnaire I had prepared thoroughly covered information about the wildlife, the vegetation, the climate, the economy and much more. Time flew by and upon landing we all thought we were experts regarding Zululand. But, there are always surprises on any vacation and ours to South Africa was no exception.



**Chapter  
3**

# TOUGH GUY SPEAKS

That fateful day when my life changed forever had begun the same as all my days on Earth. After sleeping through the night glued to my mother's body, I woke up hungry. I drank her milk, first thing, until I could not hold another drop. My cousins, big brother and I had gone for our usual morning mud bath along the banks of the Mumba River. Totally filthy, we rinsed ourselves (with the help of our mothers). Our trunks make excellent hoses and elephants love to inhale river water and then spray each other clean. It is a great gift...a trunk, I mean. Humans will just have to take my word for it!

"What a beautiful day!" My mother said to my cousins, her sisters, my brother, Funny Guy, and me as we dried ourselves in the morning sun.

Not everyone agreed. Auntie See Clearly looked out toward the horizon. She was the oldest...the matriarch of the herd. She raised her trunk and sniffed.

"A big storm is on the way. It will present much danger very soon. We must move quickly to higher ground!"

No one ever questioned Auntie See Clearly. She was always right. That is why we did exactly as she asked. This should not have been a problem except for one minor detail, which had never been a problem, really, until that 'change my life forever' day. You see, I was born with, what might be described as, a handicap. My front left leg was 1 inch shorter than my right front leg, and my mama had shown me how to live with it. But that day, that nightmare day, a great challenge confronted me...because of this shorter leg.

My mother spoke gently, but firmly. "Hurry, Tough Guy, you must focus on walking as quickly as you can. Hold on to Funny Guy, my sweet." He was right in front of me and Mama was right behind me.

"I will Mother," I assured her as I attached my trunk to his tail. "I have been practicing my fast walking!"

This was true. Funny Guy, Cousin Happy Toes and I made up lots of games and contests every day. They were always encouraging me to try harder and get faster and stronger.

"You are doing great, my love." Mama nudged me with her trunk as she spoke these words of encouragement.

Suddenly there was a terrible noise! It was a clap of thunder, which sent waves of fear through my body. Then came a lightening bolt, filling the darkened sky with a blinding streak of light. Next came the rain...hard and fast...bucketsful... so heavy I could no longer see.

"Wrap your trunk tighter around my tail, Tough Guy, and don't let go," Funny Guy trumpeted. He was afraid, too, and he was very scared for me.

I could feel my mother's strong head as she pushed me up the mountain. We all pushed against the wind and rain which was fighting us every step of the way. Progress was slow as we fought for higher ground. Then it happened. The earth quaked with a force I had never experienced. Then mud, like a big tidal wave, lifted me high into the sky. It pushed me away from Brother, away from Mother, away from my aunts and cousins. It carried me Away... Away...Away!

# Chapter 4



# JOHAN AND ELSA SPEAK

"Goodness, Johan! What a deafening noise! I will never get used to thunder!" I moved right next to my brother in our wonderful enclosure. I loved our little home. Mr. Bob Edwards had made it for Johan and me when we came to this Sanctuary 2 years ago. But I was still afraid...even though I knew we were safe here.

"So cool Elsa...look at the sky! The lightening looks like a bright silver ribbon dancing to the thunder in the rain." Johan thought everything was cool...and he was not afraid of anything.

Just then Mr. Bob Edwards came to check on us. He is a kind man and all his workers and all the animals living here think this. My brother and I feel like we are his favorites, though. We were so young when he saved us and nursed us back to good health himself.

"How are my babies doing?" He spoke with a lovely English accent. He still called us his babies even though we are almost 3 and very big next to him.

"Elsa, there is no need to feel frightened. You will always be safe here." And he kissed my trunk in his special way. Mr. Edwards always knows what I am feeling... which is quite remarkable.

"Johan, my boy, does nothing frighten you?" He asked my brother as he pet him and patted him. "You look like you want to go out into this devilish weather."

Johan loves to tease Mr. Bob Edwards and, when he said this, my brother gently pushed him with his trunk.

"Ha, ha, ha...you two know exactly what I am saying...it is absolutely brilliant!"

At that moment the earth beneath our feet rumbled with such force that Mr. Edwards lost his balance and stumbled into me.

"Gracious! Sorry girl...didn't mean to give you a startle. This weather is starting to concern me!" He said as he hugged Johan and myself at the same time.

"Mr. Edwards...the Gods have sent the mud vipers to destroy our land!" Big, Mr. Bob Edwards' best and strongest worker, was yelling this as he came running into our shelter. Big is one of the most respected leaders of the Zulu Nation and these two men are great friends.

"The Gods must be very angry for this horrible weather to be upon us!" Big said with terror in his voice.

"I don't know if that is true, Big, but I do know the flash flood probably created a mudslide. We must make sure our fences are all secure." And the two men started for the door.

"Johan, don't you leave too. I am afraid to stay here alone," I cried.

"Johan," Mr. Bob Edwards had heard my thoughts. "You must stay here for now and protect Elsa. I am depending on you. Understand, my boy?"

"Oh...alright." Johan spoke to Mr. Bob with his eyes.

"That' a boy, Johan." And, hugging us dearly, Mr. Edwards and Big left at once to secure the fences of Shepherds' Sanctuary.

# Chapter 5



# BAO JIAN SPEAKS

“What was that?” I was jolted out of my fully netted bed by something that felt like an earthquake. I had decided to sleep late this morning because my family and I had not arrived at the Sanctuary until well past midnight last night. But, I was fully awake now.

“Bao Jian, come quickly! Mother and Father want us to come down to the kitchen for a meeting about what is going on.”

“What is going on Mei Ling?”

“A flood and a mudslide and all sorts of things.” Mei Ling told me as she helped me out from under my bed netting. She must have been awake for a while. She was stylishly dressed in pink shorts, black rubber boots that ended where her shorts began, a long-sleeved sun protective flowery shirt and a white vest with many pockets.

I grabbed a pair of basketball shorts and a sun protective white shirt. Changing out of my p.j.'s and slipping into my crocks, I ran after Mei Ling who was now with my parents in the kitchen.

“Better than an alarm clock, I must say,” I announced reaching the kitchen. “What was that enormous explosion?”

“There has been a mudslide which is causing the Mumba River to overflow its banks.” Mr. Gold said joining us.

“Wow...we just talked about that yesterday, Mr. Gold.” It had been part of the unit on climate and weather from Mr. Gold’s questionnaire. “This happened 12 years ago and now it is happening again?” I asked.

Mother was not at all happy about this turn of events. She was clutching Mylo tightly and now she was pulling Mei Ling and me into an inescapable grip.

“Mother...you are crushing us...we’re fine,” I promised as I loosened her grip on Mei Ling and me.

Just then, Father came in. “Come, everyone. Let us eat and talk.”

We all took a seat around a beautifully arranged breakfast table that was covered with many choices of foods to eat. As we filled our plates with this and that, our father took charge.

“As you must know by now, there has been a serious flooding event and a very destructive mudslide. All the men who work for Mr. Bob Edwards as well as Mr. Edwards have gone to make sure the northern fences of this magnificent Sanctuary have not been breached,” My father informed us.

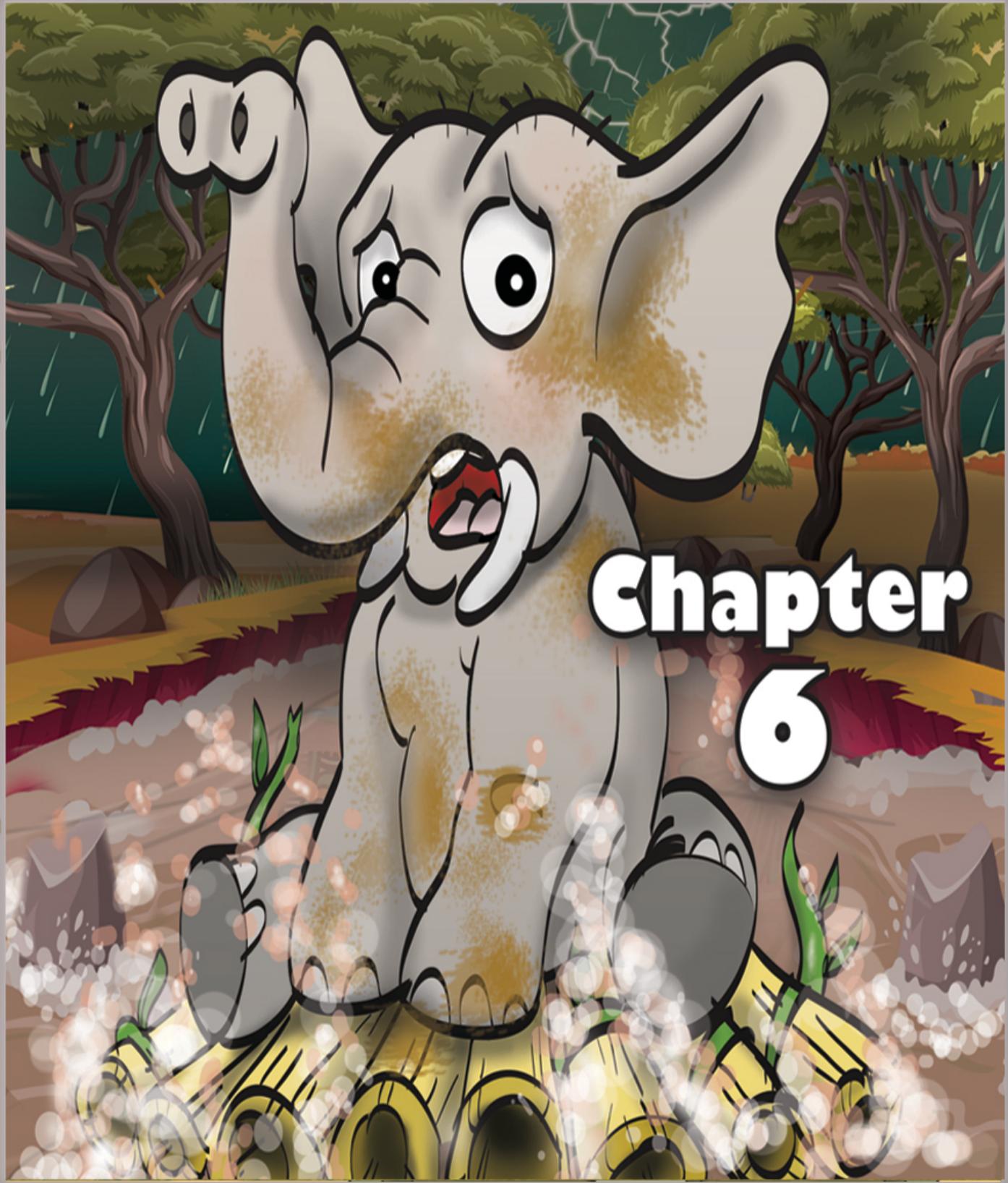
“That would be a disaster. Remember, Mr. Gold? 12 years ago the fences were ripped from their foundations and many animals and people were swept away by the force of the river.” I was beginning to freak out a little myself.

“That is true, Bao Jian,” Mr. Gold confirmed. “But the fencing surrounding the Sanctuary now was designed by superb architects and engineers. I can assure you, that type of disaster is most unlikely now!” Mr. Gold’s confidence was contagious and soon we were all feeling better.

“So, here you are.” Mrs. Edwards, who insisted on being called Caroline, came joyfully into the room. She looked out the big french doors that revealed a beautiful South Africa right in front of us. Come and see. It has stopped raining, the sun is out and just look at that magnificent rainbow!

“A most wonderful omen!” My mother added as Mylo reassured her with cheek kisses. Everyone burst out laughing, believing all was well.

“Please, everyone, let’s enjoy our meal as I fill you in on all the particulars of this most unusual morning,” Ms. Caroline said as she joined us for breakfast.



**Chapter**  
**6**

# TOUGH GUY SPEAKS

I am not sure how long this wild mud wave ride lasted. I was tossed around as though I were a peacock feather. Scenery of my beloved Africa passed by my eyes faster than a gazelle being chased by a lion. I was, at times, as high as the treetops. I was also the same height as birds that were flying away from this danger.

“Thud”...Suddenly I was back on the ground...but it wasn't the ground. Having hit something very hard, I was now a surfing elephant, and my board was some sort of a wooden plank.

“Please...(I prayed to the Gods of the wind, rain and jungle) keep me safe!”

I had a thought that, if I weren't so afraid, this could be fun...maybe. I gripped my board with all 4 legs as it carried me further and further from my home, my mother, my herd.

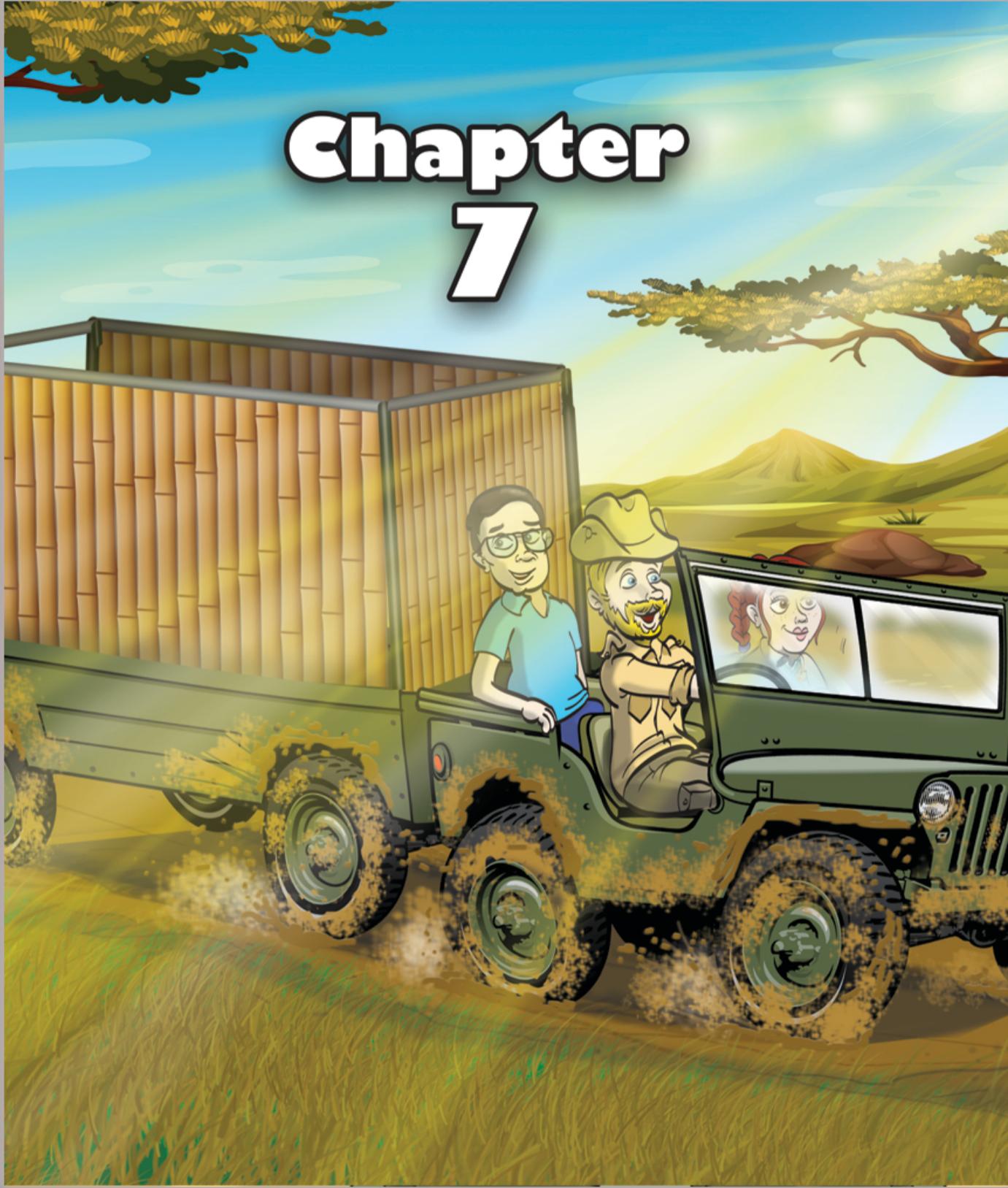
And then... the mud disappeared and I found myself floating down the Mumba River. The sun was peeking out from clouds that were parting. A beautiful rainbow seemed to be guiding me and I felt peaceful...for a moment or two. I gazed up and saw a family of chimpanzees clinging to each other in a Banyan tree. This sight gave me a voice somehow and I began trumpeting for Mother, Brother...or anyone... as I journeyed on.

In a short while I seemed to drift toward a big island of vines. It captured my board, leaving it and me entangled and at a standstill in the middle of this great river.

“What shall I do? How will I ever find my mother and family?” I began to cry. I couldn't help it because I was afraid if my mother couldn't find me...Wait...What? I saw them... men...in jeeps and trucks, driving along the river's bank. Then, without thinking, I began to trumpet...as loudly and as strongly as I have ever trumpeted!

“Please, please, help me,” I blew. And then I saw them...Seeing Me!

# Chapter 7



# MR. GOLD SPEAKS

While the Lee family plus Mylo, Ms. Caroline and I ate our breakfast, the sound of wind chimes filled the air.

"That must be Bob," Ms. Caroline announced as she hurried to the kitchen to answer the phone.

A serious discussion between Ms. Caroline and Mr. Bob Edwards came next. I tried to eavesdrop while staying somewhat engaged in the conversation at the breakfast table. I could only guess at what the issues might be because what I heard from the one-sided discussion was..."Dear me...yes, yes, of course...absolutely...right away!"

The next thing I knew, Mr. Lee, Ms. Caroline and I were driving down a muddy road in a jeep with a trailer attached.

"I am assuming that something has gone wrong with the Sanctuary's fencing." I broke the silence with my assumption. "That mudslide sounded as destructive as a Volcano in full eruption. When I was a teenager Mount Helena erupted in Washington State in the U.S.A. and people described the noise as petrifying. I watched an amazing documentary about it and..."

"Actually," Ms. Caroline interrupted, "Mr. Bob says the fencing is splendid...no problems with that."

"Then what exactly is our mission?" Mr. Lee wanted to know.

"There is an emergency ahead of us and we are all needed." That was all Ms. Caroline said.

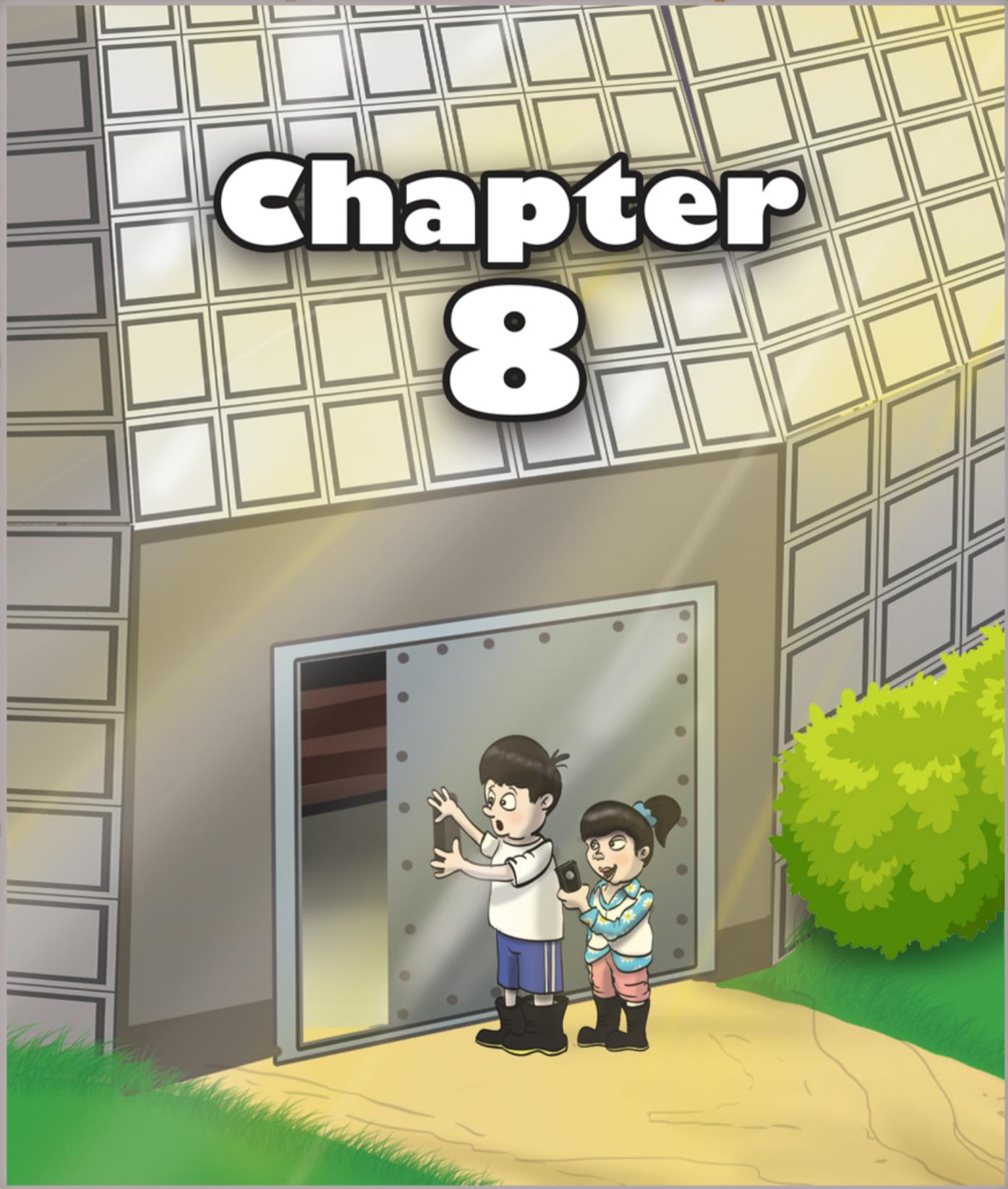
Finally our truck and trailer reached Mr. Bob, his foreman, Big, and several other Zulu tribesmen. Now I could see what she had meant. There, in the middle of the Mumba River, stranded on a plank of some sort and trapped in a massive tangle of vines was the sweetest baby elephant I had ever seen. It was crying (fact... elephants do cry). Obviously, he or she was terrified of this clear and present danger.

"Simply amazing...I see now we will be performing a most important rescue?" I blurted. "This is history in the making. The children should most definitely be here to document this event. I beg of you all, let me drive back to the Sanctuary and get Bao Jian and Mei Ling!"

"Of course...yes, Mr. Gold. You are right about that! This is definitely a teaching moment and should not be wasted." Ms. Caroline said with great enthusiasm. "I will drive back for the children, Mr. Gold. You are needed here."

And, as Ms. Caroline climbed into Mr. Bob's jeep, she reminded me, "Be sure to take video with that wonderful iPhone of yours, Mr Gold. I will be back lickity-split," she shouted as she disappeared from view.

# Chapter 8



# MEI LING SPEAKS

As Father, Mr. Gold and Ms. Caroline drove away, Bao Jian and I grumbled to Mother at the unfairness of our being left behind just because of our ages.

“Isn’t ageism against the law, Mama? Grandfather says you can not be discriminated against because of your age.”

Along with my many hobbies, I am very interested in civil rights. Mr. Gold thinks I have what it takes to be a lawyer some day, because I love to argue right from wrong.

“Well, I am a bit upset myself,” Mother added. “Why would your father declare that this was a job for men when he, himself, has no idea where they are going and what is happening.”

“And I am almost 11. In many cultures, a boy is considered a man by the age of 10.” My brother added his own reality. “I am perfectly capable of doing anything Father or Mr. Gold can do!”

“Perhaps you children should start photo journaling the Sanctuary’s main house and the grounds around us and explain about the storm and the...”

“That is a great idea, Mama,” I said as Bao and I hurried to our rooms to get our iPhones.

Our rooms were right next to each other on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the main house and we shared a balcony. We both stepped out onto it as soon as we had our phones because this elevated view of the property and beyond was spectacular. As we videotaped, doing voiceovers and scanning the premises, I suddenly noticed a huge octagon-shaped building that seemed out of place in South Africa.

“Hey, B...what do you think that building is over there? It looks like something you might see in the Antarctic...or Alaska...or...”

“It kind of does look like an igloo,” Bao agreed. “There is only one way to know, Mei Ling, and that is to go check it out.”

“Do you think that it’s safe...I mean it might have some wild animals housed in it.” I was a bit reluctant to go exploring.

“No way...and besides, we’ll take Mylo and Mother with us,” he said as he whizzed by me and hurried down the stairs.

“Oh, yeah, they are perfect to take along as protection,” I said sarcastically but was right behind him.

“Mother, we are going on a little adventure and would love it if you and Mylo would come with us.” Bao Jian knows how to smooth talk Mama.

“What kind of an adventure, Bao Jian,” Mama asked as we reached her rocking herself and Mylo in a gigantic porch rocker.

Pulling a tiny, yet high-powered pair of binoculars from his backpack, he pointed in the direction of the strange building and said, “Here... have a look.” He handed her the binoculars.

“Yes, I see...Let me go get the Sanctuary’s handbook and see what we are looking at...It will just take a moment.”

But, no sooner had Mama and Mylo left the porch, Bao and I, like world-class runners, were sprinting toward the octagon. Well, perhaps I am exaggerating. The sun was now fully out but the mud was insanely thick and slowed our tempo down quite a bit. I did have on a pair of rubber boots and so did Bao, but, by the time we reached the odd shaped building, our legs and clothes were covered in mud.

“Bao Jian, what are you doing?” he was starting to open the sliding door of this building that contained “who knows what”.

“Obviously there are no windows and how else are we going to know what is in here. Turn the video on so you can document our discovery.”

I swear my brother has a lot of courage...or maybe he is just a bit nuts... but I did what he asked, which makes me crazy, too.

“I have never seen a structure like this...Is it titanium covered in rubber?” Bao asked no-one in particular as he slowly opened the door...ever so slightly.

“Wow, Mei Ling, it is 2 young elephants...and they’re awesome!”

“How do you know they are young, Bao?” I asked and fearfully peeked in, while videotaping all the time.

“Remember the reports we did for Mr. Gold...when we drew elephants at different stages of development?”

“That was 2 years ago, but, yes, you are right. And are they ever adorable!” I exclaimed as I fully entered the building.

“Children, children, come away. “ It was Mama carrying Mylo and she looked terrified. “These are wild elephants and they might charge us!”

But I was not hearing Mother. I was now fully inside the enclosure, and Bao and I were filming away.

“Hi there,” I said with great confidence as if these 2 elephants could understand every word I said. “My name is Mei Ling and this is my brother, Bao Jian. We are staying here as your guests at the Sanctuary. The woman over there is my mother and that’s our little dog Mylo.”

“Children, please, I demand that you come here at once,” my mother gasped at Bao and me, but we weren’t afraid and we were getting some wonderful footage on our phones.

“Mother, stop worrying!” Bao had found a mural on the wall with pictures of the two elephants and information about them just like you would see at the zoo.

“They are almost 3 years of age. They are tame and actually like people.” I had joined Bao and was reading also.

“Look Mama, it is their story...This one is Johan and this one is Elsa. Aren’t they precious and adorable?”

I was now very close to Elsa so I reached up and stroked her trunk. She nodded at this and drew closer. Meanwhile, my mother had summoned her inner courage and was now reading the elephants’ biographies as Bao and I had done. She was clutching Mylo so tightly, however, that he began to whimper.

“These elephants are warriors, Mei Ling,” my brother said finishing their story and petting Johan along his side.

“According to the information here, Johan and I are a lot alike. He is strong, he loves to eat, and he seeks adventure at every turn.” Bao was speaking now to Johan, as if Johan understood him.

“And Elsa sounds like me. She is quiet and a very good listener...”

“Yes, but you don’t have her gorgeous ears sister, that is for sure!” My brother is a jokester.

“And Elsa likes children...especially girls. You are darling, Elsa. I already love you.”

And as I told her this, she nudged me with her trunk. Then a photo party began. We all took selfies with Johan and Elsa. Even Mama and Mylo joined in on the fun. I went back and forth doing photos and video recordings and Johan and Elsa turned out to be quite the posers! We were having a blast when we suddenly heard the backfiring of a jeep coming up the driveway.

# Chapter

9



# TOUGH GUY SPEAKS

I watched my 'to be rescuers' gather along the edge of the river as I clung desperately to my river board. They saw me, I was certain about that, and I could see that no one had a gun or a spear or any weapon that could harm me. So, I was hopeful that all the Gods had sent them to help me (my Auntie See Clearly has told me many stories about the Gods and their love for all species of children).

It seemed, at first, that only men had come to save me. They were talking and pointing and figuring out how to free me, I assumed. And then, 2 women and a boy and a girl and a furry little dog arrived in a jeep, speaking very quickly with each other. One of the men, who seemed to be the leader, held a small box to his ear and spoke into it like someone was inside of it. Then, the two children took boxes out of their pockets that looked just like the leader man's box and looked through them at me. I was becoming very impatient because it seemed as though no one realized my scary situation and, so, I began to trumpet my anger in my loudest voice possible. That, definitely, got their attention and then a riverboat raft appeared from upstream carrying more big men with lots of rope. They began to yell to the man with the box on shore like they were making a plan to help me out of this mess. I quit trumpeting and watched and listened.

Then, the men on the riverboat raft rowed close to shore and the leader man climbed onto it. As they came towards me, that man spoke.

"Hello there, buddy. You're ok. We are here to help you so try not to be afraid."

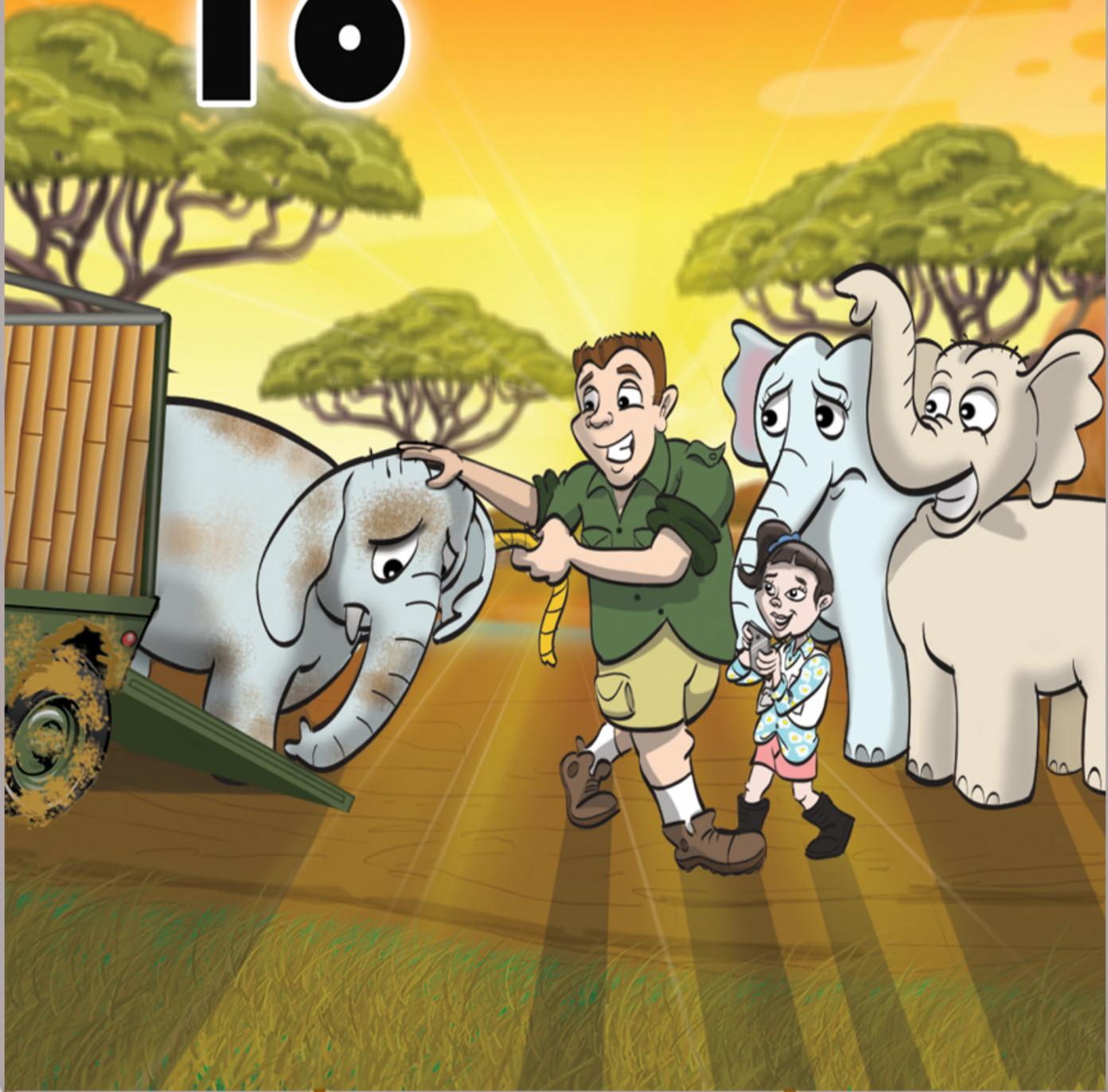
His voice was soft and calm and, as he drew closer to my vine island, I thought he seemed friendly. But I did not trust him...or anyone or any of this and, really, I just wanted my mother.

"My name is Bob Edwards and I have an animal Sanctuary. We have saved many animals that have gotten themselves into a bit of a mess...just like you. These are my Zulu friends and they are experts at saving baby elephants who get stuck in vines and we are all going to help you. So bare with us, fella, and you will be free very soon." I had no idea what this man, Bob, was saying, but I did know the words 'help' and 'friend' and 'free'. My mother had taught me words good humans use and these were 3 of them. I had no choice by this point, anyway, and so I tried to be calm and let them help me.

For a long time Bob and the Zulu men worked with the ropes... braiding, tying knots, then braiding again, until something like a hammock was created. Then, the men in the boat took knives from their belts and began cutting the vines away. Next, they removed their shirts, dove into the water and, swimming under my body, captured my board and me with the hammock.

The boy and the girl on shore, still holding their boxes, and still looking through them at me, began to scream and jump and clap their free hands with each other. The furry dog barked and barked like it knew what was happening. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, to kick and fight and scream. Suddenly, I was doing all of this but Bob Edwards kept speaking kindly to me and, soon, I realized I was being towed in my hammock down the river, by men who seemed to be taking me...wait...Where? At this point I only knew to fight and trumpet for my herd and my mother as I became more lost and afraid. I was being taken, against my will, to a place unknown.

# Chapter 10



# ELSA & JOHAN SPEAK

## ELSA SPEAKS

Johan and I had been eating grasses and berries and other special foods Ms. Caroline prepares for us daily. My brother and I love to eat. We still remember days long ago when we almost died of starvation. Food helps us cope with many feelings...hunger, fear, sadness, boredom, joy, anger...Johan and I say it is a cure for everything and, being great big baby elephants, we can eat a lot!

We had been alone for a long time. The sun was telling me it was now midday when we heard the Sanctuary jeeps and truck coming up the drive.

"Johan, what are you doing? Be careful," I said as he hurried to the door and pushed it open.

"Calm down, Elsa...It seems that everyone is finally back...and there is a new kid in town!" Johan announced.

I came up behind Johan as he moved forward to greet the Edwards, the guests and the new baby elephant. I am a lot more shy than Johan and decided, at first, to watch from the door of our structure.

## JOHAN SPEAKS

I was really excited when I spied the baby. He was being led out of the trailer by Mr. Bob Edwards who was holding the hand of the girl, Mei Ling, on his other side. Mei Ling and Mr. Bob were quietly speaking to the baby elephant ( who seemed extremely upset). I knew Elsa and I could be the solution to this problem. I turned and waved my trunk at Elsa signaling for her to come...now.

When the boy, Bao Jian, saw me, he smiled so big that his face made me happy. He was holding his picture box and talking to himself as he came towards me.

"Bao...come back here at once!" His mother was practically screeching but Bao assured her I was his friend and he was safe. Mr. Bob Edwards agreed and told Mrs. Lee that I was not to be feared.

"Johan, the Gods have brought us a baby. How lovely!" Elsa was thrilled. She was thinking how fulfilling it would be for her to have a baby to mother. "He is so cute, but he does not walk right," she said coming right up to him and stroking him with her trunk.

# ELSA SPEAKS

The baby was crying and softly trumpeting and I was worried his leg was hurting.

"There there, my little friend. You are safe and we are your friends. We are all here to help you." I hoped he believed me.

Then Johan and I stood on either side of him and began soothing the baby as our mother and sister used to do when we were little and afraid. Mr. Bob and Ms. Caroline and the guests seemed relieved.

"Bao Jian...Mei Ling," Mr. Bob said. "You are about to see my beauties do magic!"

Then all the humans...the entire Lee family, Mr. Gold, Mr. and Mrs. Edwards, and Big gathered on the front porch and witnessed the language of elephants. The Lee children continued to spy through their boxes, talking with each other, as Mr. Gold interpreted (ahh... humans) what we were saying and what we were doing. He coached them as a teacher of all things would. History was being made and my brother, the baby elephant and I were the Stars!

# Chapter 1



# MR. GOLD SPEAKS

Throughout all my days as a teacher, student, and traveler...with all the remarkable adventures I have experienced since meeting the Lee family, today has been The Most Extraordinary!

By the time the baby elephant had calmed down enough that he was not trumpeting and crying anymore, (thanks to Elsa and Johan for that...so loving) it was 7:30 pm. That evening the sunset was exquisite (Africa is known for this), inspiring me to begin my photo journaling of this trip like I have done with all my travels.

"Weren't my babies fantastic with the newbie today?" Mr. Bob Edwards asked no one in particular and so we all responded "yes" and "absolutely" and "amazing." I joined the others at the dinner table and we all filled our bellies with Ms. Caroline's fabulous English Stew... her mother's secret recipe.

"I am going to call him Tough Guy," Mr. Edwards announced. "His name came to me as we were towing him down the river. He was putting up a great fight and I am certain he was calling for his herd. And to think he survived that mudslide!! Yes, I think it is the perfect name for him."

Again, we all agreed as we continued to enjoy our delicious dinner. Afterwards, Mr. Bob Edwards escorted Bao Jian, Mei Ling, and myself into his elaborate study. There were bookshelves filled with books of all genres. One wall had a huge viewing screen with audiovisual equipment opposite it. Mr. Edwards insisted that we use what we needed, taking the videos of that day and creating a film. He suggested it would be an excellent documentary.

From the children's morning videos of the igloo-like structure taken from the balcony of the hotel, to the children's first encounter with Elsa and Johan, to their footage shot from the jeep with Ms. Caroline, to the discovery of Tough Guy, his rescue and his first meeting with his new Sanctuary friends, it was all there. I was impressed and thrilled. You see, filmmaking is a particularly favorite hobby of mine, amateur though I am, and I have tried to impart my knowledge upon Bao and Mei Ling. As we combined Mei Ling's footage with Bao Jian's, a wonderful little documentary film began to emerge.

"Mylo!" Our concentration was interrupted as our little buddy burst into the study and jumped onto Mei Ling's lap, kissing her face with joy.

"Look Mylo, you are in our movie. See?" Mei Ling said as she propped Mylo up to watch himself.

"Children, it is way past your bedtime!" It was Mrs. Lee who had followed Mylo straight to her children.

"So sorry, Mrs. Lee. We have been so focused on our videos that we all got carried away. Would you like to see...", I tried to engage her in our accomplishment but...

"It is not a problem, Mr. Gold. Mr. Bob Edwards has just gone to check on little Tough Guy and I thought you might want to join him."

Mrs. Lee was speaking to me but the children, excited about another photo opportunity, were half way out the door when...

"No, no children...not you...I must insist...it is time for bed. Perhaps Mr. Gold can..."

"Of course I will!" And grabbing both phones, I hurried off to join Mr. Bob and Tough Guy as the children's voices of protest faded from earshot.

# Chapter 12



# TOUGH GUY SPEAKS

I am miserable...and so angry with myself for not being strong enough or brave enough to overcome my fate of the mudslide. Why didn't I hold on tighter to my brother, Funny Guy. I am deeply sad. How will I ever find my family or they find me. And, thinking this thought makes me so afraid I just want to wail and trumpet until I no longer feel these feelings.

Instead, I decide to sulk...to mope and turn my back on these 2 elephants who seem thrilled to have me as part of their family. I swear, if Elsa cuddles me one more time I will explode...with rage. I have never felt this way before but I don't care about anyone or anything. I just want to be back with my mother and my herd.

"Come on, Tough Guy, you really need to eat something!" The annoyingly kind man coaxed.

"It really is good stuff," Johan said scooping up food with his trunk and shoveling it into his mouth. But I wasn't hungry and I was way too angry, afraid and sad to eat.

"Oh great," I thought as the man called Mr. Gold came in. He was carrying three boxes that, it seems, every human has and can't do without...

"How are you feeling today, Tough Guy?"

Now I know that Mr. Gold is trying to help me with his gentleness, but...how does he think I am feeling?

"I get it. You must be very afraid, but, with your permission, I would like to take some more videos of you. The children and I want to call attention to the plight of African elephants. You are a very sympathetic character and I am certain the world will fall in love with you. I think you will be a hero!"

I, however, can barely breathe thinking what will become of me.

# Chapter 13



# BAO JIAN SPEAKS

I woke up incredibly early that second day at the Sanctuary. In fact, I watched the sunrise and filmed it using the time delay button on my cell phone...a total work of art if I do say so myself.

Mr. Gold had taken some awesome footage of Tough Guy on my phone the night before... just like he said he would. This, added to the film he shot on Mei Ling's phone, made me feel as though I hadn't missed a thing.

Since it was uncomfortably hot already, I dressed in red shorts, a red and white teeshirt and my favorite Vans with red and white squares. Then, I hurried off to the elephant structure just as soon as I covered all exposed flesh with a combination of sunscreen and bug spray.

Tough Guy seemed very agitated and Mr. and Mrs. Edwards as well as Johan and Elsa were doing their best to comfort and calm him. I went into director/videographer mode... immediately! When one is filming a documentary one must document...capiche?

Mei Ling soon joined the rest of us. Honestly, my little sister has style! Her outfit was her own concoction...blue jean shorts with little white hearts she had sewn on by herself, red leather mini boots, a red tank top and a white sun protective blouse with little red heart-shaped buttons she had found on a dress mother was throwing away.

"What's up, sister? Are you going on a modeling shoot?" I love teasing Mei Ling.

"Of course not, but thank you for the compliment, Bao Jian. Actually, I am hoping to lift Tough Guy's spirits...if possible.

"Oh dear," Mei Ling said staring at Tough Guy, "He still seems so scared...just like I felt when I was an orphan.

"Really, Mei Ling? You were just an infant when you were adopted. It is scientific fact that we don't remember anything before 3 or 4 years of age." Sometimes my sister exaggerates.

"Scientific facts vary and evolve all the time. I swear to you, I do remember the fear...a memory locked in my bones," my sister said adamantly, as Ms. Caroline approached us.

"Well, I am not sure if memories are stored in our bones, but there is something called muscle memory. And, perhaps you are speaking of spiritual awareness, Mei Ling. If this is so, perhaps your intuition can help us with Tough Guy." And this statement is a perfect example of how Ms. Caroline thinks...and sees.

"I can certainly try my best, Ms. Caroline. Would you mind filming me as I try to bond with him?" Mei Ling asked, taking her cell phone from Mr. Gold and handing it to Mrs. Edwards.

"I would love to Mei Ling." She took the phone and began filming while Mei Ling moved slowly toward Elsa and Johan, thinking this would be a good cue to Tough Guy that she was their friend and would, therefore, be a friend to him.

"Elsa...Johan," my sister spoke to them as she approached, "I am certain that if we show Tough Guy lots of love, we will succeed in helping him to feel safe. Then, he will calm down and realize we are all here to help him."

By now my sister was stroking both Johan and Elsa on the tops of their trunks. I am telling you, tears were forming in my eyes and I had to blink them away in order to keep filming. As for Tough Guy...well, for the first time since we found him, he stopped trumpeting and crying.

Now I know my sister has special powers with all animals. Over the years she has had three parakeets, two hamsters, three kittens and Mylo. In fact, when Mylo came to us, Mei Ling nursed him through a long sickness. We all did, but Mei Ling was incredible. She would hold him on her lap for hours and hours, feeding him tiny amounts of food with her fingertips

and helping him drink water from a doll's bottle. Mother and Father say that is why he lived. She is like an animal savior and now she was hoping to save Tough Guy.

"And there she goes," I told Mrs. E. as the two of us watched Mei Ling move slowly... slowly... slowly toward Tough Guy.

"Magical...simply magical," Ms. Caroline said as she watched and filmed Mei Ling quieting Tough Guy.

"Mei Ling, keep your distance. Tough Guy spooks!" Mr. Edwards was protecting my sister. But, although Tough Guy looked gigantic next to her, my sister was in charge and not afraid.

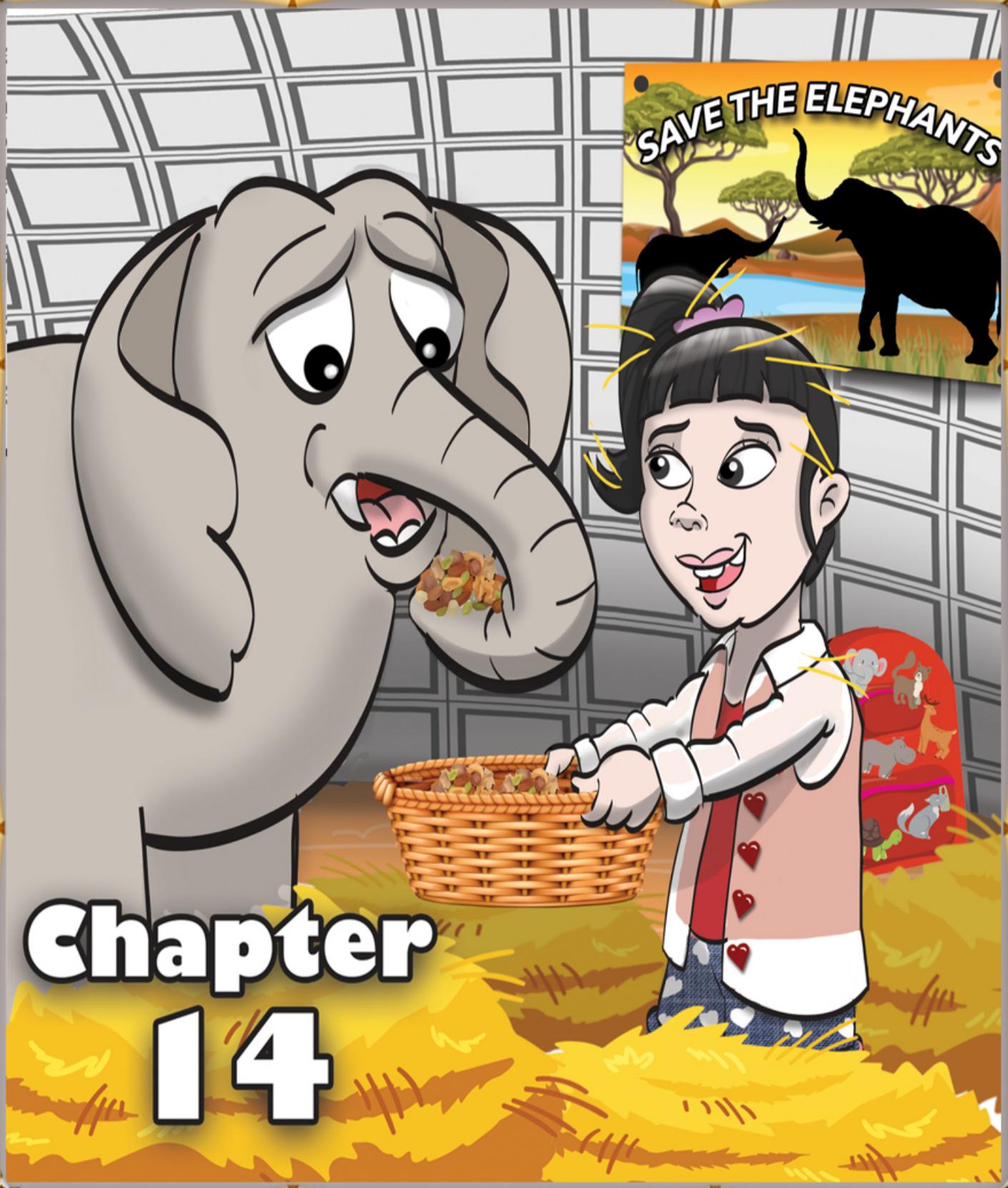
Mrs. Edwards and I filmed all day. By sunset a transformation had occurred...Tough Guy was bonding with Mei Ling...a sign things were getting better. However, Mama, along with Mylo, came to fetch all of us. She had prepared our favorite... dumplings, and insisted we all come in for dinner.

"Goodness me," Mrs. Edwards exclaimed. "This day has truly gotten away from me. And I am thrilled to be your guest for dinner!"

"I second that!" Echoed Mr. Gold.

Then, my dad and Mr. Edwards suddenly realized that they, too, were starving and hurried out with Mr. Gold.

Mei Ling and I protested, however. We did not want to stop filming or leave Tough Guy but Mama would hear none of it. And when she speaks we must obey...end of story. But, to be honest, I was starving and tired and welcomed my strict mother's orders!



**Chapter  
14**

# TOUGH GUY SPEAKS

“Don’t be scared, Tough Guy.” Elsa was trying to reassure me, but it was hard over my wailing. I had slept a little during the night but sunrise came and with it my awareness and then my misery.

“I am so lonely for my mother.” I responded with a huge trumpeting to Elsa’s elephant speak.

“Aren’t you exhausted from crying and trumpeting so much?” Johan asked me... joining the conversation.

“Where are they...Mother, Brother, Auntie...and my herd?” I was running out of steam, however, and starting to feel hungry and thirsty again.

Johan and Elsa did not give up on me. They continued to explain that their humans were very wonderful people and would surely bring me back to my herd when safe to do so.

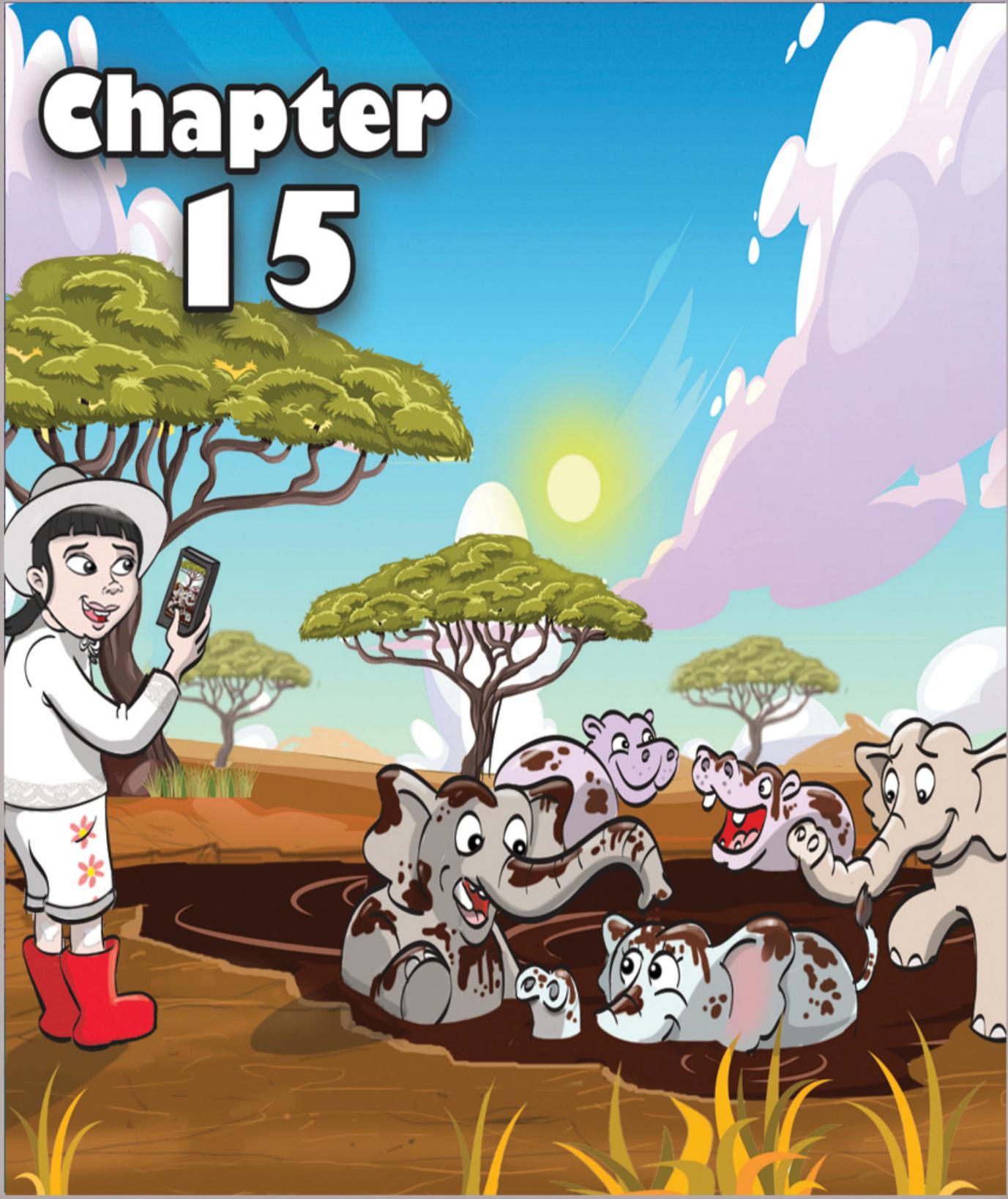
“In the meantime, you must eat. Mrs. Edwards’ food is super powerful and will help in so many ways if you will just trust...”

At that moment the girl with special vibrations awoke. She had made a bed of straw the night before and had slept near me. I am pretty sure her mother did not know this for surely she would not have allowed the girl to do so. It is hard to know why, but her presence began to calm me. Of course, I had no idea what she was saying as she spoke with her humans. I knew, however, that I was starving. And, as the magic girl grew closer, I gave in to trusting her. When she offered me food that she held out in a basket, I chose to eat, realizing that if I wanted to see my herd again, I needed food...for strength. This was the most important thing to do in this moment. And eat I did...like there was no tomorrow. It was positively delicious. Elsa had told me the truth and the more I ate, the better I felt.

As I ate, the magic girl was talking and soothing me. “Mrs. Edwards feeds all her animals food that will keep them strong and happy. She is the tall woman over there, filming this so we can show the world how wonderful you are and how important it is to save the elephants from extinction. Tough Guy, you are so special and, I promise you, we will find your herd.”

This girl, who was now so close to me, speaking words I did not comprehend, whose vibrations were of total love and understanding, encouraged me to accept my fate right now in order to face my life with strength and hope tomorrow.

# Chapter 15



# MEI LING SPEAKS

For several days now I have not wanted to do anything other than hang out with Tough Guy, Elsa and Johan. On the one hand, I know my family is very disappointed. But I am thinking of the greater good. Tough Guy is getting calmer and stronger and I cannot separate his fate from that of my own so many years ago.

"Honestly, sister, don't you want to go out on Safari today? Mr. Bob Edwards is taking us to see a family of Gorillas. You know you love Gorillas."

"Please... don't make me feel guilty, Bao. I want to go, but my heart tells me to stay. The babies are starting to trust me now, and I can't handle missing a moment with Tough Guy. He is starting to respond to Elsa and Johan and he only eats for me. Besides, what if his mother and his herd find him today?"

I could tell by the look on my brother's face that he was thinking this would never happen. Since day one, a group of men from the Zulu tribe had been scouring the land for miles around searching for Tough Guy's family but had found nothing. And, unfortunately, I had heard Mr. Bob Edwards speaking with Mr. Gold in a bleak and dire conversation regarding this situation. I only wish I had not been eavesdropping!

"Let's go people." It was Mr. Bob Edwards signaling that the excursion was about to begin.

"I understand, Mei Ling. Just be sure to film everything that happens today and so will I." Then, Bao ran quickly out the door, joining the rest of my family waiting in the Sanctuary's safari jeep.

"Don't worry...our documentary will change the world...you will see!" I yelled after my brother as I went to join Mrs. Caroline Edwards and Big who were in the elephant hut already...seeing to the needs of my babies.

Doing as I had done on all days prior to this one, I filmed. The greatest fun this morning was the mud bathing. Big and Mrs. Edwards led the way, while Elsa, Johan Tough Guy and I followed behind them. We walked a short distance and came to a section of the Sanctuary with a big mud swimming pool. There were 2 baby hippos already submerged in the mud and the elephants wasted no time joining them. Tough Guy seemed, for the first time, like one of the gang and looked as though he had a smile on his face as he sank into the pool of mud. This is a ritual for all elephants in Africa. They protect their skin and cool their bodies using mud as a defense against the hot sun.

I filmed for quite a while as the babies rolled, frolicked and basked in the sun. Mrs. Edwards gave me a neck wrap with barley inside of it. It had been in the freezer all night and kept me cool as I filmed in the midday sun. I was wearing white shorts, a white sun protective long sleeved blouse and a white broad brimmed sun hat. I had gobs of sunscreen on my legs so I wouldn't fry!

"Mei Ling, dear, see if you can coax the babies over to the shade of the Banyan Tree?"

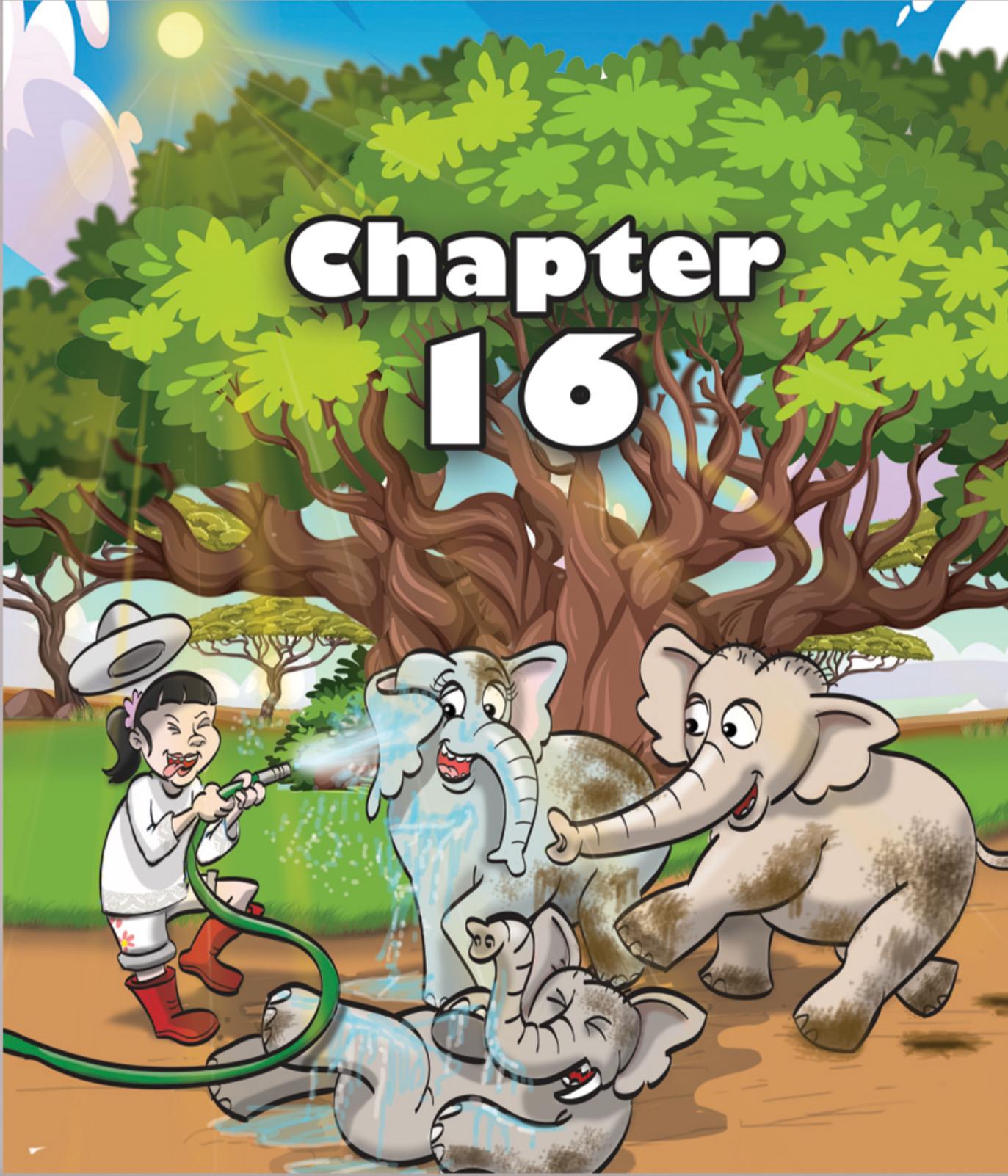
"Shade...did you say shade? Absolutely!" I was beginning to feel as though I might soon melt.

"I will do the filming and you can do the rinsing...Big will help you."

I gave her my phone and she took over as videographer. She was excellent at this. Mrs. Edwards had cared about all sorts of endangered species for many years and had traveled the world helping eagles, polar bears, wolves and many others. She filmed and documented all her experiences everywhere she went. This had been vital in the raising of funds for the preservation of endangered species.

"Thank you, yes, Mrs. Edwards. I would love that!" For me, I now realized that I was going to follow in her footsteps. I was going to use the position my destiny had given me to save the elephants of Africa from all the threats they presently faced.

# Chapter 16



# JOHAN AND ELSA SPEAKS

“Johan! Look! It’s Big...and you know what that means!” Elsa said, swinging her trunk from left to right and feeling soooo excited.

“Absolutely, I know. Tough Guy, follow Elsa and me. Today is all about fun and joy...I promise!”

Tough Guy, although doing much better because he was now eating and gaining strength, told his 2 new friends the he would only feel happiness again when he was reunited with his herd.

Elsa responded. “Tough Guy, (she was starting to sound like a parent), we have talked about this...you must trust that Mr. Edwards and his team of men will, with the help of the great elephant spirits, find your herd soon. It will happen because I feel it!”

Tough Guy bobbed his head a bit which meant that he would hold onto this dream a little longer. She had been right about the food and he did have faith in the elephant spirits. He knew he was still alive because the Gods had not let him die.

“Elsa is absolutely right! Look, there is no longer hanging skin on your body. You are becoming healthy again.” Johan added.

“This is true. You look very handsome. Your body is stronger and your eyes look bright,” Elsa said with a sweetness that made Tough Guy feel a bit tingly. And with a gentle nudge from Elsa, Tough Guy, along with his new friends, followed Big to the most grand mud hole he had ever experienced.

After a long time mudding, Mei Ling began coaxing us toward the giant Banyan Tree.

“Look Johan, the magic girl is going to hose us down today. You are in for a new experience, Tough Guy. Just follow my brother and me and you will see what I mean.”

# Chapter 17



# MR. GOLD SPEAKS

Have you ever heard of a mystical synchronicity? I would like to take this time to teach you about it. A famous psychologist by the name of Carl Jung explained it and I, without a doubt, experienced it.

First, you know that I am a teacher. And, as a teacher, I am, necessarily, a student... soaking up knowledge wherever I go from everyone I meet. My mother and father proudly refer to me as “the sponge” and I take it as quite the compliment. Traveling the world allows me the opportunity to learn first hand about governments, religions, cultures and all things regarding our magnificent planet. This has enhanced, in my humble opinion, my value as a teacher.

And so, once, while backpacking through India, I came upon a monk in deep meditation. He was on the side of the road sitting cross-legged, eyes shut, and as I passed he spoke.

“I see you are following your calling as a teacher and I am happy to impart some wisdom if you so choose,” he said softly, not opening his eyes. Of course, I was a bit startled at first but, as a student of life, I sat down beside him, saying not a word, waiting for him to speak.

Then he said, “ God is magical...mystical...Do not hurry through your life. Take your time and you will know that God is in all things. A personal relationship with God is yours when you so choose.”

His advice has remained in my heart since that day and I know, looking back on the events of today, that God choreographed the mystical synchronicity I shall now describe to you.

Each evening after dinner everyone gathered in the living room at the Shepherd’s Sanctuary to discuss the following day’s agenda. On the 6th night of our stay, Mr. and Mrs. Edwards insisted that we really must see the Gorilla Sanctuary, which was a 20 miles drive from the reserve. Their excitement became our excitement...except for Mei Ling who argued that, as much as she loved and adored gorillas, she could not possibly leave the babies.

“But Mei Ling,” I challenged, “You have spent months becoming an expert in the language and culture of Gorillas. They are your favorite species of mammals. One day away from Tough Guy, Johan and Elsa will not...”

“No, Mr. Gold, I know I must stay. This as my truth at this moment in time.”

And since one of my most important lessons to the children is to always speak their truth, no matter what, I realized this conversation was over.

The following morning we all... Mr. Edwards and Mrs. Edwards, Mr. and Mrs. Lee, Mylo, Bao Jing, Mei Ling, Mr. Big and myself ... had an “as usual” great breakfast together, but Mrs. Edwards, Big and Mei Ling had all decided to stay with the babies. Our 2 Zulu guides were supposed to be “good to go” at 8:30 a.m. but had been slightly delayed because a slow leak in one of the front tires of our Safari jeep had to be patched.

Then, Bao Jing had made a last ditch effort to try and persuade (to no avail) Mei Ling to come with us. Therefore, we did not leave the Sanctuary until 8:44 a.m. The next interruption to our journey came at around the 10 miles mark of our drive when Mr. Lee received a text and needed to make a very important phone call to his business partner back in Shanghai. This required our driving off the main road to find a spot where he found phone reception. While this was happening, Mr. Edwards checked under the hood of the vehicle for some unfamiliar sound. It turned out to be just the fan belt, no big deal, but this and the unexpected phone call added a certain amount of time to our journey putting us in absolute synchronicity with what came next.

As we made our way back to the main road, Jacob, our driver, suddenly slammed on the breaks, speaking in his language, which I did not understand. Then he and Mr. Edwards had an intense conversation (in Zulu) while Mr. Edwards grabbed his binoculars to get a better look.

“What is it, Mr. Edwards,” Mr. Lee asked.

“See for yourself, Mr. Lee,” Mr. Edwards said, handing him the binoculars. Then I looked and, finally, Boa Jing. Mr. Edwards again took the binoculars and climbed up onto the hood of the jeep. And we all took turns doing the same.

A small herd of elephants, (and of course we all immediately thought it might be, it could be Tough Guy’s herd), was traveling on a hidden path in the exact direction from which we had come. They were headed toward The Sanctuary.

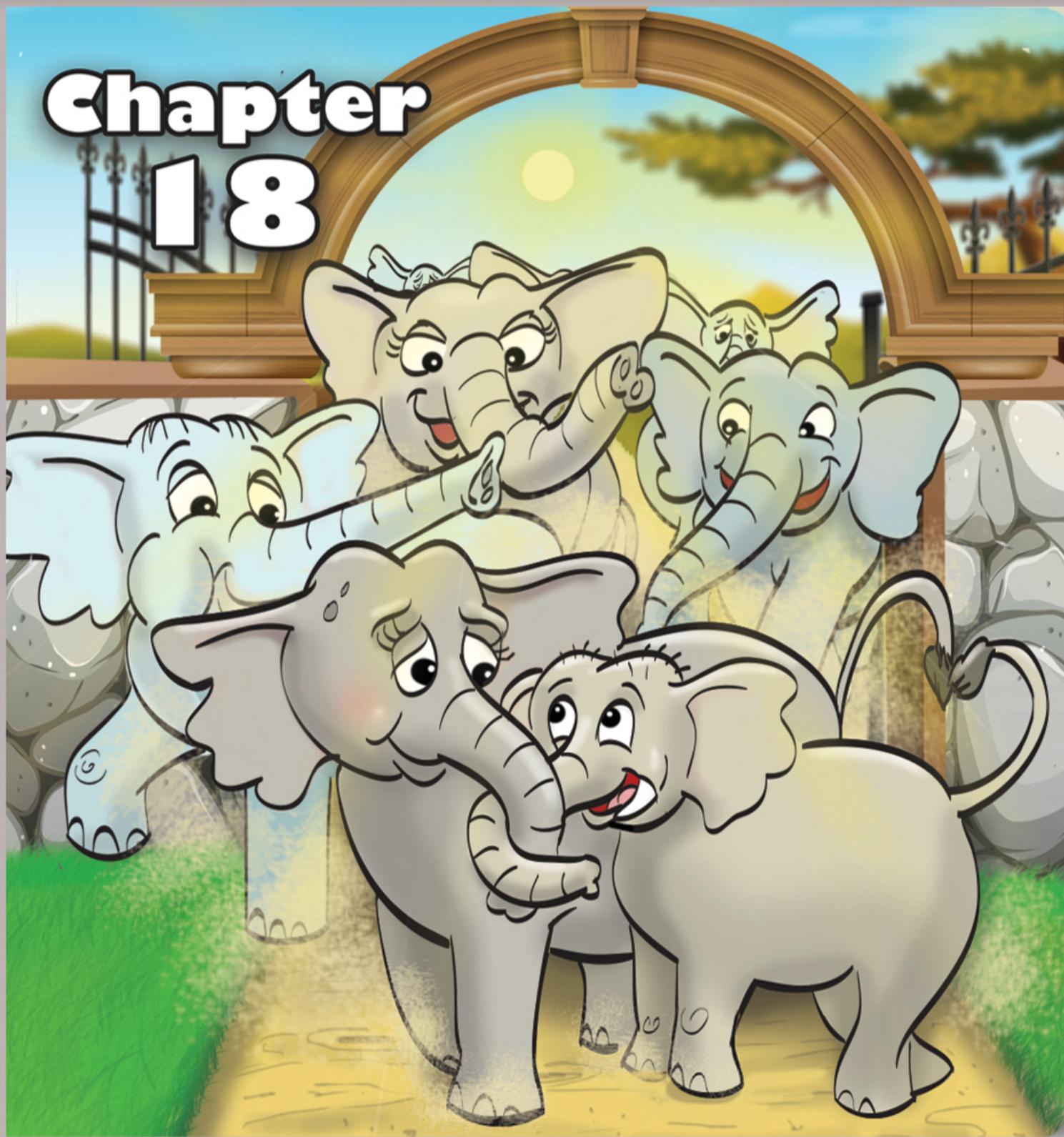
We all spoke at once, the gist of our conversation being that we must turn the jeep around and follow them. If this was Tough Guy’s family, we must not miss their extraordinary reunion.

We moved slowly, making certain we stayed a bit behind so the elephants would not notice us. And, as the minutes passed and the odometer ticked away the distance traveled, we became more and more certain that these elephants belonged to Tough Guy and that he belonged to them.

So, why was this a mystical synchronicity?

Well, had the events of that morning not occurred exactly as they had...delay in leaving, Mr. Lee’s important phone call making us drive off road at that exact spot, the fan belt delay...Jacob would not have had that first sighting and we would not have witnessed the single greatest event of this trip and of all our trips since I have been with the Lee family! God, for sure, had had a hand in it all... of this I have no doubt.

# Chapter 18



# TOUGH GUY SPEAKS

Being hosed down after mudding all morning was, I admit, an amazing and pleasure filled experience for all of us. Johan and Elsa had been right and I actually forgot about my mother and family for a minute.

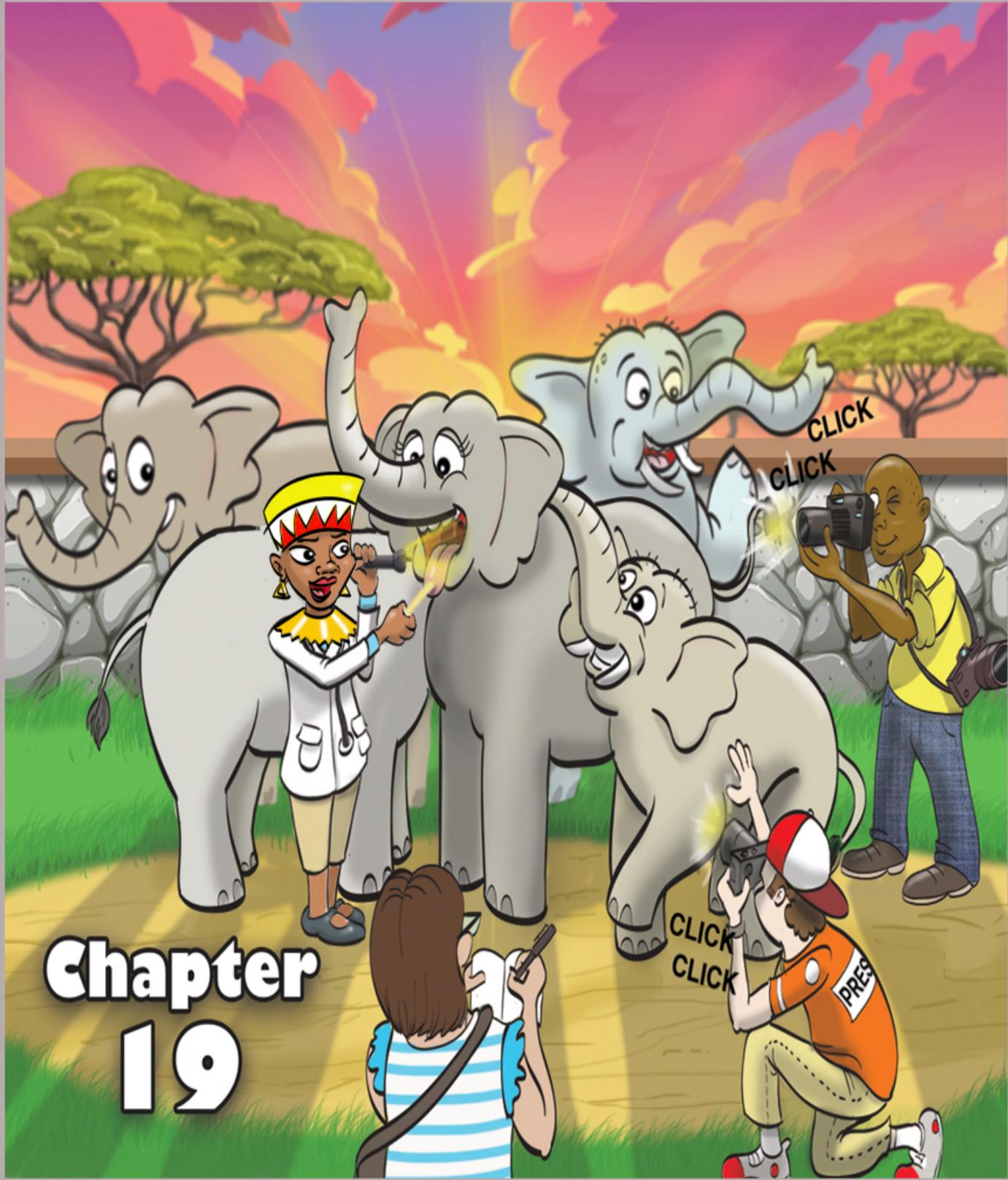
Suddenly, the special girl's box made the sound of bells. At that exact same moment I felt the vibration. Johan and Elsa felt it, too. The 3 of us lifted our heads to inhale the freshly sprayed air above us. And I knew immediately that what I smelled was my old life...my herd...my mother.

The kind woman who made us the good food started speaking fast into the magic girl's box. These two were feeling great joy as they put their ears next to the box. We were all experiencing the same thing...my mother was coming. She and my whole herd were coming for me and everyone was so, so glad.

We all turned and headed to the front gates of the Sanctuary and the same glorious reality. The Safari jeep was reaching the gates and just as they opened, my mother, Auntie and Funny Guy emerged from the dense thicket of trees lining the roadside. Then, in unison, all the elephants trumpeted their joy...so much so that the earth beneath us vibrated, causing the jeep to stop short and stand still.

"Mother," I bellowed as I ran toward my family.

And the girl, jumping up and down, cried, " Mama, Papa..." and the rest I could not hear because I was surrounded by my family and smothered in love!



**Chapter  
19**

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PRES

# BAO JIAN SPEAKS

We all celebrated that wonderful day of reunion. Of course, I filmed the entire day. When my phone ran out of battery power, I used Mr. Gold's phone or Mei Ling's phone, constantly recharging one phone after another. Mei Ling chose to be with Mrs. Edwards and Mama, making food for our many new elephant guests (all seemed to be ravenous), or in constant conversation with Elsa, Johan and Tough Guy (who was glued to his mother's side). And I am very happy that the Sanctuary had as much acreage as it did because 9 new elephants swallowed up the land with surprising speed.

In the week that followed, the Sanctuary was bombarded with media. You see, Mr. Edwards had written about and sent pictures of the reunion of Tough Guy and his family to the local newspaper. Quickly, the word spread all over Africa and reporters came from near and far to cover this momentous event. It became quite stressful and chaotic until my father hired a local security team to keep the reporters outside of the Sanctuary. Those of us at the Sanctuary were then able to focus on all the elephants and their needs.

"Mei Ling, do you want to film today?" A question I asked Mei Ling daily. I didn't want her to feel left out as a film maker, but she had felt no such way.

"Oh Bao, I would love to help you, but there is so much to be done for the elephants and I am feeling this is my purpose. Perhaps tomorrow, but you are welcome to keep using my phone so nothing is missed!"

Then, exactly one week to the day after the arrival of Tough Guy's family, Big's sister, Sarah, arrived and added amazing energy and talent to the Sanctuary's new and somewhat overwhelming responsibilities. She was not only a veterinarian who had spent the previous 4 years in Kenya rehabilitating many breeds of animals wounded in the wild, but her specialties were Gorillas and Elephants. Of course, she knew about the Shepherds' Sanctuary because of Big and had even visited many times in the past when home from her job in Kenya. She had read Mr. Edwards' article on the internet and had immediately called Big to find out all the specifics.

Within 3 weeks of her arrival, (and I will tell you she never left from her first day here), Sarah began an amazing system of record keeping on all the elephants, their medical and physical needs, her remedies and recommendations. Mei Ling, Mama and Mrs. Edwards became her assistants while Mr. Gold and I became experts as photo journalists. We recorded everything...following all the elephants through the eye of the camera. But it was Tough Guy who emerged our Star. His joyful personality infected us all...He grew stronger, healthier and the leader of his pack!

# Chapter

# 20



# MEI LING SPEAKS

It has been a wonderful and amazing time of my life. Dr. Sarah has taught me so many different things since we first met 3 weeks ago. I absolutely love all the elephants and taking care of them has been sometimes difficult but always exciting, stimulating and thought provoking.

Dr. Sarah tells me daily that I am a natural when it comes to understanding these magnificent elephants. One afternoon I spoke deeply with her regarding my feelings of intuition...that I have something intuitive inside of me that guides me, and, for the first time ever, this part of who I am was validated.

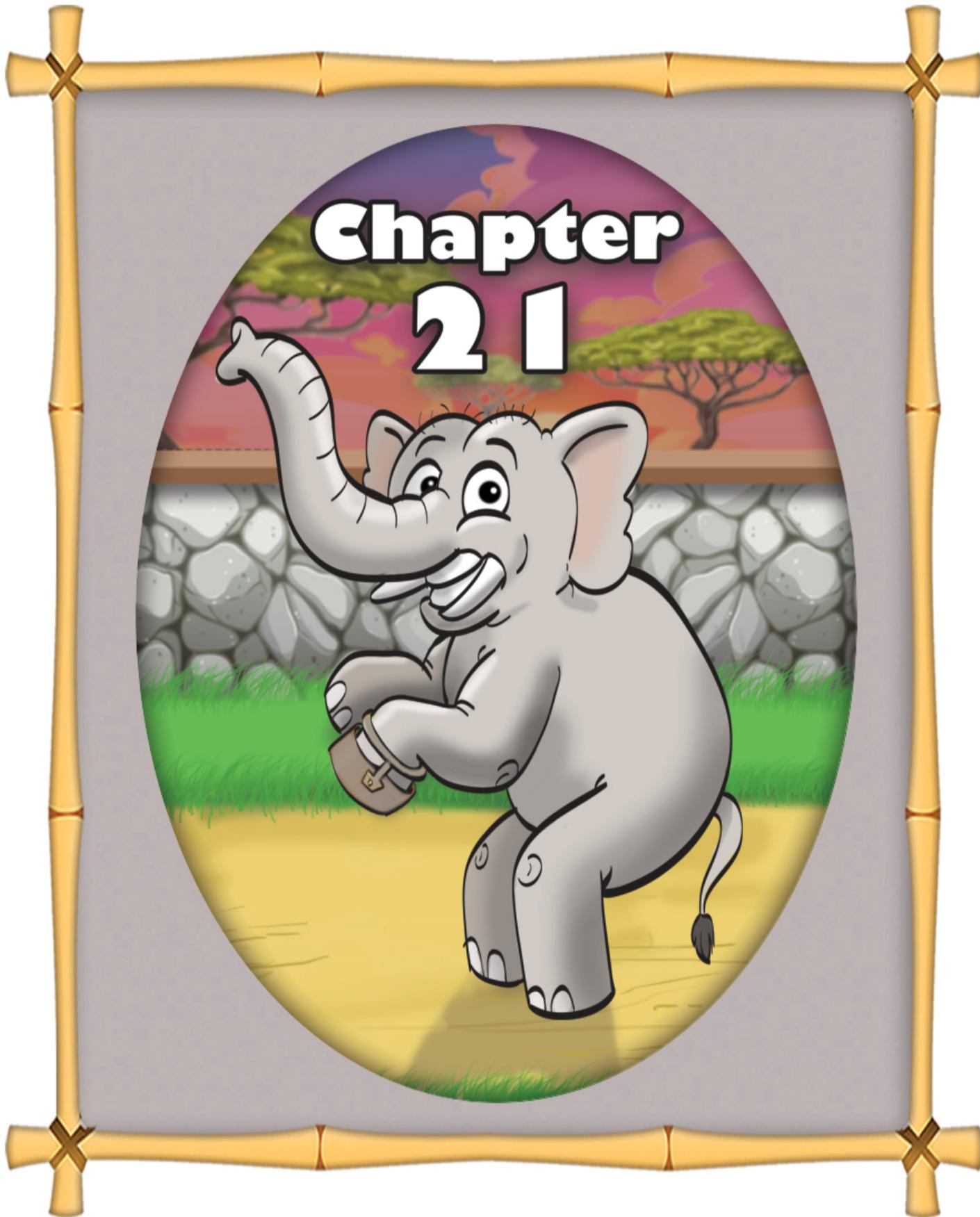
"You know, Mei Ling, most religions that I have studied believe that intuition is God. It is in all of us but some people never realize it. Perhaps it is because you began your life as an orphan. For Big and myself, it is because our mother died when we were so young, and, with that great sorrow, came the need for us to be on our own. We learned to listen to the voice within, thinking it was our mother guiding us from the other side. Consider yourself one of the lucky ones to have this gift. It will grow as you grow and will be a constant source of comfort and joy all your life."

"Yes, I do feel this...that a spark of God guides me if I so choose. And, lately, I have been very concerned about the future of, not only our elephants here at the Sanctuary, but all the elephants in Africa. And it's not only my awareness of people who kill these majestic animals for ignorant reasons, but that I feel tortured because my knowing this puts every elephant's fate into my hands."

Sarah, hearing this, pulled me into her arms and held me with great compassion. The words she spoke will live in me forever.

"I know exactly how you feel. It is the reason I have devoted my life to the magnificent wildlife of Africa. It seems as if God is offering you the opportunity to help to lead mankind out of ignorance in these matters and into the light. But know this...the task is enormous so start where you are and take small steps...one at a time. I will be happy to help you whenever you wish."

Little did I know that the events which would take place during the next 3 days would seal my fate and my journey. Helping the elephants of Africa would be my calling for many years to come.



**Chapter  
21**

# TOUGH GUY SPEAKS

Six weeks ago the Gods of my herd and the Gods of all the people at the Edwards' Sanctuary answered our prayers and Mother and my family found me. My world became safe again. This is not to say that I wasn't safe here before my herd's arrival. The magic girl, Johan and Elsa, Mr. and Mrs. Edwards, Big... everyone was so loving and caring but it was I who couldn't feel safe and trusting until my mother hugged me with her truck, Funny Guy made me laugh and Auntie See Clearly spoke her gentle words of reassurance. I assume it is because I am still very young and had experienced so many scary moments by myself that I was a bit difficult in the beginning.

I have become myself again and I am happier than I ever have imagined. All of my herd is being cared for here at the Sanctuary. All our needs are being met...and then some. The food, the mud hole, the hose watering and Dr. Sarah who is fixing us all...and you know what? Auntie See Clearly heard Dr. Sarah speaking with Big about fixing my short leg, which would solve so many worries that I carry.

"Tough Guy, I wish not to get your hopes up, but Dr. Sarah is going to help you with your special condition. Apparently, she can make your short front leg match your other front leg. If so, you will always be able to keep up with our herd and never get separated from us again." Auntie See Clearly was very good at translating human language.

"That would be amazing, but I don't see how this can be." I answered. We were hanging out under the Banyan Tree after mudding and being hosed by Magic girl and Mrs. Edwards.

Suddenly the boy appeared. "Mrs. Edwards, Mei Ling! Father and Mr. Edwards need all of us to come up to the house. A team of reporters from Beijing is here to speak with all of us.

The girl was alive with joy. "This is our chance, Bao. This is our first opportunity to inform the Chinese people about the specialness of elephants. Mrs. Edwards, will you be alright by yourself for a while?"

"Yes, of course, but if you see Big, will you ask him to come and help me lead the elephants to the fields. They need to rest and graze."

Then the boy and magic girl ran off with their boxes in hand to join the others up at the house while Mrs. Edwards tried herding 12 elephants. "Come on everyone. Let's go. Follow me."

Suddenly, Mylo appeared. He started barking at me like crazy and so I decided to respond to his nonsense with a barking of my own. I lifted my trunk and trumpeted but at that exact same moment Mrs. Edwards, not expecting my response, tripped over the hose and fell. Mylo and I stopped all our noise and went to her.

"Oh dear, look what I've gone and done!"

Next, she started breathing in a strange way until suddenly she fell back with eyes closed. And then I saw it...a bone was sticking out of her leg. I knew this was a serious event. In a way that only he and I can know, Mylo and I quickly made a plan. We hurried to the house, Mylo barking and me trumpeting. We were so loud and frantic for the safety of Mrs. Edwards that the humans in the house ran onto the porch and followed us back to Mrs. Edwards, who was now surrounded by Elsa, Johan and my elephant family.

The good news... Mrs. Edwards, though she suffered a serious injury requiring surgery, was fine within a few weeks. But Mr. Edwards, shaken by this event, made the decision, (along with Mrs. Edwards), to sell the Sanctuary to the Lee family, who, by now, was all in. Then, Mr. and Mrs. Lee made a plan to build their own house on the premises, hiring Big as the foreman and members of his extended family and friends to do the building.

For the next few months, Mr. Lee made several trips back and forth to China for business and Mr. and Mrs. Edwards went to stay with their daughter and her family in England while

Mrs. Edwards healed. Mrs. Lee, Sarah, Big, Mr. Gold, and the children saw to the needs of all the elephants. Everything was documented, my recovery and corrected leg being the focus for all to see.



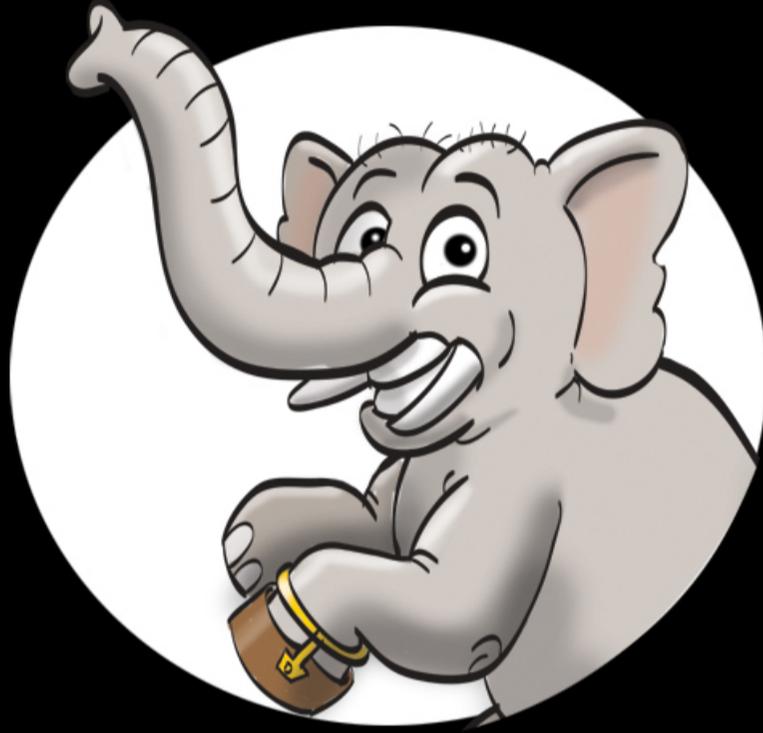
# EPILOGUE

# TOUGH GUY...EPILOGUE

It has been one year now since my herd came to the Sanctuary and, though we have always been gypsies, we are very happy to stay with our new human friends. Mr. and Mrs. Edwards come and go as they please. Mr. Edwards says he just can't leave his babies for too long...(that would be Johan, Elsa and myself). Mr. Lee has become a South African business man. He has expanded the Sanctuary and is building a new hotel on the premises as well as making the elephants' area a paradise on earth.

As for the children, Bao and Mei Ling, well, they are quite the filmmakers on a mission. They never want to hear of another elephant being disrespected or hurt again. And they, along with Sarah and Mr. Gold,( who are in love and engaged, by the way), are creating the greatest documentary for the whole world to see. At least, that is what the magic girl tells me each and every day. And I believe she will succeed with this challenge because she has great passion, much like Auntie and Mother, and you all know how successful they were in finding me.

I now have great hope for the elephants of Africa, and great hope for my success as a member of my herd and as the "Star" the magic girl promises I will be. Yes, this broken, terrified and desperate being that I once was is blossoming... today, tomorrow and every day forward because, like the magic girl, it is my destiny to make a difference on this planet, one step at a time.



*The End*

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