

Alfred's Big Adventure

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A little while back, I wrote about looking at biodiversity in a different light (remember Christy Moore's daddy longlegs dancing to the reel in the flickering light!). Of course, seeing an alternative side to biodiversity is a lot easier for children, particularly those with a vivid imagination. And children, unlike adults, see things as a lot more black and white. So it's no surprise that in many of the classic children's tales, its animals more than humans who tend to be the hero's, leaving us with the classic bad guys; rats, snakes and weasels, the hero's; lions, stallions and stags, and the beautiful; baby ducklings, fawn and bunny rabbits. But you don't need 'the wild and wonderful' to fuel a child's imagination. Sometimes the best stories happen right on our doorsteps, in our gardens or school yards, so here's a little tale that could happen on your doorstep, and you can add your own characters and scenes to it, but before you retell it, remember, the selling point of any good story is in the enthusiasm of the narrator!

Alfred loved to play and was always looking for fun and new adventures, but all his family wanted to do was work, work, and work. Because Alfred was the youngest, he wasn't allowed out on his own, and soon he became very bored sitting around at home. So one day he decided to break the rules and go out on a big adventure!

When his parents were gone to work, and his brothers and sisters weren't looking, he made a run for it. He ran and ran until he could no longer see his house. Then he stopped and looked around. Where was he?

Alfred had never seen anywhere like this before. He was in a world of giants. There were huge plants of all shapes and sizes towering over him. A giant daisy leaned over to take a closer look at him.

'Who are you?' she asked (in a high pitched voice, with her head bobbing from side to side), but she didn't let him answer. Instead she kept on talking as if he wasn't even there. 'My name is Daphne, but most people call me daft Daphne because all I want to do is dance. I love to dance. I dance in the sun. I dance in the rain. I just love to dance. Would you like to dance?'

Alfred loved to dance, so he grabbed onto Daphne's soft white petals and danced until he got so dizzy that he couldn't hold on anymore. Alfred found himself flying through the air and crashed into something soft and slimy.

'Hey, watch where you're going' (said a gruff voice). Alfred was a bit dazed, but he still managed to notice two angry eyes staring at him from the ends of their stalks. Alfred had landed on a very cranky slug.

'What's the big deal kid, crashing into everyone when they're trying to have their lunch!' said the slug as he munched on bits of leaves.

Alfred was about to say sorry when he heard another voice say 'Leave the kid alone Sully'. Alfred looked up to where he heard the voice coming from. A beautiful bright yellow butterfly with a single orange spot on each wing hovered over him. 'The name's Stone' said the butterfly, 'Brim Stone'.

‘Never mind old Sully kid, he’s always cranky. Say, what’s a kid like you doing out here on their own’.

When Brim Stone heard about Alfred’s big adventure, he wanted to join in, so he carried Alfred high into the sky.

Alfred had never realized how big and colourful his world was until then. From where he was he could see animals and plants in all the colours of the rainbow. There were big ones and small ones. There were pretty ones and funny-looking ones. There were ones with lots of legs and ones with no legs. There were ones that moved quickly and ones that moved slowly. There were ones with wings and ones with shells. (How many different animals and plants can you see? Are they all different colours, shapes and sizes too?).

Alfred could see ladybirds sitting on flowers, little spiders making their webs, robins singing in the hedge, earthworms burrowing into the soil, snails climbing up walls and much, much more. He could see Daphne. She was still dancing. He could see Sully, the cranky slug. He could even see his own house.

Then he remembered, it was almost dinnertime, and Alfred was getting hungry, so Brim Stone took him home. ‘Thanks for the adventure kid’ said Brim, ‘look out for me the next time you’re out and about’, and then he fluttered off.

‘Alfred, it’s dinnertime’ called his father, ‘what have you been up to all day?’

‘I’ve been on a big adventure’ replied Alfred.

‘Good for you, did you have a good time’ asked his father.

‘I had the best day ever’ said Alfred.

The End

Now if any children want to meet Alfred, he shouldn’t be too hard to find. Alfred is an ant, and to Alfred, the world of giants was simply a back garden.

In your story, you’ll probably encounter many more characters and have lots more adventures. A hedgerow can be transformed into a jungle, a small stone can be a huge mountain, while a dip in the ground can be a huge crater. Even a tiny puddle can be a wide ocean. Robins, wagtails, snails, earthworms, caterpillars, butterflies, bumblebees, beetles, nettles, dandelions, primroses and many more can all be the heroes and villains in your story.

So, if you can imagine yourself to be the size of Alfred, then you can have a world of fun right on your doorstep.

Until next time...