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Finding a Home

FEATURING **NAYA™**

BY SUSAN HUGHES
ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE





our
generation®

This is Naya's story.



N A Y A TM

FINDING A HOME

BY

SUSAN HUGHES

ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE

An Our Generation® book

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EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

*Big words, wacky words, powerful words, funny words...
what do they all mean? They are marked with this symbol *.
Look them up in the Glossary at the end of this book.*

Chapter One

WILD & UNPREDICTABLE

I threw open my bedroom window on the upper floor of our house and breathed in the beautiful warm air.

“Hello, world!” I cried happily. I gazed out at the landscape around my home. Beyond our yard, the South African savanna* stretched into the distance until it met the gentle hills. The endless yellow grasses, the tall baobab* trees and acacia* trees scattered here and there...

I couldn’t see them, but I knew which animals would be moving across the land. Several herds of zebras might be over there in the east, already grazing* in their favorite spots. The giraffes might be there, too, stretching their long necks up to eat the leaves from the tops of the acacia trees.

And maybe the elephants were already



enjoying a mud bath at the edge of the waterhole!

I grinned. I loved my home so much. I couldn't imagine living anywhere else in my whole life....



“Naya?” said Mom. “Are you coming?”

I took a deep breath and nodded. Then I followed Mom into the Silver Shells Elementary School, in San Diego, on the coast of California, in the United States, in North America—and a long, long way from South Africa.

Sure, most kids would be nervous walking into their new school, especially if they'd just moved not only to a new city, but to a new continent. And even if it was the last week of school and they were just here to register for starting school in August.

But I was more than nervous. I was scared.

I'd never been to school before. I'd been homeschooled* all my life. The thought of sitting in class, at a desk, and only seeing the trees and grass through a closed window all day long made



me unhappy.

And the thought of being surrounded by other kids....

When Mom and I sat down with the principal, Ms. Cardinal, she actually seemed really nice. She smiled as Mom talked about how she and Dad had met.

“I was born in California,” Mom explained. “But after I graduated from veterinarian school*, I traveled throughout Africa. It had always been my dream to see the amazing wildlife there firsthand.”

Mom looked at me and grinned, because this was something she and I shared, an enormous love for wild animals.

“I decided to volunteer on a wildlife reserve* in South Africa and gain some medical experience with the wild animals. While I was there, I met Lewis, a photojournalist* from San Diego, who was working in South Africa,” Mom said.

“When he and Mom met, they fell in love and got married,” I added. I always liked this romantic part! “And about nine years ago, they



had me!”

Ms. Cardinal smiled. “And now you’ve all moved here, to San Diego!”

“We want to be closer to Lewis’s father, who is getting a bit older,” said Mom. “We missed not seeing him very much for so many years! He lives in a seniors’ community right along the beach, quite close to our new house and veterinary clinic.”

Mom explained that she was taking over the clinic from an old friend of hers, a veterinarian, who was retiring and moving away.

I had to speak up here because I love talking about animals. “Now Mom looks after domestic and exotic animals: dogs, cats, snakes, hamsters and rabbits.” I smiled. “We also have a wildlife rehabilitation center*, almost like back home...”

Knock, knock.

The school secretary poked her head in. “If you want Naya to meet some of the children in her next year’s class, you need to go now, Ms. Cardinal,” she said, pointing to the clock on the wall. “It’s almost lunchtime.”



As the three of us hurried down the hallway, I got worried again. Kids stared out at me from several classrooms. You see, I wasn't sure I knew how to get along with other children.

I'd met kids in South Africa, of course—but not too many. I never really had a chance to make friends with any of them. My parents homeschooled me because our wildlife reserve was too far from town for me to go to school there, so I never met any friends that way.

Not that I minded. I loved living on the reserve. I did some studying from books at home. But I did most of my learning outdoors, out on the savanna.

That's where Mom taught me how to respect animals and how to care for those that were sick and injured. That's also where I learned from another important teacher, my best friend, Bandile. He is one of the gamekeepers* on the reserve.

Bandile and I got along really well because we both loved animals so much! We'd drive through the reserve in the jeep, and he'd teach me



about everything. The lions, giraffes, wildebeests* and antelope. The birds and insects. The trees, water and weather. He taught me to stay quiet and watch and listen. He even taught me to speak his own first language, Tsonga!

“This is Naya,” said Ms. Cardinal. She stood at the front of a classroom, waving me in. “She’ll be joining many of you next year, in fourth grade.”

I stepped through the door, and everyone stared at me of course. It was so embarrassing.

The teacher told me his name. He said some other things to me, too, but I can’t really remember. It was a blur. Then finally, Ms. Cardinal said, “See you in September,” and I could leave.

But as we were walking down the hallway to the exit doors, the lunch bell rang. All the kids began pouring out of their classrooms. It was like being in the middle of a stampede* of wildebeests! I thought we might be trampled! And the noise was crazy loud!

I admit, I grabbed at Mom’s hand, and





everyone looking at me probably thought I acted like a baby.

I'd never felt so uncomfortable in my whole life. These kids seemed wilder and more unpredictable* than any animals I'd ever been around!

Oh, why did we have to move here? I thought. I just want to go back to my real home, South Africa.



Chapter Two

A HELPING HAND

While Mom made us sandwiches for lunch, I tried to cheer myself up by playing with our pets. Yes, we have two cats, a rabbit and a dog, and these guys are actually *one* reason that moving to California hasn't been so bad. (Did I mention that I love animals?)

I patted the black cat, named Chicco, and then the long-haired cat, named Micky. Next I fed Nibbles, the rabbit, a carrot. And then I played for a while with Tally. He is a very handsome poodle-and-Australian shepherd dog mix.

The pets had come to the clinic when they were sick or injured—and their owners had never returned to pick them up! Which sounds sad, except they had the best life at the clinic. Everyone who came in gave them lots of love, so they were



very happy in their new home.

In fact, Mom's friend, the previous owner of the clinic, decided they would be happier staying with our family when she moved away and couldn't take them with her.

When I arrived a week or so ago, I didn't even know we'd have pets. Mom had wanted it to be a surprise.

Mom moved here two months ago, ahead of Dad and me. She got the house set up and began her role as owner and vet at the clinic and wildlife center while Dad and I packed up our home in South Africa. Then Dad and I flew over together.

But we'd only been here a day or so when Dad had to leave. Again. Off on a photo assignment in Asia for a magazine.

Dad felt bad to be leaving so soon. I wished he could have stayed longer, too, but I know it's his job. The life of a photojournalist is unpredictable and he has to go whenever he's asked.

While Dad's away, he always keeps in touch. He writes the best emails! And whenever he can,



he tries to video-chat with Mom and me. In fact, even though we're not actually together in person too often, I think Dad and I might spend more time communicating with each other than most other kids and their dads!

Anyway, Dad never misses showing up for the really important things, and he's promised to go to school with me on my first day this autumn. I'm sure I can count on him to turn up.

School. I sighed and said to Tally, "If only the first day of school could never arrive...."



"So, I have to hurry back to the clinic now," said Mom, after we'd eaten lunch. "Want to come along and help out?"

Of course I agreed!

OK—this is *another* thing I like about having moved here. Being able to lend a hand with the animals.

As we explained to Ms. Cardinal, our animal center has three parts: the veterinary clinic; a pet



grooming area; and the wildlife rehabilitation center and sanctuary*. So Mom needs lots of assistance to keep it all running.

Donna is the receptionist/vet assistant/office manager who helps Mom with the vet clinic.

Nico works in the grooming area. That's where people bring their dogs to be bathed and groomed and have their nails cut.

Students from a local veterinary school come and help us at the rehabilitation sanctuary. There are also quite a few animal-loving volunteers who help out.

But Mom lets me do a lot, too. I get to help feed and water any animal patients who have to stay at the clinic overnight. And I help keep the dogs calm when they're being groomed.

Today, Nico needed an assistant. A little cocker spaniel, named Poppy, is always nervous when she comes in to be bathed. So after Nico snapped the safety leash onto Poppy's collar and began to shampoo her coat, my job was to speak to the dog quietly, calming her.





Then Donna asked me to refill the water bottles of the animals boarding at the veterinary clinic: a rabbit, a chinchilla*, three dogs, a cat and a bearded dragon*.

She also asked me if I would check in on the ball python.

“Sure!” I said, happily. I know all about ball pythons because they live in certain parts of Africa and I learned about them there. The snake is small and a bit shy. It looks like it might be venomous*, but it’s not.

But even if it were, I’m not really afraid of any animals. Animals need to be treated with respect and they don’t usually want to hurt anyone, especially not people. They only hurt other animals when they’re hungry or afraid.

At the rehabilitation center, I’m not supposed to get too close to the wild animals, but I’m allowed to help prepare their food and clean their empty enclosures.

“The python just needs its water changed,” Donna told me.



A ball python needs fresh water every day when it's in captivity*. It likes water in a big bowl so it can climb in and soak!

I was disappointed when I got to the snake's container. It was asleep. So I changed its water, but I didn't get to see its beautiful golden eyes.

Now I had time to visit my favorite part of the center, the wildlife rehabilitation sanctuary. This is where wildlife officers or people like hikers, drivers or farmers bring wild animals if they find them hurt or sick. Mom and her team help them recover.

Usually they only stay here a short time, and then can be released back into the wild. But not always. Sometimes the animals don't get completely better. They can't go back to their original habitat*. We send them to other sanctuaries where they live for the rest of their lives.

I wished I could peek in at the animals that had arrived here in the last week. But I couldn't. These newcomers need frequent care, so we keep them in small covered crates in the clinic.



Helpers feed them, water them, or care for them, but they touch them as little as possible. It's stressful* for the animals and too much stress makes them take longer to heal or get well.

Also, we don't want the wild animals to get used to people while they're here. If they stay wary* of us, they'll survive* better when they return to the wild.

I climbed up to the top floor of the sanctuary building. There's an observation room up there with big windows and high-powered* binoculars. I looked down into the outdoor enclosures below. That's where we keep the larger animals that are "on the mend," the ones we hope can be released when they are completely recovered.

I looked into each of the separate enclosures. "Hello, opossums and squirrels," I said. "Hello, rabbits and raccoon."

I could also see the three coyotes, the wolf, the two deer and the turkey vulture.

I sighed. I wished I could do more to help them. It's so sad to see these animals here when



they should be in their own wild habitats, living freely.

“I wish we could all go back home,” I whispered sadly.



Chapter Three

WALKING WITH GRAMPS

So, OK, there's one other good thing about living here. My grandfather had visited us many times at home—I mean, in South Africa—when I was very little. Now, I'd be able to spend more time with him.

We'd tried to video-chat with Gramps before we moved here but only a few times. He didn't seem too comfortable using computers. He did write us lots of letters though, and I wrote back, and so now I feel like we know each other pretty well.

Gramps seems to really love animals, just like I do. And since we've moved here, he's come over to see us almost every day.

I wish Dad could spend as much time with us, I found myself thinking. But then I reminded



myself that I had just received another email from Dad that morning and that we were going to video-chat tomorrow. I knew he was doing his best to stay in touch.

Now, I hurried into the house, put Tally on the leash, and grabbed my camera and my art journal.

My art journal is like a scrapbook, but I don't just jot notes and my impressions of things in it. I also draw animals, cartoons and pretty doodles. I glue things in it, too: pictures and articles that I clip from magazines and lots of my own photos.

I love taking photos, just like my dad. I might even want to be a photographer like him when I'm older, but I can't quite decide. I also might want to be a vet, like Mom, maybe specializing* in marine* animals.

Which is actually one other good thing—is *that number four?*—about moving to San Diego: the chance to see all the marine wildlife here.

Gramps was waiting for me at the front gate, binoculars around his neck. He had walked over



from the retirement community, which is really close by.

“Hey there, Naya!” he called. He patted Tally’s head and then my head, too, which made me smile. “How about another walk along the pier* today, oh my granddaughter?”

“Sure, oh my grandfather!” I replied.

When we got to the pier, we stood there for a while, looking out at the ocean and trying to spot whales. Then Gramps asked, “How was your visit to your new school this morning?”

I didn’t know if I should be truthful, in case he thought I was silly. But he is my dad’s dad, after all, so I decided to be honest. Just like I’d be with Dad, if he were here.

“Not so good, Gramps,” I confessed*. “All the kids stared at me. And it’s so noisy there. And I’m not sure I can sit at a desk all day. And what if the kids don’t like me? I don’t really know how to get along with other kids very well.”

I went on and on, about why I felt more comfortable with wild animals than with actual



children.

Gramps didn't look horrified. And the best thing was, he didn't try to give me advice or say, "Don't worry, it will be alright." He just listened and nodded now and again. That was what Dad would have done. It made me happy that I'd confided* in him.

No whales today, so we headed over to another beach, and *wow!* We saw sea lions, dozens of them. Some were swimming in the ocean and others were sunning on the beach. It was so exciting!

There's only one type of seal on the coast of South Africa—the South African fur seal—and I've seen them many times, but I've never seen a sea lion before, and here was a whole group of them!

"There are many types of sea creatures living in this habitat," explained Gramps. "Everything, wild or not, has a home."

I took lots of photos of the sea lions and sketched them, too.

It was great. Gramps wasn't in a hurry. He





made me feel like we had all the time in the world. I took more photos and even made some notes. Watching me, Gramps grinned. “You’re just like your dad, Naya,” he said, “always wanting to make a record of what you see!”

We talked more about Dad as we headed home.

“Your mom tells me that your dad is on a big assignment in a remote location in Indonesia,” Gramps said. “She says he won’t be back until the end of the summer.”

“But we can send him email messages, Gramps,” I said. “And he emails back as often as he can.”

“Emailing makes me a bit nervous. I’m not too good at it,” Gramps said. He looked a bit sad.

“I’ll email Dad tonight and tell him that you and I were at the beach together and that we saw sea lions,” I promised Gramps. “And I’ll tell him that you’re planning on taking me to the San Diego Zoo soon. It’ll be my very first visit.”

I guess we both really miss not having my



dad around. But somehow, today, being with Gramps seemed to make me feel a little less lonely for Dad.



Soon after I said goodbye to Gramps at our gate, and fed and watered Tally, Mom poked her head in the door.

“Naya, come quickly!” she called. “A new baby animal has just arrived at the rehabilitation center. It’s a Sierra Nevada red fox. They’re endangered, which means there are very few of them left in all of North America. In fact, no one in our center has even seen one before.”

I was so excited! I hurried out after Mom.

“These foxes live up in the mountains, and not anywhere near the city,” she continued. “A hiker found the “kit,” which is what we call a baby fox, all alone. It looked like she’d been there alone for some time.”

“Poor little thing,” I said, as we entered the rehabilitation clinic.



“The hiker realized the fox needed help, so she notified a wildlife officer, who brought her here,” said Mom. She lowered her voice as we entered the examining room. “Sarah, one of the volunteer vets, is examining her now.”

Oh my goodness! Sarah was holding a tiny little creature. I gasped. She was so sweet. She had red fur all along her back and head, a white chest and black stockings. She had a pointy nose and two pointy ears.

Oh, you sweet little thing, I thought. You must be missing your home and your parents so much!

Sarah gave the fox one last look-over. Then she gently placed her into a crate and covered the crate with a towel.

“She’s a bit dehydrated* and she could be a little bit sick as well,” Sarah told us, after we’d left the room. “I’ve given her some fluids* and nutrients*. We’ll continue this over the next few days, and then she should be fine.”

Sarah smiled at me. “Hopefully by the time



your school starts, Naya, we'll be able to return the baby to her own family. But maybe in the meantime you could try to think of a name for the kit."

"OK," I said. "I'd love to!"

Sarah wanted my help to think of a name for the baby fox—and maybe there were other ways I could help, too.

We've just got to get her home, I thought.
We've just got to!



Chapter Four

I MISS YOU, KIKOU

That night, Mom and I sent an email to Dad, like I told Gramps I would. I told him about everything that happened today.

Afterwards, Mom let me do some online research about the Sierra Nevada red fox. I learned that it's probably the most endangered mammal in all of North America. One reason is that it lives in a very small habitat—two small mountain ranges in California—and this habitat is shrinking.

Loggers and wildfires have removed many trees. Recreational activities in those mountains are changing the habitat and driving away the foxes.

Then Mom reminded me it was 9 p.m., time for us to video-chat with Bandile, our friend in Africa.

There's a time difference between here and



South Africa. When it's nine o'clock at night here in California, it's six o'clock in the morning there. Everyone on the wildlife reserve gets up at dawn, so it's a perfect time for Bandile to talk.

Bandile had video-chatted with Mom and me twice since we arrived a few weeks ago and we had agreed to talk again tonight. It was so good to see his face, even long-distance!

Today he took his laptop computer outside to show me the compound*, the baobab and acacia trees and all the flowers. It was great to see some of the other staff, too.

But best of all was seeing Kikou, my pet South African bush baby*.

“Kikou, hello!” I cried. “I miss you, Kikou!”

Kikou was orphaned when she was only a few weeks old. A local woman had brought her to the reserve and Mom had managed to save her life. But when Mom tried to return her to the wild, it wasn't possible. Kikou had come to depend on us too much. So she became a pet at the reserve.

Everyone loved her, but I knew I was



Kikou's favorite! She always came to me when she saw me and rode around on my shoulder. I was so sad to leave her behind when we moved, but bush babies aren't allowed here in California. Plus, I understood that it was best for Kikou to stay at home in the environment she was used to.

"Bandile, guess what happened today?" I asked. I explained all about the Sierra Nevada red fox kit, and I told him I'm naming her Sierra. Sierra is Spanish for "jagged mountain range." It would remind us of Sierra's true home in California's mountains.

"It makes me so sad to see her here, without her family," I said.

"I'm confident you'll help Sierra get back where she belongs, Naya," he told me.

I updated Bandile on all the animals in our rehabilitation center. Then he updated me on all the animals on the reserve, especially the new lion cubs living on the savanna with their mom.

"Did you know there are also lions here in California?" I asked Bandile. I wasn't sure if he'd



notice the funny look on my face.

“In the zoo, perhaps,” he responded.

“No, there are lions in the sea—sea lions!” I told him, with a laugh.

He laughed, too. Of course he knew all about sea lions, but it was fun to tell him I’d seen them with my own eyes this week with Gramps.

It was sad to say goodbye to Bandile, Kikou and my South African home.

Later, as Mom tucked me into bed, I sighed.

“I’m not sure if I’ll ever get used to living here,” I said.

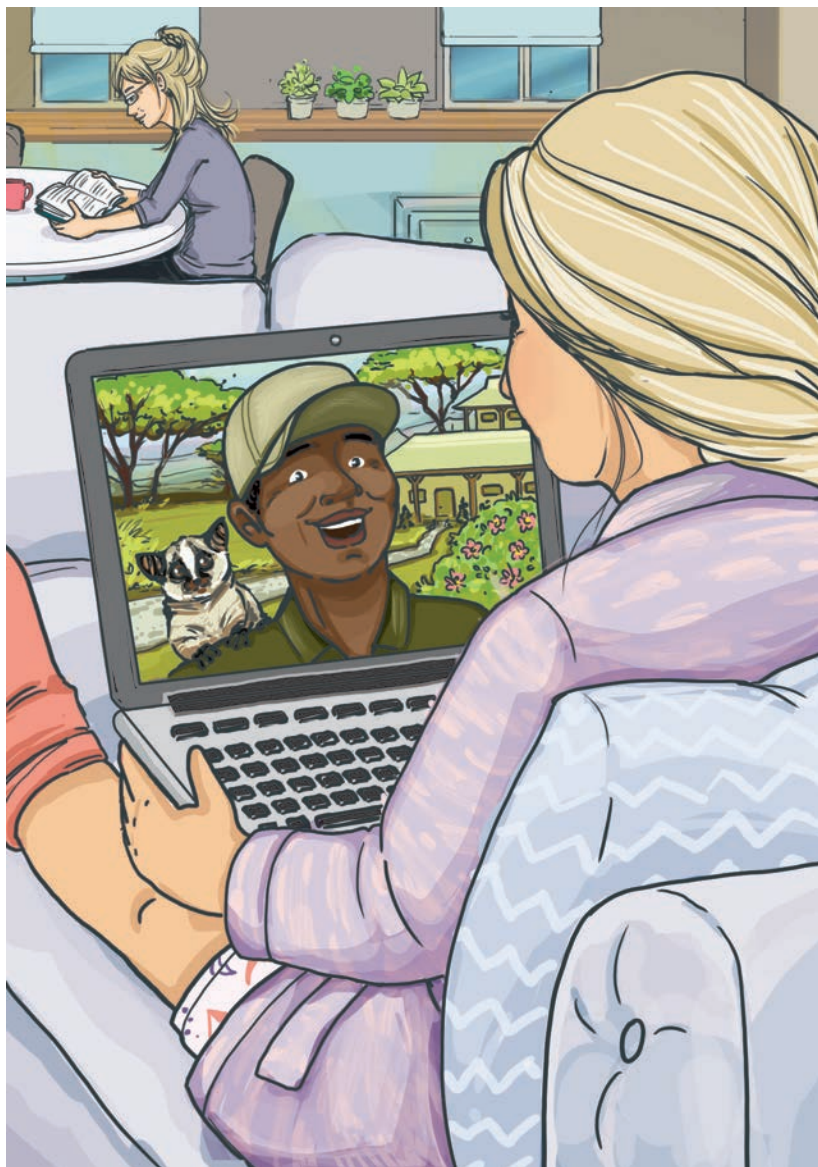
“You’re young and you’ll adapt*,” Mom assured me, with a kiss. “I’m sure you’ll grow to love it here.”

But would I? I wondered. Would this place ever feel like home?

I thought about it for a long time. I decided I had to try harder. Maybe I needed to stop thinking about myself and instead think about the animals here, the ones whose habitats were shrinking.

And maybe I needed to get other people to





start thinking about them, too. I just had to come up with the perfect plan to make this happen!



Chapter Five

GOING TO THE ZOO, ZOO, ZOO

Two days later, Mom, Gramps and I visited the San Diego Zoo. And yes, this zoo is *another* good thing about moving to California. I'd heard so many amazing things about it.

We spent a fun day exploring. I took photos of every animal I saw and I also made sketches in my art journal.

First, we saw the Northern animals. Our favorites? The polar bear and the Arctic fox.

Next we checked out the Outback* section. I loved seeing the kangaroos! Finally we visited the Asia section. I loved the pandas best, and Mom and Gramps loved the sun bears*.

Then, disaster!

While Mom was asking Gramps if he was ready to go home, I overheard* a boy and girl



talking about penguins.

“I wonder what section of the zoo the penguins are in,” said the boy. He looked about my age, nine years old, and the girl, who looked kind of like him, was older, maybe twelve or so.

“Well,” said the girl, “since penguins are only at the North Pole, they must be in the Northern section. Obviously.”

“But this map doesn’t list penguins in the Northern section,” said the boy, quite sensibly.

“Well, where else would they be?” the girl said, her hands on her hips. “What other section has ice and snow?”

Before I realized it, I was chiming in. “Excuse me,” I said. “Penguins don’t only live at the North Pole. I used to live in South Africa and there were penguins there. They’re called African penguins.”

They both looked surprised. But the girl frowned. “No way,” she said.

“African penguins are one of the few species of penguin that isn’t found in a cold environment,” I went on. “They live on the coast of South Africa



and on some islands nearby.”

The girl continued frowning. “But how could any penguins possibly survive in such hot temperatures?”

“They spend most of their time in the ocean, feeding. And that keeps them cool,” I explained, although her reaction* was making me regret* I’d said anything. “And they have a special built-in cooling system that keeps them cool as well.”

“Yeah, right,” said the girl. “You’re making this all up.”

I shrugged, trying not to show that she was hurting my feelings. “No, I’m not. Really. Check out the ones here at the zoo,” I suggested. “You’ll also see that African penguins are an endangered species.”

The girl actually made a face at me, but the boy looked at me carefully.

“I’m Alan, and this is my sister, Pamela,” he said. “I think you came into my classroom the other day. You’re Naya, and you’re new, right?”

I nodded, but then Alan’s parents called to



him and his sister.

“Bye, Naya,” he said, and then they were gone.

I was so relieved that I didn’t have to talk to them anymore. Why had I even spoken to them in the first place? I guess because they were talking about animals and it’s something I care about. I wish I hadn’t said anything at all.

Now Alan was probably thinking I invent things about animals, when the opposite is true! What if he thinks I’m a liar, and I have to face him all next year in class?

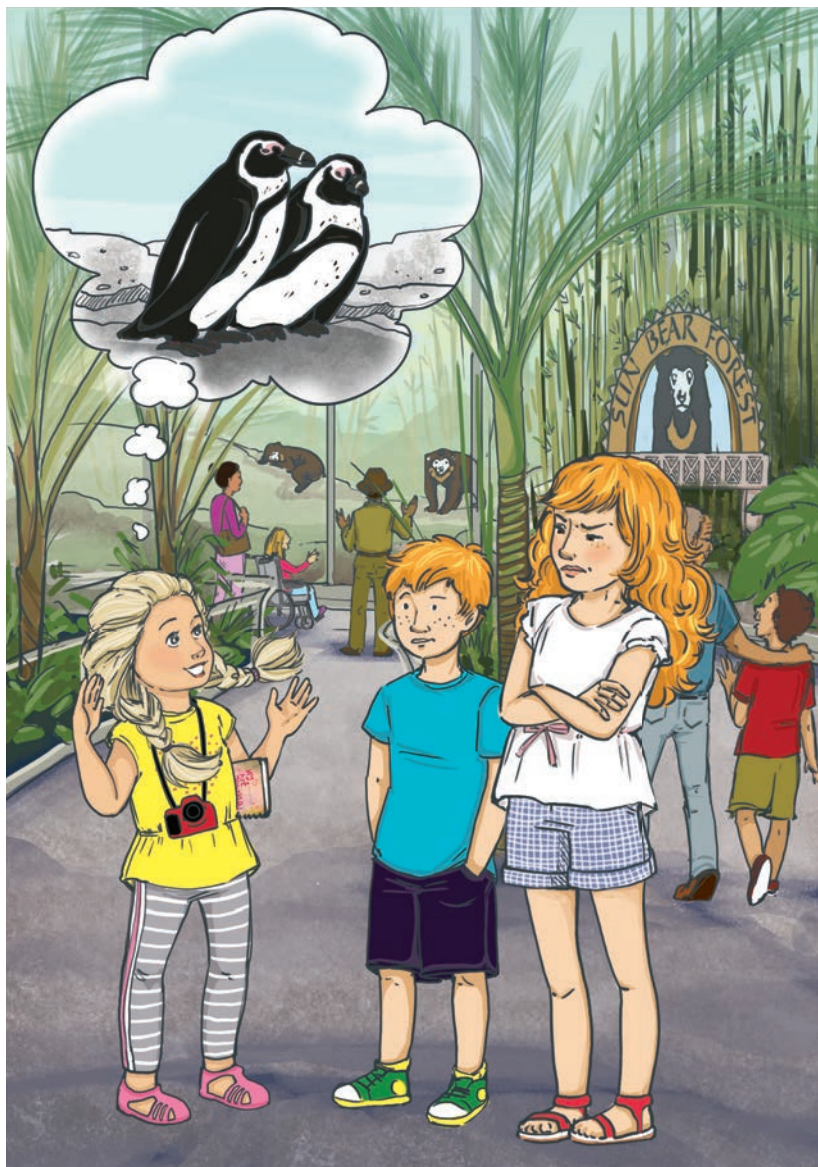
“Naya!” Mom called. “Gramps is a bit tired but...”

“But I won’t go home until you two take me to see your South African animals,” said Gramps, getting to his feet.

I grinned. “Of course, Gramps. We’d love to!”

It was great to see the lions, giraffes and elephants in the Africa section, and—sure enough—African penguins, too. I snapped fun photos of





them swimming.

Gramps marveled* at them all and it was wonderful. But it did make me feel a bit homesick.

Later that evening, Mom agreed that we could go and peek in at the red fox kit, just to see how she was doing.

When we lifted the cover, we saw the fox kit all curled up, sound asleep. I whispered a special good night to her.

“I really hope we can return Sierra to her natural habitat,” I told Mom, as she tucked me into my own bed. “I feel sorry that she’s so far from her home.”

“We’ll do our best,” Mom said. “It’s especially important to try to help endangered species, but of course all species are important on Earth. From insects to birds to animals, and all the places where they live, their special habitats....”

Mom was right. I still hadn’t come up with a plan of action yet, but I wasn’t giving up. Not on something this important. I knew if I kept thinking about it, I’d come up with something soon.



Chapter Six

EMAIL TO DAD

Dear Dad,

I miss you, and I hope you're well. Mom and I are both OK. Well, Mom is, anyway. I'm still nervous about school starting.

The good news is that the Sierra Nevada red fox kit has been here for almost a week and she's getting stronger every day. Sarah asked me to name her, and guess what? I named her Sierra!

But Dad, did you know that it isn't only animals in Africa and their habitats that need to be protected? There are animals and habitats here in the United States that need protection, too!

But I have a great idea! Listen to what happened today...



In my long email to Dad, I told him about the grandmother, mom, and three kids who came by here this morning and asked if they could see the animals in the rehabilitation center. Usually Laura, who works in the center, has to tell people who want to tour the center that she's too busy.

But Mom had just hired an additional helper, Eduardo, last week, so Laura actually did have some time for them.

Mom said she didn't want the animals to be exposed* to too many people. But she agreed that Laura could take the visitors up on the observation floor to see the animals from there.

And Dad, Laura asked me if I wanted to go, too, and I said yes. When we got to the observation floor, Laura told the family about some of the newer animals that we're caring for inside the center, such as the baby red fox. One of the boys, Ethan, looked really worried as he listened.

Then Laura pointed out all the animals in the



outside enclosures: the opossums, the raccoon, the rabbits, the coyotes and the deer.

Two of the kids were especially excited. They looked through the binoculars to get a really close look. Laura started telling them interesting facts about each animal.

But Ethan just kept standing there, with a worried expression. I felt so sorry for him, but I thought I might know what he was thinking about. Dad, you won't believe it, but I got up my courage and asked him if he was OK.

He said he had lots more questions about what will happen to Sierra. And he asked if she will ever be able to go back to the mountains.

Dad, I didn't even feel shy talking to him because he was so concerned about the kit. I told him some facts about Sierra Nevada red foxes and how we were trying to help Sierra. I wished I had a photo so I could show him how cute she is close up.



I told Dad that I began telling Ethan a bit about Kikou, just to make him smile. Ethan started asking me questions about South Africa. And, before I knew it, the whole family was gathered around listening and I was talking to them about my life on the wildlife reserve in South Africa.

I explained to Dad that, after the family left, Laura thanked me for helping her. She said she thought they really learned a lot from both us.

Then suddenly, I got the best idea! I knew Mom would be at our house eating lunch, so I burst into the kitchen, surprising her. I told her that I'd thought of something we could do to help the Sierra Nevada red fox and other endangered animals in California. And to help protect their habitats.

I suggested we do tours of the sanctuary from the observation room. We could teach people about all the animals here—*and* talk to them about why animals are so important to the Earth and how we





have to protect them and their habitats.

I continued to write to Dad, recalling what Mom had said. “Lots of people have phoned us to ask for a tour. A few even asked if they could bring their children’s birthday party groups here.” Mom sipped her tea. “We’ve been too busy...”

“But now Eduardo is here, and Laura is happy to do some tours, and I can help, too!” I said.

Mom looked at me carefully. “Are you sure you want to do that, Naya? It means talking to lots of children.”

I paused. “Well, I don’t really feel that comfortable with the kids,” I admitted, “but it’s the only thing I can think of to do to try to make a difference. And maybe I can take photos of Sierra and show them to people and they won’t be able to *not* care about her and the other animals!”

Dad, I told her I’d think of ways to let as many



people as possible know about the tours.

Mom said OK! And so that's what my plan is for the summer. Give tours and advertise them. Teach people about animals and their habitats.

I hope you think it's a good idea, too, Dad. And that you don't mind this long email. Oh, and Mom's helping me attach some of the photos I took this week so you can have a look!

Also, I miss you, Dad.

Love, Naya

Mom and I sent the email and right away I felt better after pouring my heart out* to Dad!

Dad must have been at his computer right when I sent the email, because a short time later he replied back with an email just as long as mine. He described some of the animals he was photographing and he even sent along some of the photos he had taken that day. Best of all, he thought my idea about giving tours was terrific



and he told me he missed me, too.

I'm pretty sure I fell asleep with a smile on my face.



Chapter Seven

NO IDEA IS A BAD IDEA

The very next morning, I asked Mom to drop Tally and me off at Gramps' place. I wanted to explain my idea to him about giving tours so I could raise awareness of endangered animals in California. I was sure he'd want to help.

As soon as I saw Gramps, I started filling him in on my plan.

"And Mom said I could take some photos of Sierra and the other animals. I'm going to create displays about them so people can see them and their activities more closely," I concluded breathlessly.

"Excellent!" said Gramps, who had listened carefully while he patted Tally.

"Gramps, would you want to...well, help me out?" I asked. "I'm trying to think of ways to



get even *more* people to come and visit. I'm just not sure how to spread the word."

"You bet!" he said, enthusiastically.

So while we walked together back to the center, the two of us brainstormed. We each said anything that came into our minds, no matter how wild or dumb it might sound. The rule of brainstorming is that no idea is a bad idea.

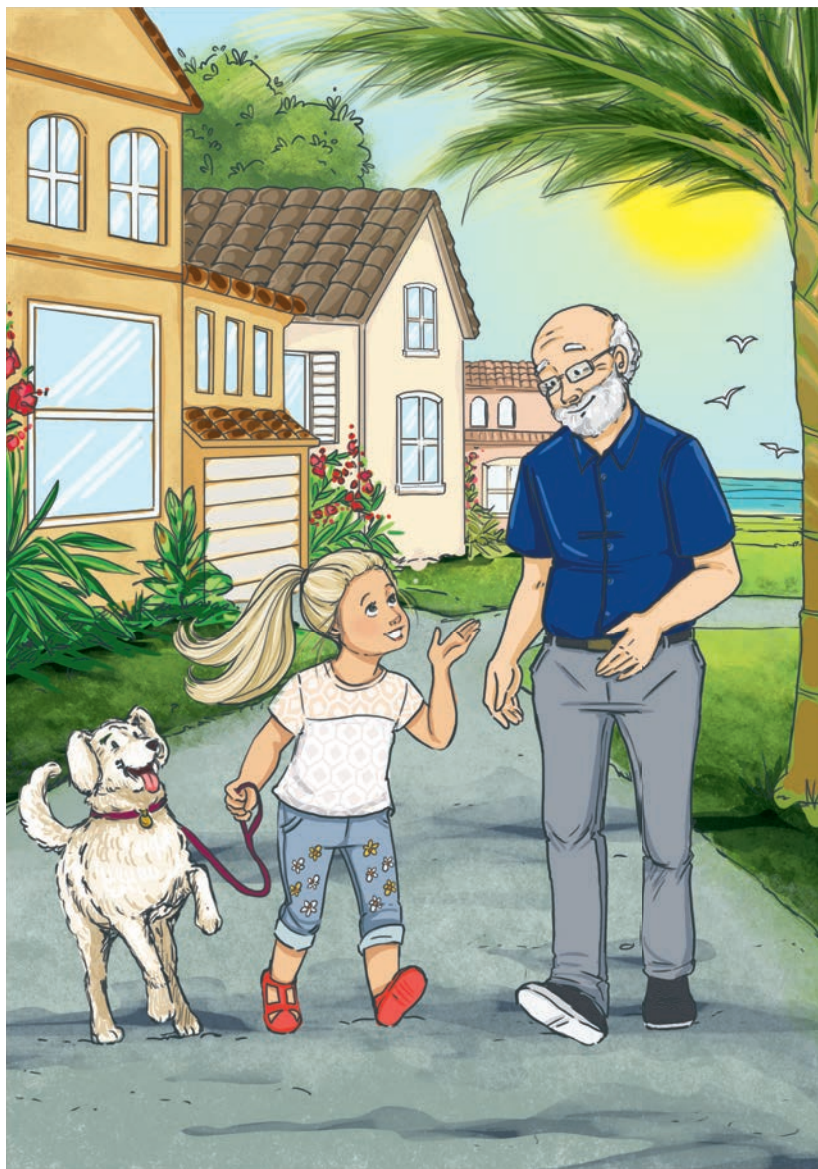
When we had a bunch of ideas, we talked about the pros and cons* of each one. Then we decided on three good plans.

First, we wouldn't just focus on telling people about the importance of saving the animals and their habitats here in California. We'd also tell them about South African habitats and the animals such as lions and elephants that depend on them.

"You've just come from South Africa," said Gramps, "and you're practically an expert on many of the animals there!"

Second, I would create displays, but I'd make some about endangered animals here at the sanctuary and their habitats and also some about





South African animals and their habitats.

Third, Gramps would create an online poster using my photos of the animals. He'd send it out to the local papers to help attract people to my tours.

"But I thought you were nervous about even using email," I reminded Gramps gently.

"Well, this is important," he said. "So I need to brace myself—and learn more about technology. You'll see. I'm going to become a computer wizard!"



Gramps and I worked hard for hours. Then, at three o'clock, it was time for us to video-chat with Bandile. Gramps and Bandile had met in person when Gramps visited South Africa, but that had been quite a few years ago.

It was late in South Africa, but Bandile answered as planned. He was happy to see me and to see Gramps again. He even introduced Gramps to Kikou! I told Bandile about how much Gramps was helping me and I described our exciting plans.



“Different animals have different needs,” Bandile said. “One habitat is not the same as another one. And if some habitats are lost, animals are sure to be lost as well.”

“The world will suffer. It needs diversity,” said Gramps.

“Exactly,” agreed Bandile. “And the more people that know this, the better. I have great confidence that Naya can spread this lesson.”

It made me very happy. The three of us—all part of one team, understanding and agreeing with one another so easily!

Bandile was eager to tour our center. So Gramps and I took the laptop computer out to the sanctuary and used it to show Bandile around.

First, we went up to the observation floor. We showed Bandile the view of the outdoor enclosures. Even without using binoculars, he could see the deer and the coyotes!

Then we headed down to the clinic. I’d arranged this with Mom ahead of time. “We have a special surprise for you, Bandile,” I told him.



“But we have to be very quiet!”

Carefully, Gramps and I carried the laptop into one of the clinic care rooms and stood behind the screen.

Sarah was feeding Sierra. We stood very still and watched, holding the computer so Bandile could watch as well.

First, the little fox enjoyed a bowl of milk. She gobbled up some meat that Sarah offered her. Then, when she squirmed and wiggled, Sarah put her down in the large playpen area. Sierra tumbled and played for a while, exploring and sniffing at the space.

Soon Sierra became tired. Sarah scooped her up, put her back in her crate, and covered it.

“Goodbye for now, Sierra,” I whispered.

“Thank you for introducing me to your little fox,” Bandile said to Gramps and me, before we all said goodbye. “I really hope she gets big and strong enough to go home.”



Chapter Eight

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL

The next weeks just zoomed by! I was really busy preparing the display posters. And I was also giving tours with Laura. Gramps' advertising was paying off*. The wildlife center was getting more tour bookings that we'd ever imagined.

At first I mainly stood in the back and let Laura lead the tours. But after a few tours, I began to speak up a little more. When it was time for questions, Laura would direct* some of them to me.

I was OK talking with the adults, as usual, and I was starting to feel a little more comfortable with kids. I felt like I was beginning to figure them out. Just like I'd done with the animals on the game reserve, I was learning about them by observing them.





Before long, Gramps and I came up with another idea. Mom's vet clinic and sanctuary already had a website, so I asked her if I could make a video to link to the website. It would show people footage* of the animals being rehabilitated.

Mom agreed. I spent two full days filming all the animals. I loved it! Mom allowed me to get right up close to the enclosures, staying quiet and still. I was able to film the animals eating, drinking, sleeping and moving around the enclosures.

She even let me film Sierra. I loved that best of all!

Gramps was doing so well on the computer. He figured out how to link the videos to the website. He also set up a computer system on the observation floor. When people came for tours and the animals were resting or not easy to spot, visitors could still get to know them.

It was especially fun to watch how people reacted as they looked at the photos and video of Sierra. They really seemed to enjoy seeing her up close and personal this way. Even the shy



kids had lots of questions for us. Usually Laura asked me to answer them. She said kids connected more to me because I was their age.

Oh, and even though I was so busy with all the animals, I also set aside time to work on my art journal.

Gramps and I continued to video-chat with Bandile every week. We wanted to keep him updated on our project.

Plus, I sent Dad lots of emails, and I even helped Gramps send some, too. He caught on right away.

“I don’t know why I was nervous about trying this computer thing-y. It really is very useful!” Gramps said, which made Mom and I grin.

And Gramps was happy when Dad began to send emails back to him, too. Gramps and I both really missed Dad a lot. But it was so nice to have each other!



Chapter Nine

POPPING THE BALLOON

Suddenly it was August. I couldn't believe it. There was only one week left before school.

And what would happen when school began? I'd be in class all day and wouldn't have nearly as much time to guide the tours. I was worried about letting the animals down.

I was also worried about Sierra. Sarah said that in a few more days she'd be able to decide whether she could return Sierra to her family in the wild or not. What if she wasn't healthy enough? What if she had become too dependent on humans—on us—to survive in the wild? I told myself that worrying wouldn't help, but it was difficult not to.

And anyway, that morning I had to get ready to help out with a birthday party tour.



I was chatting with Gramps ten minutes before the tour was supposed to begin, when Laura came hurrying up.

“I’m sorry, Naya, but there’s a change of plan. An animal just arrived that I have to attend to right away,” she told me. “I can’t lead the tour and there aren’t any extra volunteers available. I think we’ll have to cancel.”

“Oh, no,” I said. I was sorry that we’d miss the chance to teach all these kids about protecting wildlife habitats.

Then Gramps spoke up. “Naya, why don’t you lead the tour and I’ll be your back-up person. Would that be OK, Laura?”

“That would be great,” Laura said, “as long as Naya is OK with it.”

I hesitated for a moment. Birthday party groups are a big challenge for me, even with Laura as leader! But Gramps was giving me a thumbs-up and it was so important to spread our message.

“OK, we’ll do it,” I agreed.

But about two seconds later, after Laura had



gone and ten kids crowded into the center, my heart sank.

There was the girl I'd seen at the zoo. Pamela! The one who had argued with me about the penguins. And there was her brother, Alan, too.

Oh no! I thought, as I realized it was Pamela's birthday. *I'm going to be the tour guide for Pamela's birthday party!*

For a moment, I thought about throwing in the towel*. I'd just say I changed my mind. Or that I didn't feel well.

But no. Gramps would try to give the tour on his own and that wouldn't be fair to him.

I'd just have to be brave. I'd just have to do my best.

Then Alan came up to me, smiling, and said, "Hey, what are you doing here?"

And his parents came to greet me, too. "Is it time to begin?" they asked.

So I took a deep breath and began.

"Hello everyone," I said to the whole group.



“I’m Naya, and I’m going to be your guide to the rehabilitation center today. This is my grandfather, and he will be helping out as well.”

Of course, Pamela took one look at me and made a pouting face. “She’s just a kid,” she complained. “We need a proper guide for my birthday party tour.”

I hesitated. I felt like running away and hiding. But Gramps gave me another thumbs-up and Alan gave me an encouraging smile. So I decided to ignore Pamela.

“Please follow me,” I said, trying to sound professional. I led the group up to the observation floor and began our presentation.

I talked to the kids about all the animals we had here. I invited them to look at the displays and to look down into the enclosures. I showed them how to use the binoculars. All the kids seemed interested and I was able to answer most of their questions.

We were almost done, and everything had gone quite well. I began to wrap up by explaining





how important it is for all of us to be more aware of what is happening to animal habitats, and how making a difference can all begin with one small step.

Pamela's parents were talking with Gramps on the other side of the room.

"I hate to pop your balloon, Naya," Pamela said, just loudly enough so all her friends could hear, "but it would take more than you could ever do to make a big difference."

I know she just said it to make me feel bad. I know I should have told her she was wrong.

But all her friends giggled and I sort of froze. Alan rushed over and tried to apologize for his sister, but I blushed, and all I could think of to say was, "That's the end of the tour everyone. My grandfather will show you back downstairs."

As I hurried away, I couldn't help thinking, *Maybe she's right. Maybe nothing I'm doing will actually make a difference.* I felt really discouraged.



Chapter Ten

SURPRISE!

I woke up the next morning, four days before school was starting, and the very first thing I thought about was Pamela.

I'd been feeling a little more confident about being with other kids. And like maybe school would be OK. I'd been thinking that maybe the work Gramps, Laura and I were doing could help our world.

Then, Pamela had ruined it.

I got up and headed down to breakfast, feeling grumpy and sad.

“Naya! Surprise!”

Dad was there! Dad was standing right there, beside Mom and Gramps. I couldn't believe it. I ran into his open arms and we hugged for a long time.





“I’ve missed you, your mom and my dad so much,” Dad said. “I read all your emails, Naya. I’m sorry I’ve been away all summer, but I told you I’d be here for your first day of school, and here I am! I wouldn’t miss that for anything.

“It’s a special moment in your life,” Dad continued. “I thought I’d come home a few days early, just so you wouldn’t worry.”

I *knew* I could always count on my dad. It was so good to see him. I think I might have even cried a little, but mostly I was smiling.

“And guess what?” Dad said. He had a funny look on his face. “I have two pieces of good news. The first is that I got a long-term contract with my magazine to focus on assignments about the California coast, so I won’t be traveling so far from home anymore!”

“Oh, Dad, that’s wonderful!” I said.

“And, the second piece of news is that my first assignment is...to photograph our new wildlife sanctuary!” Dad said. “That’s all because of you, Naya.”



“Me? What do you mean?” I asked.

Dad grinned. “I told my editor about everything you’re doing, and she thought this would make an amazing story! That if more people read about how you’re trying to help raise awareness about habitat loss, your efforts will inspire them to take action.”

“For example, it might inspire readers to fight for changing laws so more animals and habitats are protected,” said Mom.

“Exactly,” said Dad. “So, Naya, they want to run the article in their very next issue. And they want me to take some photos and write up the story!”

“Fantastic, Dad!” I cried. “How soon can we start?”

Dad put down his toast and coffee—and picked up his camera. “How about right now?”



Chapter Eleven

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Dad, Gramps, and I were so busy preparing for the article that the next few days zipped past. I was so happy to have Dad home that I didn't even think about school. But then, of course, it did arrive—the first day.

One good thing was that both Mom and Dad walked with me to school. Maybe the other kids thought I was acting like a kindergartner, but I didn't care. It helped me to have them there.

I had to go to the office first and meet again with Ms. Cardinal, the principal. But this was *not* a good thing. Because by the time she took me to my new classroom, all the other students were already there.

My new teacher, Mr. Santini, stopped talking to the class and greeted me. He assigned a seat to



me, and then we spent a few minutes getting me settled. For a minute, I thought it might not be so bad.

But then he said to the class, “Naya has moved to San Diego from South Africa.” He turned to me. “Why don’t you stand up and tell the class a little about yourself, Naya?”

Here it was: my worst nightmare. I could feel myself blushing. Some kids started giggling.

I started talking, but I was stumbling over my words and feeling really nervous. Then a boy started waving his hand around.

“Naya!” he called out. “Can I ask a question?”

Oh no, it was Alan. Now I was even more embarrassed. The last time I’d seen him, I’d been running away from his sister’s birthday party tour.

So I said OK, and Alan smiled again. “Could you tell us about where you lived in South Africa? And about the elephants and lions on your wildlife reserve?”

I remembered it was the question he’d heard





me answer at the sanctuary during the birthday party tour. He must've noticed then that everyone in the group had quieted down and had been interested in hearing my responses.

Alan was trying to help me! He was hoping the same thing would happen here.

And it did! All the kids whispered excitedly, "Wildlife reserve? Elephants and lions?" And then they waited quietly for me to answer.

I began explaining what my parents did in South Africa, and what it was like living on a wildlife reserve, riding out on the savanna in the jeep with Bandile to check on the animals.

One girl put up her hand and asked a question. And then another boy did. And soon I was describing what giraffes eat, and how we know that elephants have such good memories, and why lions hunt together in groups. I explained why it's so important that their habitat is preserved.

Mr. Santini kept nodding, allowing students to ask as many questions as they wanted. Alan smiled at me encouragingly.



I'd brought along a photo that I'd taken of Kikou, and I showed it to the class and explained the story of the little bush baby. I also explained about our wildlife sanctuary here in San Diego and our tours, and our pets, including Tally. And I talked about Sierra, too. I even told them how much I love taking photos of animals.

Finally Mr. Santini stood up, laughing. "OK, everyone. This is fascinating, and Naya has taught us a lot today. But we need to turn our attention to some other topics now."

He smiled at me. "Naya, can you bring in your photos of Sierra and show them to us later this week? And we'd like to hear more about your concerns for animal habitats, too."

When I finally sat down again, I felt so much better.



A bit later, we went out for recess. I hurried straight over to thank Alan for his help. We didn't get to talk much because some other kids from our



class crowded around, wanting to find out more about South Africa, bush babies, Sierra and other cool things.

And the rest of the school day? Let's just say it was a lot better than I thought it would be! Maybe I'd learned something about how to get along with other kids from doing all those presentations and tours.

When the last bell rang, Mr. Santini insisted we walk down the hallway quietly and in a line. There were no wildebeests stampeding!

However, as I looked for Gramps in the schoolyard, my heart sank. Maybe the day wasn't going to end up being OK after all. Pamela was there, and she was heading right for me.

"Naya!" she called, loudly.

I thought about trying to slip back into the school, but then I told myself, *no, be brave this time*. I wasn't going to let her say more mean things to me.

But she surprised me. She stood in front of me, and she looked me in the eyes.



“Naya, I want to apologize,” she said. “For being mean to you at the zoo and for being mean to you at my birthday party.” She looked down at her hands. “Sometimes I just don’t get along with other kids too well.”

I stammered out, “That’s OK. I understand.”

Then Alan came over, and Pamela was telling him it was time for her to walk him home.

“Just a minute, Pam,” Alan told her. He turned to me. “Naya, I have a dog, too,” he said. “Can I come over to walk Scamps with you and Tally one day?”

“Sure,” I said.

We smiled at each other. Then Pamela dragged him away, and then Gramps was there, calling to me. It was time for me to head home, too.



Chapter Twelve

HOME SWEET HOME

The next few days of school went well. It was nice having Dad around. I don't know who was happier to spend time with him—me or Gramps!

Dad had finished writing the article and taking the photos of the sanctuary and had submitted them to the magazine. Then he'd told the magazine he wanted a few weeks off before beginning his next assignment so he could spend some time with Mom, Gramps and me. Every day after school, he and I went for a walk along the pier with Gramps.

Dad had brought me my very own pair of binoculars because he knew I'd been having so much fun looking for sea lions and whales. Gramps and I looked at the marine animals through our binoculars, and then Dad and I took photos.

One day, Alan even came along with his dog,



Scamps.

Dad and I often checked in on Sierra. And Gramps came and had dinner with us every day.

But tonight, Gramps saw me frowning while we cleaned up after dinner. “Are you OK, Naya?” he asked.

I nodded, but then it came spilling out. “I know the magazine article will come out soon and that might bring the rehabilitation center more publicity, which is great, but...”

Mom and Dad had stopped loading the dishwasher. They were listening, too.

“I’m worried about Sierra,” I explained. “Sarah hasn’t told us yet whether she’s ready to be returned to her family. What if...what if she’s never ready? What if...?”

“Oh, Naya!” Mom clapped her hands together. “I’m so sorry. We were saving two pieces of special news for you. We meant to tell you at dinner but we forgot!”

I could hardly breathe. I saw Gramp’s eyes light up, too. “What is it?” I asked.



“Just this morning Sarah told us that Sierra is doing so well that she plans to return the little fox to her family in the mountains next week!” Mom said.

“That’s wonderful!” said Gramps.

“And, Naya, the magazine editor called today,” said Dad. He had that funny look on his face again. “I told her the good news about Sierra and she was thrilled. She wants me to extend the story to include the release of the baby red fox.”

Dad came and hugged me. “She’s going to create a special issue to feature the story and your cause—protecting endangered animals and their habitats. She wants readers all around the world to sit up and take notice!”

“Sierra is going home—and so many people will be able to read about it and why it’s so important,” I exclaimed. “I can’t believe it!”



Three weeks later, we were all gathered to watch Sierra be set free. Dad, Sarah, the wildlife officer, a video technician and I were actually there



in the Sierra Nevada mountains with Sierra. Mom, Gramps, Alan and lots of Mom's staff and volunteers were back at the sanctuary. They were watching a computer screen, connected to all the action by a live video feed.

And then, oh my goodness, it happened. As we watched, holding our breath, Sarah opened the door of the crate and out came Sierra. She took a few sniffs of the air, quickly realized her family was near, and then bounded away to find them, without a backward glance.

It was amazing. Sierra was free. She was home.

Home. I've been thinking a lot about what that means. For Sierra, it's the mountains of California. Wild animals live best in their own natural habitat. That's where they belong.

And me? Well, Mom was right. It turns out that I *am* adaptable! My home was in South Africa, but now it's here. As long as my family is with me, that's where home is!





Glossary

*Many words have more than one meaning. Here are the definitions of words marked with this symbol * (an asterisk) as they are used in this story.*

acacia: *a spiny tree found in tropical areas such as the plains of Africa*

adapt: *to get used to a new place or way of life*

baobab: *a large African tree with a thick trunk*

bearded dragon: *an Australian lizard which is a popular pet in the United States*

bush baby: *a small African animal that has large eyes, a long tail and is great at leaping (also called a galago)*

captivity: *being kept in a cage*

chinchilla: *a small South American animal with beautiful, soft gray fur*

compound: *a group of buildings, often surrounded by a wall or fence*

confessed: *admitted something that is embarrassing*

confided: *told something secret or private to someone you trust*



dehydrated: *not having enough water
or moisture*

direct: *guide*

exposed: *placed in close contact*

fluids: *liquids*

footage: *scenes recorded on film or video*

gamekeepers: *people in charge of
protecting wildlife on a reserve*

grazing: *feeding on grass*

habitat: *the place where a plant or animal
naturally lives*

high-powered (binoculars): *providing
a more powerful, close-up view*

homeschooled: *taught at home and not at
a traditional school*

marine (animals): *living in the sea*

marveled: *expressed wonder or amazement*

nutrients: *ingredients in foods that are
needed for good health*

Outback: *a large area of Australia which
is home to many animals but few people*

overheard: *heard something that was said to
another person*



“paying off”: *an expression that means
creating a good result*

photojournalist: *a person who creates news
stories for magazines, television
or radio using words and photographs*

pier: *a walkway built out over the ocean*

“pouring my heart out”: *an expression
that means telling your secret
feelings and thoughts*

“pros and cons”: *good points and
bad points about an idea*

reaction: *response*

regret: *wish you hadn’t said or done something*

sanctuary: *a place where wild animals
are protected*

savanna: *a large flat area with grass and
few trees, found in hot, dry parts
of the world*

specializing: *concentrating a business or
studies on one particular type of interest*

stampede: *a sudden rush of many
excited animals or people*

stressful: *upsetting, causing worry*



sun bear: *the smallest of all bears, it has a golden “sunrise” patch of fur on its chest and is found in Southeast Asia*

survive: *stay alive*

“throwing in the towel”: *an expression that means giving up*

unpredictable: *impossible to know in advance what will happen*

venomous: *poisonous*

veterinarian school: *a college or university where people are trained to become doctors who care for animals*

wary: *watchful and on guard against danger*

wildebeests: *large, fast-running African animals with long curving horns*

wildlife rehabilitation center: *a place where sick or injured wild animals are cared for and returned to good health, with the goal of returning them to the wild*

wildlife reserve: *a place where wild animals can live safely and their habitats are protected*



Habitat Match-Up Game

An animal's habitat is its natural home. Naya helps to return a baby Sierra Nevada red fox to its habitat in the mountains. Play this game with your friends or family to help them learn about habitats.

Supplies You Will Need:

- 4 large pieces of paper
- Stack of index cards
- Pens or pencils, markers, tape
- Optional: pictures of animals (including birds and insects!)

List of Habitats:

desert, mountain, ocean, savanna, tundra, steppe, forest (tropical forest, temperate forest, rainforest), edge of forest, meadow or field, marsh, coast, estuary, bay, pond, stream, river, flower garden or neighborhood

The goal of the game is to match animals with their habitats!

To Prepare the Game for the Players (by yourself or with a helper):

1. Choose 4 habitats but make sure one is the Sierra Nevada mountains. (You can use suggestions for others from the list if you wish.) Write each habitat on a separate piece of paper in big letters.
2. Look up names of 6 or more animals that live in each of the 4 habitats. Be sure to include the Sierra Nevada red fox!
3. Write each name on an index card. Or you can draw pictures of the animals or paste photos of them on the cards.

How to Play:

1. Tape or place each large paper with a habitat name in a corner of the room.
2. Place the animal name cards in a stack. Shuffle them.
3. One by one, each player takes a card. The player acts like the animal on the card, moving and making sounds. The player goes to stand in the corner of the room that is labeled with the animal's correct habitat.
4. When each player-animal is in its correct habitat, play again!





The Power of a Girl

For every *Our Generation*® product you buy, a portion of sales goes to Free The Children's Power of a Girl Initiative to help provide girls in developing countries an education—the most powerful tool in the world for escaping poverty.

Did you know that out of the millions of children who aren't in school, 70% of them are girls? In developing communities around the world, many girls can't go to school. Usually it's because there's no school available or because their responsibilities to family (farming, earning an income, walking hours each day for water) prevent it.

Over the past two years, Free The Children has had incredible success with its Year of Water and Year of Education initiatives, providing 100,000 people with clean water for life and building 200 classrooms for overseas communities. This year, they celebrate the Year of Empowerment, focusing on supporting alternative income projects for sustainable development.

The most incredible part is that most of Free The Children's funding comes from kids just like you, holding lemonade stands, bake sales, penny drives, walkathons and more.

Just by buying an *Our Generation* product you have helped change the world, and you are powerful (beyond belief!) to help even more.

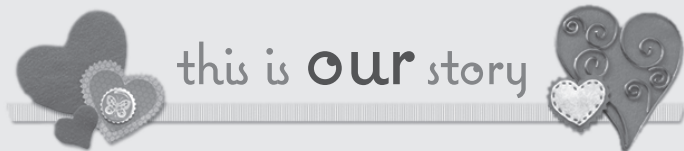
If you want to find out more, visit:
www.ogdolls.com/free-the-children



FREE THE CHILDREN

children helping children through education

Free The Children provided the factual information pertaining to their organization.
Free The Children is a 501c3 organization.



We are an extraordinary generation of girls.
And have we got a story to tell.

Our Generation® is unlike any that has come before. We're helping our families learn to recycle, holding bake sales to support charities, and holding penny drives to build homes for orphaned children in Haiti. We're helping our little sisters learn to read and even making sure the new kid at school has a place to sit in the cafeteria.

All that and we still find time to play hopscotch and hockey. To climb trees, do cartwheels all the way down the block and laugh with our friends until milk comes out of our noses. You know, to be kids.

Will we have a big impact on the world? We already have. What's ahead for us? What's ahead for the world? We have no idea. We're too busy grabbing and holding on to the joy that is today.

Yep. This is our time. This is our story.

www.ogdolls.com



About the Author

Susan Hughes is an award-winning writer of more than 30 children's books, including picture books, chapter books, young adult novels, nonfiction for all ages, and even a graphic non-fiction book. Susan is also a freelance editor who works with educational publishers to develop student books and teacher materials for a variety of grade levels. In addition, she helps coach and guide other writers in revising and polishing their own manuscripts.

About the Illustrator

Passionate about drawing from an early age, Géraldine Charette decided to pursue her studies in computer multimedia in order to further develop her style and technique. Her favorite themes to explore in her illustrations are fashion and urban life. In her free time, Géraldine loves to paint and travel. She is passionate about horses and loves spending time at the stable. It's where she feels most at peace and gives her time to think and fuel her creativity.



Finding a Home became the book that you are holding in your hands with the assistance of the talented people at Maison Battat Inc., including Joe Battat, Dany Battat, Sandy Jacinto, Loredana Ramacieri, Véronique Casavant, Véronique Chartrand, Ananda Guarany, Jenny Gambino, Natalie Cohen, Arlee Stewart, Zeynep Yasar and Pam Shrimpton.





this is OUR story®

Finding a Home

When Naya™ moves with her parents from their wildlife reserve in South Africa to a city on the coast of California, everything in her life is suddenly very different.

There are some good things, such as spending time with Gramps and helping out at Mom's new veterinary clinic and wildlife rehabilitation center. But Naya's always been more comfortable with animals than people. She already misses her daily life on the savanna, her friend Bandile and her beloved pet, Kikou. In the fall, she'll have to spend her days at a regular school...surrounded by other kids! Will Naya ever feel like she belongs in this new place?

Then a baby fox arrives at the clinic. Not only is the fox alone and far from home, its special habitat is disappearing. When Naya learns that many animals face the same difficulty, she knows she has to stop thinking about her own troubles and help. But what can she do to raise awareness of this important problem?

It's impossible to separate **Our Generation®** characters from the generation of girls who read about and play with them, for they are one and the same.

They're changing the world by making their households greener. They're baking cupcakes to help charities. They're writing in their journals, practicing for recitals, doing cartwheels down the block and giggling with their friends until they can hardly breathe. **Our Generation** is about girls growing up together. "This is our story" reflects the community of these amazing girls as they laugh, learn and create the narrative of their own generation.

Ages 7 and up

Maison Battat Inc. Publisher

Cover art © 2017 by Géraldine Charette

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