



Dayspring

Bahá'í Magazine for Children

Issue 100

A special collection of Dayspring stories

Dayspring

Produced under the auspices of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom

Dayspring is produced three times a year on an educational non-profit basis and seeks to nurture a love for God and mankind in the hearts of children. Material by children and adults of stories, plays, poems, artwork and news is warmly welcomed. Please note that under the terms of the Child Protection Act regarding publishing images of children, permission to do so is required from a parent or guardian.

Dayspring Team: Jackie Mehrabi & Maggie Manvell (editors), David Merrick (web-master), Janet Fleming Rose (proofreader), Helena Hastie (distributor).

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Contributors:

Amica Adams, illustrated by Laura Barnes: pp. 32-35.

Wendy Borrill: pp. 6-8, 14-16, 26-28.

Judy Cobb: p. 18.

Susan Engle: p. 17.

Maggie Manvell: pp. 24-25.

Jackie Mehrabi: pp. 9, 30-31, 36-37.

Adam Pringle: pp. 12-13.

Lou Turner: p. 29.

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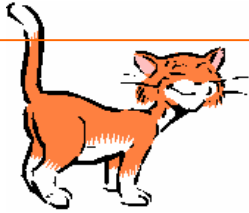
Traditional Tale which has been adapted: pp. 10-11.

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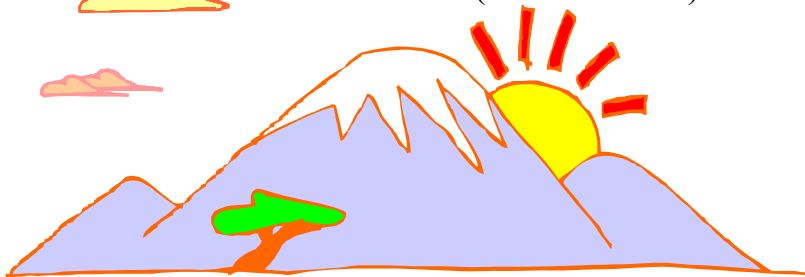
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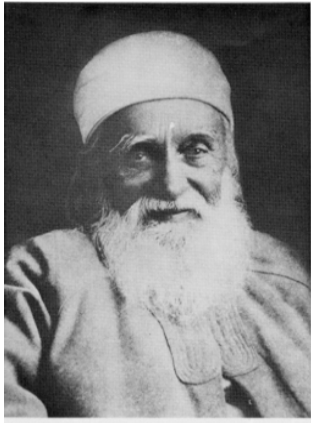




**Be a sign of love,
a manifestation
of mercy,
a fountain of
tenderness,
kind – hearted,
good to all
and gentle....**

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá)





Meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The Visitors

Many people came to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Some of them were rich or important. Some were poor. Once, a group of English people who were on holiday in the Holy Land knocked at His door. 'Abdu'l-Bahá welcomed them all and offered them hospitality.

One day an Arab gentleman came to the house. A little while later, another Arab gentleman arrived. When they saw each other they became angry because they did not like each other! 'Abdu'l-Bahá told them funny stories and they began to laugh. He also told them serious stories and they listened thoughtfully.

"My home is the home of peace," said 'Abdu'l-Bahá. "My home is the home of joy and delight. My home is the home of laughter. . . . Whoever enters through the portals of this home must go out with gladsome heart."

He told them to embrace one another, and He fetched sweets and two silk handkerchiefs to give them.

"Is it not much better to be friends than enemies?" He asked them.

"It seems God directed our steps to your home this morning," they said as they left the house the best of friends.



Neela's Bahá'í Class

Jamie's Story



Jamie is 10 years old. He does not have any friends and spends a lot of time on his own. During the week he doesn't go to the ordinary school where most of the other children go. He goes to a Special School. But Jamie does not know what is "special" about it. On Sunday mornings he goes to a Bahá'í class. He thinks that is special, but it is not called by that name. Names confuse Jamie. People confuse Jamie. But most of all, words confuse Jamie. Jamie likes things to be very clear. He does not understand why Neela, his Bahá'í class teacher, keeps telling them about God. He knows about God already. He knows that God makes him happy and loves him.

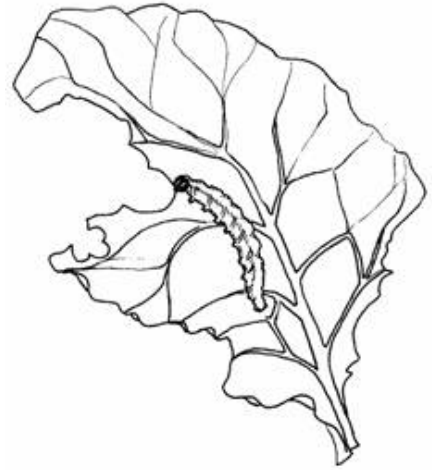
Jamie also does not understand the stories Neela tells them or the songs she wants them to sing. How, he wonders, can the children in the class be drops of one ocean or flowers in a garden? It doesn't make sense — they are boys and girls with arms and legs!

Sometimes poor Jamie gets so confused by words and people he just decides to be silent and think his own thoughts.

Others at his Special School seem to get very angry or cross when they are unhappy, but Jamie just sits in his own quiet place and looks at books. The only books he likes are about insects. It does not matter how small or creepy they are, Jamie loves them, and Neela says God made all the insects, so Jamie just loves God even more.



One week Neela tells her class a story about when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in Paris and spoke about feeling happy and how this makes you feel closer to God. The children like the story and tell each other about the things that make them feel happy or sad. As usual, Jamie is in the classroom with them but is not joining in. He does not know how to join in.



A few days later Neela is in her garden and gets very upset when she sees her vegetables because they are getting spoilt and not growing properly. Little green caterpillars are eating the leaves of her cabbages. Neela thinks the caterpillars are destroying all her hard work in the garden. She is about to squash them, when she remembers silent Jamie and his love for insects. So she carefully removes all the caterpillars from her plants and places them in another part of her garden where they cannot cause any damage. Neela does, however, keep one caterpillar and puts it into a large glass jar with some fresh cabbage leaves. She makes little holes in the lid so the caterpillar can breathe.

The next Sunday at the Bahá'í class she gives the jar to Jamie and says there is a caterpillar in there and she is named "Joy". Neela says the



caterpillar is going to become a butterfly with beautiful wings of red, orange and yellow. Jamie looks straight at her and says that she is wrong because it is a Cabbage White caterpillar and the butterfly will have white wings with little black marks on it. But will still be beautiful.

Jamie takes Joy home and keeps giving her fresh cabbage leaves to eat. After a while, Joy starts the next stage of her life, and turns into something called a pupa. Jamie knows from his books that some caterpillars can grow up to 30,000 times bigger between hatching out of their eggs and growing into adults – but not the Cabbage White, only insects in tropical parts of the world. She attaches herself to the twig Jamie has put in the jar and grows a hard cocoon around her.

One day, about two weeks later, when Jamie is getting ready to go to his Bahá'í class, he notices the pupa is beginning to split open. His mum tells him to take it with him to show the other children and Neela.

In class that day Joy becomes a butterfly. She climbs out of her pupa case, spreads out her wings to dry them in the warm sunshine, and then is ready to fly. Jamie takes the jar outside and all the other children and Neela follow him. Jamie takes the lid off the jar to let Joy fly away.

Everyone claps and smiles, even Jamie. This is the first time he can ever remember doing the same thing as the other children, and it makes him feel happy to be part of the class.





The Beautiful Day

The rain fell, and the corn in the fields grew green and tall.
"What a beautiful day," said the corn.

The rain fell, and the animals ran to the river to drink.
"What a beautiful day," said the animals.

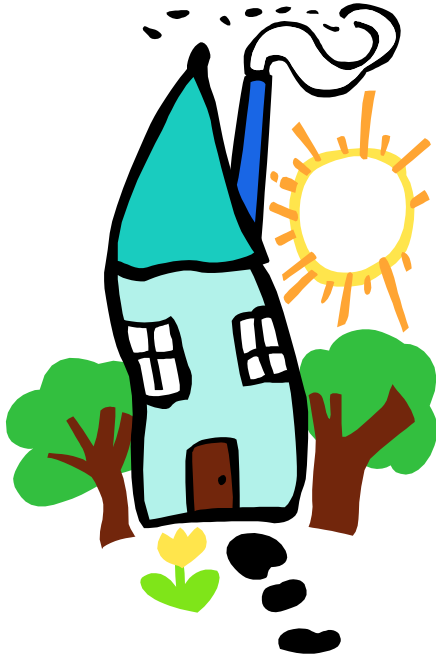
The rain fell, and the shallow pools of the fish became deep and wide. "What a beautiful day," said the fish.

The rain fell, washing the hot dry dust from the camels in the desert sand. "What a beautiful day," said the camels.

The rain fell, and made little puddles for the birds to bathe in.
"What a beautiful day," said the birds.

The rain fell, and the people in the street hurried by, wanting to get home. An old lady stood on the pavement feeling tired, until a little boy stopped and gave her a smile.
"What a beautiful day," said the old lady.





Honest Ivan

Ivan and his wife lived in a cottage in the country and they were very poor. Ivan could not get a job nearby so one day he kissed his wife goodbye and set off to find work somewhere else. After many days, he came to a farm. The farmer agreed to give him work and also somewhere to live.

After one year, the farmer asked Ivan whether he wanted to be paid in money or with good advice. Ivan said he would like to be paid with money but the farmer said that good advice would be better. He worked for three years for the farmer, and at the end of each year the farmer always asked the same thing and Ivan always gave the same reply. Each time the farmer would give him good advice instead of wages.

The advice the farmer gave him after the third year was, "It is always best to be honest."

By this time, Ivan decided he had been away long enough, and although he still had no money, he said goodbye to the farmer and set off home. Before he left, the farmer gave him a cake to take with him.

After many adventures Ivan arrived home and his wife came running towards him.

"I found a bag somebody dropped on the road," she said. "When I opened it, I found it was full of gold coins! I think it must belong to the lord who lives in the castle."



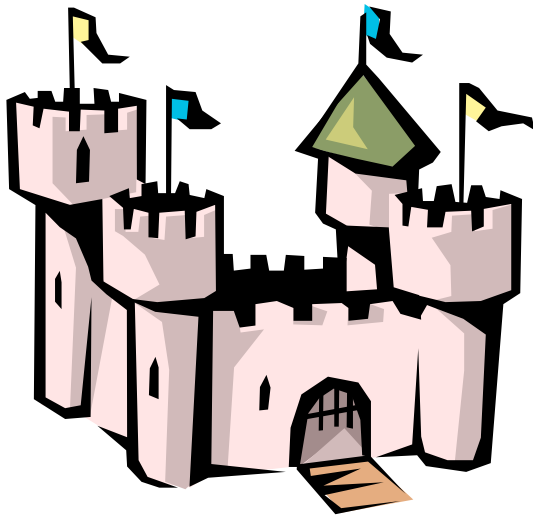
Ivan remembered the advice the farmer had given him about how it is always best to be honest.

"We must return it to the lord," he said to his wife, and she agreed.

They went to the castle and gave the bag of gold to a servant, telling him to give it to his master.



The next day, the lord happened to ride past Ivan's little cottage, and Ivan's wife asked if he had received the bag of gold coins safely. He looked surprised.

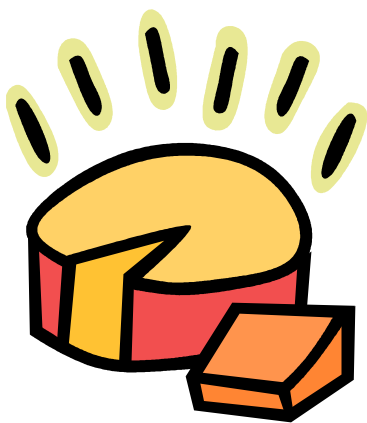


"No," he said, "I haven't seen it." And he knew the servant must have stolen it. When he returned to the castle, he ordered the servant to leave.

"I don't want anyone who is dishonest working for me," he said.

Then he went to Ivan and asked if he would like the servant's job. Ivan was delighted and he and his

wife went to live in the castle.



They were sitting round the kitchen table that evening feeling very happy, when Ivan remembered the cake the farmer had given him. He cut a piece of the cake — and inside found three gold coins, one for every year he had worked on the farm!



The Bird and Me

(A true story)

I had been ill and was staying in a nursing home for a few weeks until I was better. It was a nice place, with flowers either side of the path leading to the front door and big windows which let the sunshine in.

And the nurses were very kind, although they were usually too busy to stop and chat as they had many other patients to look after, not just me of course.



One day when I was feeling lonely, I decided I would go along the hall to the sitting room and see if anyone was there. The only problem was, on the way to the sitting room I would have to pass the open door to a room where a bird was kept in a cage. And the bird always made the most dreadful screeching noise every time he saw someone. He would scream at the top of his voice and beat himself against the bars, sometimes causing wing feathers to come loose and flutter to the floor of the cage. He would go on screeching until the person disappeared from sight again.

Everyone hated that bird and said he was mad and should be got rid of.

I wondered what to do about the problem as I felt sorry for him but couldn't bear the noise either. As I was in a wheelchair, I couldn't run past the door. And as I had to use my hands to wheel myself, I couldn't put my fingers in my ears to block out the sound. So I did something else. I went into the room.



Well, that bird jumped up and down and shouted at me in bird language for ages! But when I just sat there, and didn't move, after a while he began to calm down.

The bird and I looked at each other. He was the size of a pigeon but more beautiful. He was a tame parrot, although his great-grandparents would probably have been wild and free to fly in the rain forests of Africa. Parrots are said to be the most intelligent birds in the world, able to learn all sorts of tricks and up to 2000 words! No wonder this one was trying to tell us how bored he was, being shut in a small cage away from everyone! I later



learnt that his owner had died, which is why he was so unhappy.

I told him how beautiful he was and he cocked his head on one side and looked at me with bright, beady eyes full of questions. He had a very strong beak so I didn't try to touch him, though. Not then.

Every day I would visit the parrot and talk to him. And although he still made a fuss when people passed by, he stopped his terrible screaming. And a week later I opened his cage door, blocking it with my arm so he couldn't escape, and slowly put my hand inside, resting it on the bottom of the cage.

He looked at it for a minute then hopped onto my finger. It was the nicest feeling ever. I kept very still, not wanting to frighten him by moving too quickly, and he sat there for a long time, occasionally reaching out his head to peck at his bowl of seeds and taking sips of water, completely relaxed and happy. Then I very carefully lifted my hand so he was level with his perch, and he jumped onto it.



He trusted me, and I trusted him by opening the cage door and letting him come out. He would sit on my hand as good as gold and never tried to fly out of the room. I would tell him stories and he would make soft cooing sounds in the back of his throat and ruffle his wings contentedly. You see, he was lonely. He just wanted someone to be kind to him and be his friend.

I wanted a friend too, and in the end we found each other.

Neela's Bahá'í Class

May's Story

May lives in a flat in a big city. In her home she has her older brother and sister, her mum and dad, her papa and grandma, and a budgie called Lady-day. It is always busy in there and other family members often visit them. May likes living in a busy home, in a busy city. She likes the noises from the street below of the cars, lorries and people. She likes all the shops and supermarkets, and going out to choose and buy different kinds of food from all over the world.

At school May is in a class that has children from all over the world. May often wonders why they left their homes to come and live in her city, but she is glad that they have.

Every Sunday morning May goes to her Bahá'í class. It is fun and she listens to the stories and likes joining in with the games and the singing. One day May hopes that she can be a teacher just like Neela. She thinks Neela is wonderful and clever, but sometimes May gets impatient with Neela because she thinks she is too slow. May likes to rush to the end of a story as quickly as possible and then tell her ideas about it to the rest of the class. Neela tries to explain to May that there are some people in the class who are different from her.

In class Neela talks to them about Bahá'u'lláh and explains how He says that we should be patient under all conditions, and put our whole trust and confidence in God. Neela says that it is not always easy to be patient but if we trust God, then it becomes simple. As it is the Intercalary Days the class also talks about the Fast, which the youth and adults will soon be doing, and then



about the celebration of Naw-Ruz, the Bahá'í New Year. May loves Naw-Ruz and wishes it is now, not in nineteen days time, which seems a very long way away. As it is coming to the end of winter and the start of spring, Neela suggests that the class begins a special project. Neela explains that this project is one that needs patience and trust.



She gives all the children a plant pot each and says they are to fill it with some special compost she has, then they must plant three seeds in it. Then, in the summer, they will be able to pick lovely fresh tomatoes and share them with their families.

May looks at the three tiny brown seeds in her dirty hand and thinks that if she suddenly sneezes they will fly off and she will never be able to find them again as they are so small. Also, May is confused because she thinks that Neela is mistaken about the tomatoes. She hears Neela say that the seeds are going to grow into tomatoes, but May thinks tomatoes come from a shop in a plastic bag and not from a pot of dirt. She asks Neela to explain to her again what they should do with their little seeds. Neela says they should put them in the plant pot, sprinkle a little water on them, and leave them on a shelf by the window, the one above the radiator. May asks what happens then – will the tomatoes pop out of the soil by the class next week?



At the Bahá'í class the next week May runs in hoping to see her tomatoes, but all she sees is a pot of dirt. She pokes her fingers into the pot and digs around looking for the tomatoes in case they are hiding, but all she finds is more soil.

May asks Neela where the tomatoes have gone, has someone come into their class during the week and eaten them? Neela tells May to be patient and trust that in time the seeds will germinate and grow. First she would see a little green shoot, then a leaf and then the plant would grow. Once it got bigger she would have to look after it carefully and water it regularly. May is not sure about this story, but she likes Neela and believes her.

So May learns patience. Her plant grows and she gets some small tomatoes on it in the summer, but not many. One boy in her class has dozens on his plant and May thinks it is probably because he had not kept poking at it in the beginning like she had. He had looked, but not touched, except one day when there had been some interesting insects on it.

Now that May has learnt that you can grow food as well as buy it, she has lots of suggestions for what the class should grow next year. Lettuces, perhaps? Carrots? An avocado tree? She can hardly wait!



Everyone



Everyone laughs.
Everyone cries.
Everyone giggles.
Everyone sighs.

No matter our outsides,
Our father or mother,
We really and truly
Belong to each other.



Everyone hurts.
Everyone grins.
Everyone loses.
Everyone wins.

Fat, tall, thin, short, hairy,
One shade or another,
We really and truly
Belong to each other.



Everyone thinks.
Everyone knows.
Everyone touches.
Everyone grows.
More precious to God
Than a daughter or brother ...
We really and truly
Belong to each other.



People often say, "You are a star!" when someone does something to help them out. Just like Celestina in this story. . .

CELESTINA



A long, long time ago, when God made everything, He made the stars.

One of the tiniest is named Celestina. Because she is so tiny, no matter how hard she tries, she can only twinkle a little bit. If you look into the night sky, you will not be able to see her.

Because she keeps very busy being kind and helpful to others, she never has time to worry about her size or her twinkle.

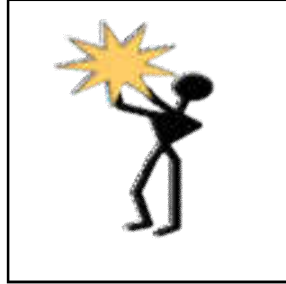
Her mother and father are quite old, and they often get tired. Every morning, Celestina shines them up. She removes the stardust from the night before, so they will be ready to sparkle in the coming night.

If a shooting star passes by and needs directions, she is right there pointing out the way to go. She cools down hot stars and warms up cold ones. She frequently has to catch a falling star.

There is always a star in some kind of trouble, so there are nights when Celestina gets very little sleep.

Now, there are much bigger stars in the sky. But that does not always mean that they are brighter. Some of them are quite dull. To be really brilliant, it is important to know the virtues, like being kind and helpful, and then to practise them. Because she does this, tiny Celestina with a tiny twinkle is a brilliant star.

All children, even tiny ones, can be brilliant. It does take practice, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote a special prayer that will help us. Just remember these three things:



TO BE BRILLIANT

1st Say this prayer

O God, guide me, protect me, make of me a shining lamp and a brilliant star. Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

2nd Learn the virtues

**3rd Practise them –
especially being kind and helpful**

1, 2 and 3

NOW, THAT'S BRILLIANT!

Nine ways to be a brilliant star!

1

Bahá'u'lláh says,

"The tongue
is for mentioning
what is good."



2

'Abdu'l-Bahá says,

"Be happy!
Be happy!
Be full of joy!"



3

'Abdu'l-Bahá says,

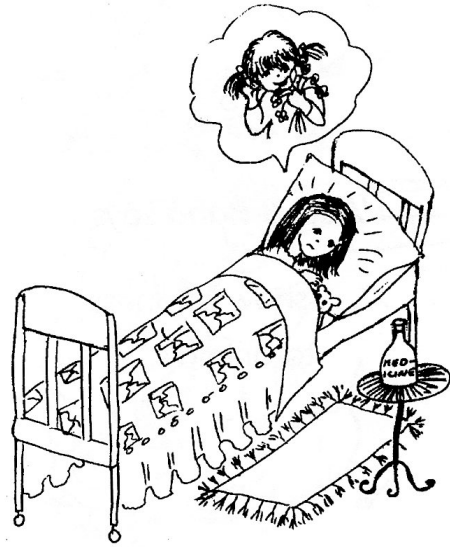
"Sing with beautiful
melodies in the
meetings."



4

'Abdu'l-Bahá says,

"We should all
visit the sick."



5

'Abdu'l-Bahá says,

"Show kindness
to animals."



6

'Abdu'l-Bahá says,

"How pleasing is
cleanliness in the
sight of God."



7

'Abdu'l-Bahá says,
"The host . . . must . . .
serve the friends with
his own hands."



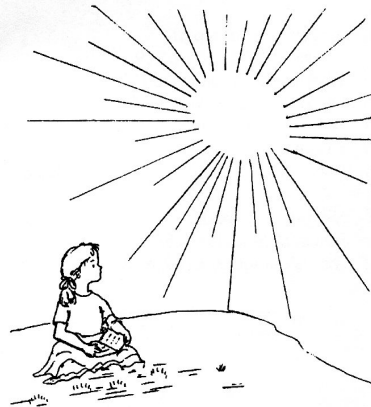
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'Abdu'l-Bahá says,
"The best way to
thank God is to love
one another."



9

Bahá'u'lláh says,
"Recite ye the
verses of God"



I Remember . . .

A true story of how a lady first heard about 'Abdu'l-Bahá and found the place where the Bahá'ís were meeting.

It was around the year 1912, and I was living in London. One day I was walking home feeling rather sad. A year before, I had heard that a holy person called 'Abdu'l-Bahá had come to London with a Message for the world about love and unity. I did not know how to find out more at the time and then I read in a newspaper that He had left to go to France. The article may have mentioned an address where meetings were taking place, but although I had prayed about it, I could not remember where it was.



I was walking along a street I had often walked along before, when something made me stop outside one of the houses. I was puzzled as I did not know anyone who lived there. Through the window I could see people in the front room talking. My heart jumped in excitement! I opened the gate and walked up the garden path and knocked on the door.

A friendly lady opened it and smiled.

"Have you come for the Bahá'í meeting?" she asked.

I could hardly believe it! I had found the house completely by accident!

Well, perhaps not really by accident. Many of the early believers were guided to the Faith through dreams and other mysterious ways. And *something* had made me stop at that particular house. I think it was a feeling of love that had guided me there. And 'Abdu'l-Bahá.



Hamish, the Kind Cat

Hamish the Mog was thoughtful and kind.
Wherever he went he was sure to find
Something to give, or something to share,
Something to show that he really did care.

He went down the garden and passed the front door.
The wind had blown leaves all over the floor.
"Don't worry!" said Mog, "I'll soon clean the room."
He went to the cupboard and pulled out
a broom.

Because he was kind, he didn't think twice,
He swept up the leaves in less than a trice.
"What a nice way to start a new day!"
He nodded and purred and went on his way.



Alone in the yard, looking very upset,
Was Rover the dog, the family pet.

"Oh dear!" Rover sobbed, "As I played with my ball,
It bounced much too high — right over the wall."



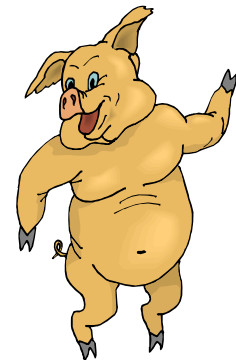
"Don't worry!" said Hamish, "There's no need to cry."
With a leap and a bound he jumped very high,
Right onto the ball — then bounced it back over.
"Oh Thank you! Wuff! Wuff!" barked jubilant Rover.

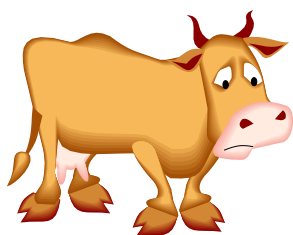
Hamish the Mog continued his walk
'Till he met Porky Pig, who was learning to talk.

"Can you help?" Porky asked, "My words are all wrong."
"It's simple!" said Mog. "What you need is a song."

"I'll play you a tune," and he took out a drum.
"Singing and dancing will help the words come."
Together they sang, and Porky the Pig
Sang lots of words and danced a wee jig.

Next, in the field, he met Daisy the Cow.
She wanted to dance, but didn't know how.
"My friend can help. He'll teach you a jig!"





When they came back Daisy looked very glum.
 "We'll show you!" said Mog, and pulled out his drum.
 They danced and they jigged and started to sing
 And Daisy the cow did a highland fling!

On up the hill, Hamish jumped on a log,
 Where, sad and upset, sat a tiny green frog.
 "What's wrong?" Hamish asked. "You look very sad."
 "It's the weather," sighed Frog, "It's turned very bad."

"There hasn't been rain, and the ditch is too dry.
 I'm afraid that my tadpoles are going to die."
 "Don't worry!" said Hamish, "I'll get them a jar.
 They can move to the pond — it's not very far."



Away Hamish ran, then back in a flash,
 With tadpoles in jar he made a quick dash,
 Along to the pond, to set them all free.
 Mrs Frog hopped along as fast as could be.



" Oh! Hamish!" she said, "you're so very kind!"
 She planted a kiss on his furry behind.
 The sun was now setting over the pond.
 Hamish was hungry — he'd been up so long.

He ran down the garden — his tummy was sore.
 The smell of his supper came out through the door.
 He ate up his food, then licked his jaws,
 Washed his face and cleaned his paws.

He said his prayers, and curled up tight,
 All cosy and warm, in the chair for the night.
 Asleep, he dreamed about giving and caring,
 Of dancing and drumming, of running and sharing.

Of singing pigs and footballing dogs,
 Of dancing cows and happy frogs.
 Warm and snug inside his fur
 But now and then gave a little purr!



Neela's Bahá'í Class

Gordon's Story



Gordon is nine years old, but he is tall so people often think he is older. He is also strong and very fit. Gordon has two big loves in his life — the Bahá'í Faith and football! Gordon is good at football and is in his school team and a league team. The city football club have asked him to train with their junior team as well. Gordon trains and plays football every day of the week, except for Sunday mornings when he goes to his Bahá'í children's class.

In the Bahá'í class he has lots of friends; some are sporty like him, while others don't like team games at all. Neela, their teacher, tells the class a story about 'Abdu'l-Bahá saying we should think of people as being like flowers of different varieties and colours in one big garden, and how beautiful that is. 'Abdu'l-Bahá called it "unity in diversity".

A garden full of the same coloured flowers would be quite boring, Gordon agrees, and asks Neela what "unity in diversity" means. She explains that people may be different from one another, but they can be united when they work together like one family or one team.

One day, a boy called Rudy, who is an older boy in one of Gordon's football teams, asks him, "What is the Bahá'í Faith, and what do Bahá'ís believe?"

Gordon tries to explain to him but Rudy still looks puzzled. Gordon asks the boy if he would like to come to the Bahá'í Centre, or to the children's class, or to borrow a book, but Rudy is not keen on any of these suggestions. During the week Gordon wonders how he can answer Rudy's question about the Bahá'í Faith in a way he will find interesting. He decides to ask Neela and the other children in his class on Sunday and see if they have any good ideas. He also consults with his Mum and Dad as they drive him to a football practice at the Sports Centre.

While Gordon is training, his parents have coffee in the Sports Centre café. On the wall is a notice board with lots of posters and leaflets pinned on it. When Gordon is ready to go home his parents show him a poster which says there is to be an "Under 12, five-a-side Football Tournament" for new teams. Gordon does not understand why his parents are showing him this poster, but then his Mum explains that the children's class could become a team and compete in the tournament. Gordon laughs at this idea because he knows how hard he has to train, and he also knows that the others are not nearly as fit as he is. But he says he will think about it.



The next Sunday he tells Neela and the class about the possibility of making up a team for the tournament in the Sports Centre. One of the girls, called May, jumps up straight away and says it is a great idea and could she please be second-captain after Gordon? The children laugh, but they like the idea and say it might be a way for some of Gordon's football friends to get to meet them. They discuss what name they should call themselves and decide on "Team Spirit".

Afterwards, Gordon is worried. He tries not to be, but he is worried he might be ashamed if his Bahá'í friends play badly, especially if any of his football friends are at the tournament. He tries to remember that games are just for fun, not about judging who is the best footballer, but it isn't easy. Over the next two weeks, once the Bahá'í class has said prayers and listened to stories about the early Bahá'í believers, everyone goes out to the park to play football. Gordon teaches them the rules and one of the dads helps as a referee for their games.

Finally the day of the tournament arrives. The five who have been chosen to be part of "Team Spirit" look like a proper team because one of the friends in the community has a shop, and she has given them all



matching T-shirts with their names on the back. May wants to wear her T-shirt with her name on the front so she can see it, but Gordon explains this is not what you do in football!

As the team goes into the Sports Centre they see Rudy and some other boys whom Gordon knows. They have also formed a new team for the tournament. He introduces all his friends to each other.

When the first game starts, "Team Spirit" scores two goals (both by Gordon). But unfortunately the team they are playing scores twelve! "Team Spirit" is knocked out in the first round. But they stay for the entire tournament and cheer all the other players and clap at all the goals. At the prize-giving ceremony in the evening, the cup for the winning team goes to Rudy's team. The judge giving out the cup and medals says that he wishes he had more prizes because he and the other referees would have liked to have awarded a prize for the "Most Sporting, if not Sporty" team, and it would have gone to "Team Spirit"! He says they had been good, friendly competitors and very enthusiastic in their support for everyone else.

Rudy likes meeting Gordon's Bahá'í friends and asks if he can come to the next children's class and maybe help to train them when they play football afterwards.

When Gordon gets home that night he thinks about the day and is very happy. He is not disappointed that his team didn't win. It had been good fun. There had definitely been unity in diversity in the team, and that was very powerful.

He can almost imagine 'Abdu'l-Bahá being there in the Sports Centre with them all and smiling.



The Ant, the Spider and Me

One hot summer's day, when I was a child, I was lying face down in the meadow, surrounded by beautiful trees. The warmth of the sun and the humming of the bees began to make me feel drowsy, but suddenly I found myself gazing at a little insect in the grass.



As it clambered over tiny lumps of soil I could see that, to him, these were like great mountains. He was struggling through a forest of tall grass and even the shortest distance was to him a very long way indeed.

As I bent over him I realised that he was not aware of me at all. My size compared to this tiny creature was very great indeed, but, still, he didn't know that I was there. I was completely outside his little world of towering grass and mountainous slopes. It was wonderful to watch him travelling slowly along, and I began to wonder — are WE like this little ant? Is God as close to us while we are so unaware? I felt a deep excitement when I thought about this. How wonderful if God could see me as I could see this little ant, and that He was watching over me.

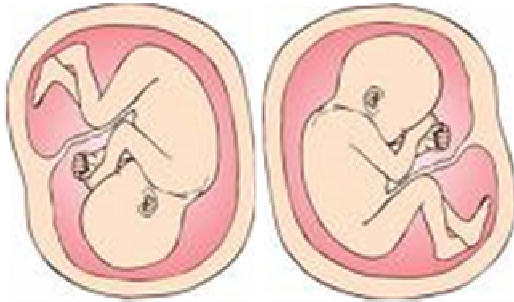
And then I caught sight of a spider a short distance away coming towards the ant, but they hadn't seen each other yet. Because I could see everything below me, I knew what was going to happen when the spider and the ant met — the spider would gobble him up in a second.

Very quickly and quietly, with just one finger, I bent the blade of grass the little ant was on and lightly placed it in a different spot so the spider would not see him. The ant didn't know I had saved him as he went happily along his way.

Then I thought about myself and other human beings. Because God can see us, He is looking after us too. And sometimes we are not even aware of it.



Max and Milly



Max and Milly floated in the warm water. They were twins and hadn't been born yet. They were still in the dark, safe world of their mother's womb. Now and again they did a somersault and bounced gently off the soft wall around them. Because they

were not identical twins, they were each wrapped in their own very thin bag called a sac, but they could feel each other moving.

Sometimes Max found he was sucking his thumb. But he didn't know it was his thumb as his eyes were closed. And he didn't know what it was called either because no one had told him yet.

Once when Milly was doing a somersault she touched her toes. Now, that felt interesting. They were wriggly and warm. They must be useful for something, she thought, but she couldn't think what!

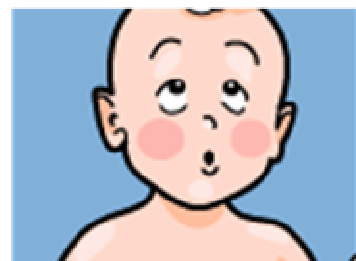
"Ahhh!" said Max, which came out as a gurgle rather than a sound because his lungs were full of water, not air.

What's that? Some rubbery things were stuck to either side of his head. If he folded them over they sprang back. And what was that little blob of fat in the middle of his face? Maybe it had grown there by mistake.

Nine months passed and Max and Milly had grown so big there was no room to swim about any more. It was so tight, Milly's little nose touched her knees. And when Max tried to stretch his legs, his feet pushed against the sides and his mother laughed and said, "Oh! He's kicking me!" but it didn't hurt. It was very cosy being so close together and the twins wanted to stay there always.

Then one day Max noticed that there was more room in the womb. He stretched out his arms to find Milly but she had disappeared!

"Oh no!" thought Max. "Where has she gone? She must have died!" He was very sad and thought she had disappeared for ever.



He was feeling so lonely he would have cried if he could, but he hadn't learnt how to do that yet. Then, a few minutes later, he felt something strange happening. He was slipping out of his nice warm home in the womb.

"Help!" he cried as he slithered through and popped out into the world.

When he got tired of yelling, Max opened his eyes and for the first time saw Milly! She hadn't died after all and was waiting for him, looking very pleased with herself. She was already wrapped up in a soft fluffy shawl and being held in one of their mother's arms. Max felt himself being gently wrapped in a shawl as well and laid in their mother's other arm. He thought she smelled lovely.

Max and Milly looked at the sunlight streaming through the window. They smelled the flowers in the vase by the bed. They heard the voice of their mother telling them that she loved them. And they felt her soft lips as she kissed them on the tops of their heads. Then she gave them some warm milk to drink. "Eyes, nose, ears, mouth! So that is what they are for!" thought Max and Milly together.

Max looked down and discovered his feet sticking out and thought he was seeing double because there were two of them. He glanced over to Milly and she waved her hands and smiled at him.

This world was much more interesting than the world they had come from, he decided. So many colours. So much to see. So much to discover. And that milk was delicious!

Their mother smiled. She knew that this was the beginning of an exciting journey for the twins, and that one day, when our bodies die, our souls will be born into yet another world of God that is even more beautiful than this one.

And just as there is nothing to be afraid of in being born into this world, she knew that there is nothing to be afraid of in being born into the next one either.

"When Milly and Max are older," their father and mother said to each other, "we will tell them all about it."



The Adventures of Mr Big

Mr Big was the smallest man you could ever meet! He lived all by himself in a little brick house surrounded by a large and wild garden. The garden was home to all of the plants that weren't welcome anywhere else. There were prickly blackberry bushes covered in fruit in the summer, and dogweed bushes with fuzzy flowers that smelled like old cheese. Large purple cauliflowers with droopy leaves trailing on the ground grew next to furry wormwood that Mr Big put inside his house when he had a cold. He said that the wormwood cleared his nose and made his head feel better.



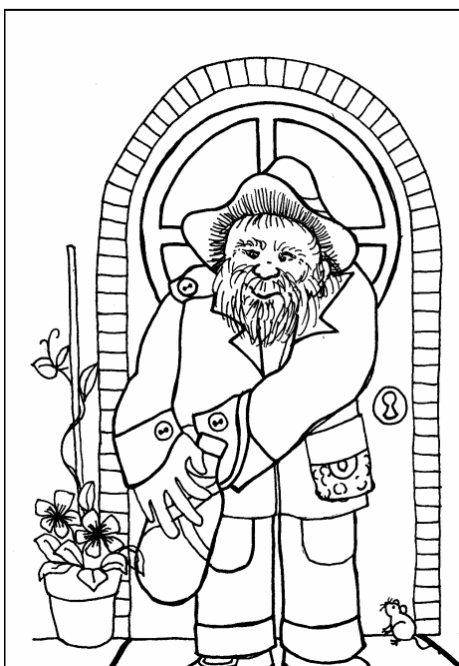
The garden was also full of little animals who scuttled around under the safe cover of the plants. Sometimes if you went outside in the early evening, you could hear the rustling of mice settling into their nests for the night, and crickets singing their loud lullabies. Or the soft sound of a snake as he slithered over the grass to his warm bed of leaves.

Mr Big lived in the middle of this garden. Although he was a small man, when he went into his house at night you would think that there were ten or even twenty burly men and women making loud music inside. For Mr Big just loved music. Inside his house he had a creaky piano that clanged out its tune no matter how sweetly you played. There was a big set of bongo drums that sometimes woke the neighbour's cat, who hissed loudly. Mr Big's favourite instrument was a rain shaker — a long hollow tube that made the sound of rain pounding on a piece of metal. It was also good for getting rid of ants, who thought that the rain was coming when he shook it, and they would hurry off to their homes in the garden.



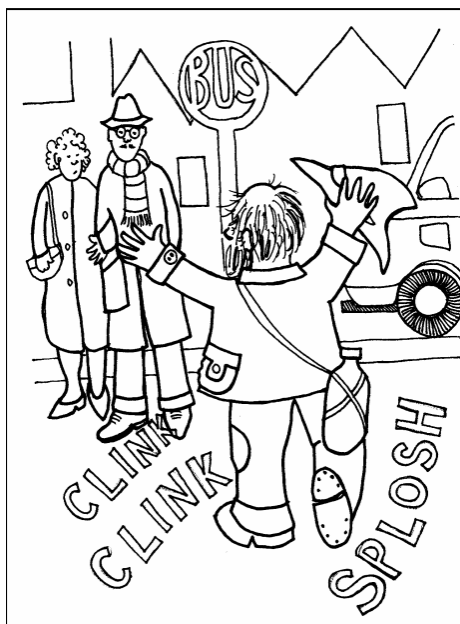
But Mr Big still felt that there was something missing. The creaky piano, the bongo drums, the rain shaker, the whistling kettle, and his other instruments, all sounded a bit flat.

Mr Big decided he needed something else. He stood on a chair to reach the top shelf of a cupboard where he kept his money, and carefully counted out a pile of coins. He put them into one of his pockets, where they made a jangly noise when he moved. He carefully hung a water bottle from his other side in case he got thirsty on his adventure.



When Mr Big put one leg forward, the coins rattled, and when he put the other leg forward, the water in the bottle splashed loudly. When he started walking, the coins and the water made a special music. Sometimes he would change the way he was walking just to hear the coins and water make their special music:

"Splosh, clink, clink, splosh, Clink-splosh, clink-splosh, Sploooosh clink-clink, Cliiiiink splosh-splosh."



The people on the street watched him in surprise — they had never seen a man making music as he walked.

Mr Big went into the biggest music store he could find. It had every musical instrument he had ever heard of, and even some he hadn't. He walked right up to the counter, where a young man in a green striped jacket was working. The man peered down at Mr Big.

"I'd like to buy a musical instrument, please," said Mr Big.

"Yes sir. What are you looking for?" the young man asked.

"I would like a super-duper music mobile," said Mr Big.

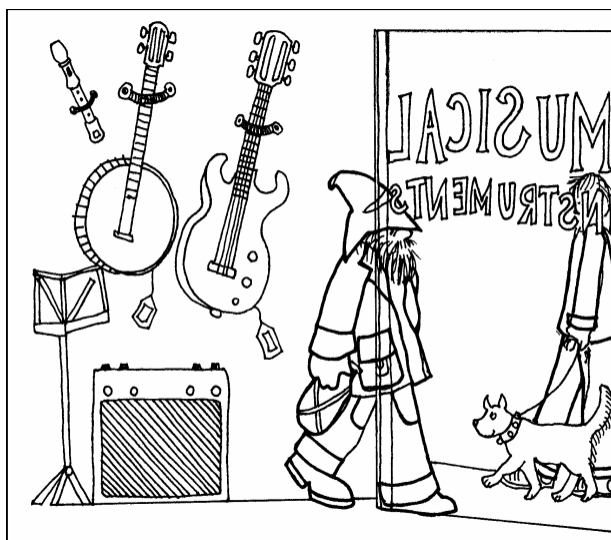
"I haven't heard of one of those before," muttered the man.

"Well, have you got something that will make my creaky piano, bongo drums, whistling kettle, and rain shaker sound sweet?"

"I'm sorry," said the man, "but I have nothing like that."

Mr Big looked sad. He turned around and walked out of the store, making a sad "splosh-clink-splosh-clink" as he went.

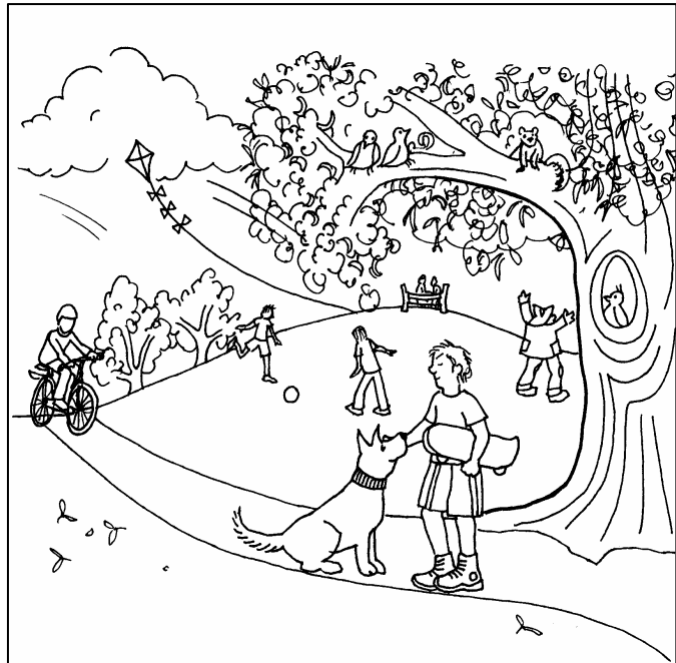
He went to the park where the children of the town were playing with their friends. Mothers and fathers were talking and laughing with each other, and dogs of all sizes, shapes and colours jumped and ran in the bright sunshine. Mr Big started to feel better. He sat and



listened to the sounds in the park. A flock of birds in a tall sycamore tree chirped and twittered, and the blue sky seemed to hum along — a soft, whispering, hushed song that got louder when the breeze rustled the leaves of the trees. And from time to time other things would join in — dogs barking, a young woman singing softly to her baby, and the laughter of small children.

Suddenly Mr Big sat up. He listened closer, and even closer. A large smile slowly came over his face, wrinkling his brown eyes at the corners. He had found the missing music he was looking for!

He rushed back to his home, the coins in his pocket and the water in the bottle making a hurried "clink-splash-clink-splash" as he ran down the street.

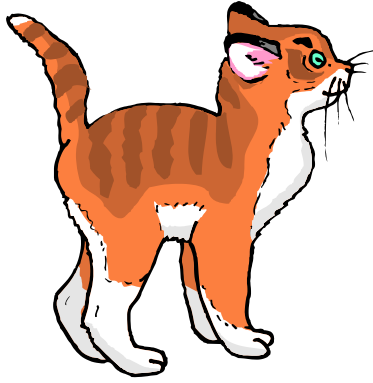


He ran through his wild and overgrown garden, full of plants not welcome anywhere else, and into his little brick house. He opened the windows wide. He stood very quietly. He heard the crickets singing lullabies to the baby mice, the smooth slithering of snakes over the leaves, the rustling of the breeze through the tall grasses, and the "plop, plop" of acorns as they fell from the huge acorn tree at the foot of the garden.

Mr Big tiptoed over to the creaky piano, and started to play very softly — so softly that he could still hear the crickets singing outside. He tapped his bongo drums in time with the falling acorns, and he shook his rainmaker so that it sounded like a gentle sprinkling of rain. The music was beautiful.



Sometimes, though, you will hear him playing his music so loudly, you might think that there is a whole crowd of people banging on bongo drums, clanging his old piano, and rattling out a loud tune. And you might even hear the next door neighbour's cat hissing!



The Ginger Kitten

(A true story)

It was a stormy day in the middle of winter on an island in Scotland. One of the children heard mewing coming from under the garden shed and found a tiny kitten huddled underneath. The children had noticed a stray mother cat running across the garden but she was half-wild and nobody could get near her. And nobody guessed she had hidden her baby kitten under the shed because it never made any sound. One day, the mother cat disappeared. The day afterwards, six-year-old Mark heard the weak cries of the kitten, and that was the first anyone knew about it. It was five weeks old and hungry.

Mark's mother brought the kitten indoors and gave it a saucer of milk. It lapped it up as fast as it could. Mark found a cardboard box and put a soft bit of blanket in it to keep the kitten warm.

The kitten blinked its big yellow eyes at Mark and began to purr. It had the loudest purr he had ever heard and its little body vibrated with the noise. It sounded like an engine and made Mark laugh.

"I am going to call him Rumble," said Mark.

Rumble was very affectionate. Whenever he saw anyone, he would begin his loud purring and rub himself against their legs, wanting to be picked up. But there was a problem. Every day, Mark's mother looked after a baby girl whose mother was out working. The baby had just learnt to crawl. She got into everything. Once it was the coal bucket! Another time it was in a basket of clean washing, which she threw all over the floor! She loved Rumble and would crawl after him and try to stroke him.

But Rumble was ill. Because he had been outside sleeping on the damp earth under the shed, he had a very bad cold. His lovely yellow eyes were running and, being a cat, he did not know how to blow his nose. Mum was worried that the baby would also become ill if she played with him, or even if she crawled over the floor where he had been. She did not know what to do. It was too cold to keep Rumble outside, even inside the shed. He was too ill

and too little. But the house was not very big and there was no place to keep him until he became well. She tried to find someone else to look after him, but nobody wanted him.

Feeling very sad, she decided she would have to take him to the vet to be put to sleep. The day she came to this difficult decision she went to the vet's and gave Rumble to him. Tears were streaming down her face and she could not stop crying. She had come to love Rumble and he was so friendly and sweet-natured she knew she would miss him. The vet gently took Rumble from her and she sadly went home. On the way she said a prayer over and over again for the little kitten.

That afternoon, Mum was busy in the kitchen when she heard a knock on the door. She opened it and was surprised to see the vet. He told her what had happened after she had left Rumble with him.

A man had come into the surgery and noticed Rumble sitting looking very sad in a cardboard box. Rumble was sneezing, his eyes were watering and his ginger fur was standing up in spikes all over him. He was not a pretty sight! But the man kept looking at him.

"Does that kitten belong to anyone?" he asked the vet at last.

"No," said the vet. "He's ill and he doesn't really have an owner. Someone has been looking after him, but she can't do it anymore."

"May I have him?" asked the man. "I live on my own and get very lonely."

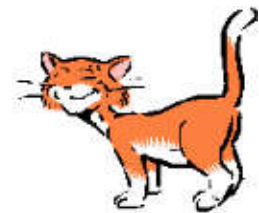
"Of course!" said the vet, sounding surprised. He hesitated and then added, "But there are lots of other kittens needing homes. Kittens much prettier than this one, and not ill!"

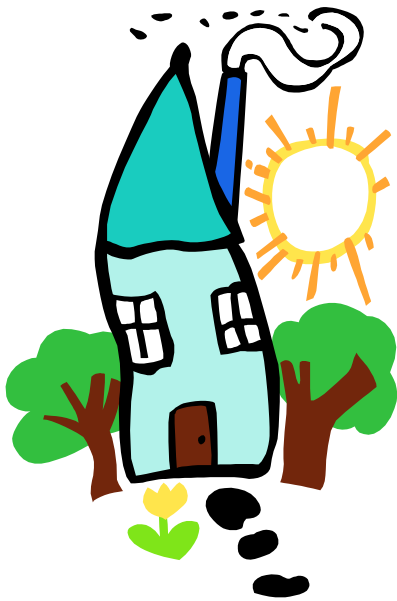
The man tickled Rumble behind his ears. Rumble looked at the man and purred. The sound was so loud for such a skinny little kitten that it made the man laugh, just as it had made Mark laugh when he first heard it.

"This is the kitten I want!" he said firmly.

When the vet told Mum, she could not believe it at first. It seemed like a miracle.

"I think Bahá'u'lláh heard my prayer and sent that man to the vet!" she said, smiling at Mark.





QUIZ

All the answers are in the stories

- 1 What did 'Abdu'l-Bahá give the two gentlemen? (p5)
- 2 What was the name of the Bahá'í class teacher? (p6)
- 3 What happens to the caterpillar the teacher brought into class? (p8)
- 4 What did the little boy do that pleased the old lady? (p9)
- 5 How many years did Ivan work for the farmer? (p10)
- 6 Where did Ivan and his wife go to live in the end? (p11)
- 7 What did the noisy bird want? (p13)
- 8 What is May growing at the children's class? (p15)
- 9 Who do we all really and truly belong to? (p17)
- 10 What makes Celestina a brilliant star? (p18)
- 11 How did the lady find the Bahá'í meeting? (p23)
- 12 Why is Hamish very special? (p24)
- 13 Where did the frog kiss Hamish? (p25)
- 14 What was Gordon really good at? (p26)
- 15 What is the name of the Bahá'í class football team? (p27)
- 16 How is the ant saved from the spider? (p29)
- 17 Where are Max and Milly at the beginning of the story? (p30)
- 18 Can you spot all of these in Mr Big's garden? A bird, squirrel, owl, cat, spider, hedgehog, lizard, butterfly? (p32)
- 19 Why did people in the street stare at Mr Big? (p34)
- 20 What happened to the ginger kitten in the end? (p37)





Strive that your
actions day by
day may be
beautiful
prayers.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

