

Friends for Peace

Extracts from *Animals for Peace* written by Kiser Barnes and illustrated by Nancy Barnes

[The background to this story: Kangaroo, Panther and Spider are important animal government ministers representing the three strongest nations in the rainforest. They have already held one peace conference which failed because they couldn't agree. Would this one be successful? Could Plip, the humble grasscutter, do anything to help? – Editor]

It was a golden summer morning, when the low wind sings and the blood stirs in answer to its song. The meadow was flooded with sunlight. A rainbow spanned the sky. Flowers, swaying happily, flung their perfume at one another. Honey bees hummed songs of thanksgiving. Animals from smaller nations, including Plip, the grasscutter, birds of every sort, squirrels, rabbits, racoons and deers, stood just beyond the meeting, sniffing the wind and listening carefully in all directions. Plip and his parents had taught the animals all they had heard from the Bahá'ís. These teachings had been spread far and wide, until they had reached even Klip, the great eagle.

One morning when Plip had been running across a field, Klip plucked him up with his huge talons. High, high up on the heavens Plip was lifted, until he had fainted. When he came to his senses, he was upon a cliff, looking up at the most magnificent creature he had ever seen. He was big and graceful and beautifully made. Every inch of him gave off such power that without any effort he dominated all who came near him. His shiny white beak was strong. Plip believed that any rock would simply bounce off it. Suddenly he had spread his wings. Each was wide enough for four grasscutters to lie on. The golden feathers glittered. Plip looked into his burning eyes.

“I am Klip,” the eagle had stated, “king of the skies and the rainforest! Are you the one who discovered what is called the ‘root solution to peace’?”

“I am,” Plip had answered, gaining his feet, prepared to fight for his life. But he didn't smell hunger or hatred from the eagle, who was king of all animals, including kangaroos, panthers and spiders.



"Tell me all you know," Klip had commanded.

Plip, a little scared but determined to teach, told the mighty Klip all he had learned of the Bahá'í teachings. The eagle was pleased with the great teachings about unity and friendship. When he returned Plip to the ground, he gave him one of his feathers.

"When you wish to share more Baha'i teachings or if you need help, hold up the feather. Soaring in the heavens, I shall see it and I will come," Klip had promised. Then, he had leaped into the air, his great wings thrusting mightily.

Plip kept the feather with him wherever he went. As he sat with the other animals watching Kangaroo, Panther and Spider he clutched it tightly, praying that this meeting would be different.... The conference began.

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"I know," Kangaroo said, "let's become friends. Our friendship will be an example for our nations. It'll be easy."

"I agree," said Panther.

"Let's get started," said Spider.

Kangaroo, in his straightforward style, said, "Let's state our dislikes so we won't offend one another."

"I'll be first," Spider volunteered. "I don't like anyone to backbite about me. We spiders are sensitive creatures."

"I don't care whether anyone backbites about me," Kangaroo declared, "but I won't allow anyone to step on my tail." In a flash, without thinking, he threw a series of punches into the air.

"Your dislikes are no problem for me," Panther said. "I hate anyone to stare at me. I promise never to offend you, Kangaroo and Spider."

"Thank you. I'll never offend you, Kangaroo and Panther," Spider pledged.

"Thank you. I'll never offend you, Panther and Spider," Kangaroo vowed.

"My friends," Spider said, "our friendship is wonderful. I'm going down by the river-side to think about it. Please, excuse me."

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[But do you know what happened as soon as Spider left? The other animals began to laugh at him, saying he was stupid! Spider was hiding behind a bush and heard what they were saying and became very upset. Then Panther trod on Kangaroo's tail and Spider glared at Panther and they soon forgot their promise to be friends and began to fight one another. – Editor]

The battle grew so intense that kangaroos, panthers, and spiders came from far and near to watch. Even the King Kangaroo, King Panther and King Spider were there!

Before long, all of them were fighting.

The pitiful sight of the animals fighting because of the insincerity of kangaroos, panthers and spiders alarmed Plip. He dashed into the open and waved high Klip's feather.

Suddenly, Klip, with hundreds of great eagles, swooped down. With their mighty wings thrashing and their strong talons prying kangaroos, panthers and spiders apart, they ended the fighting. When all had acknowledged his presence, Klip spoke.

"Listen to the words of the wise grasscutter. Speak," Klip commanded Plip in a sharp voice.

"I speak only what I have heard from the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith," Plip began with humility. "Your disunity shows there must be a real commitment for friendship and a recognition of oneness before peace can be realised. Here are the verses of God:

"... Nothing is impossible to ... God. If you desire with all your heart, friendship with every race on earth, your thoughts, spiritual and positive, will spread; it will become the desire of others, growing stronger and stronger, until it reaches the minds of all men."

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 29)

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"Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path."

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p.15)

As the words of infallible guidance were being repeated, the king of the kangaroos, the king of the panthers, and the king of the spiders, ashamed of their behaviour, embraced one another. For the first time they saw one another as friends. Doves and nightingales, honey bees and butterflies fluttered overhead. Deer and rabbits basked in the warm glow of true friendship that was stirring in every heart.

The great eagle, Klip, took to his wings, his army behind him. All the great-hearted creatures knew there was no turning back for kangaroos, panthers and spiders from the great force in those holy words, showing them how to have love and unity.

Plip cut across the field without any care where his adventure to spread the Bahá'í teachings on world peace might lead.

