



## The Missing Medals

The rainforest was filled with silvery light from the moon. Ranger Tabatha, Toco the toucan, Snapper the crocodile, Blink the frog and Bronte the butterfly stood beside a plump tree. Carved into the trunk was a large door, and scratched onto the door was a name. It read,

*'Spike Crocodile'.*

'That's my Grandpa!' said Snapper who carried a special brown-paper package. 'I can't wait for you to meet him!' He grinned with excitement.

'We're looking forward to meeting him,' said Ranger Tabatha.

'And we're looking forward to the parade,' said Toco.

'Grandpa is too,' said Snapper. 'The annual Rainforest Parade is a special event. A long time ago, when Grandpa was young, he was a soldier in the great Rainforest War.'

'What was the Rainforest War?' said Blink.

'Grandpa told me that a pack of fierce wolves, from another land, tried to take over the rainforest. They moved in, took over people's homes and destroyed their gardens.' Snapper paused with a thoughtful look on his face. 'Grandpa and his mates battled until all the wolves were gone and everyone could live peacefully in the rainforest.'

'We remember their bravery,' said Ranger Tabatha. 'That's why the Rainforest Parade is a special occasion.'

Snapper thumped the front door. **Thump, thump, thump.**

They stood still and waited for Spike to open the door. But nobody came. The door remained shut.

'How strange!' said Snapper. 'He knew we were coming today.'

'Listen!' said Ranger Tabatha. They turned their ears towards the door. From behind the door came shuffles and thuds, followed by a moaning voice, 'Where are they? Oh dear! I'm sure I left them here!'

Snapper knocked again, but Spike still didn't answer the door. Snapper tried the door handle. It turned and the door swung open. He peered into gloomy light and called out, 'It's me, Grandpa, your grandson.'

The shuffles and thuds continued, but Spike did not appear. They heard someone mumble, 'I need some help!'



'Let's go in,' said Snapper. 'We must find out what's wrong!'

Ranger Tabatha, Toco, Blink and Bronte followed Snapper inside. Each face wore a worried expression. Their eyes adjusted to the gloomy light of the living room.

'What a mess!' said Ranger Tabatha.

'What a shambles!' said Blink.

'What's happened here?' said Bronte.

'Is it burglars?' suggested Toco.

'Goodness gracious!' said Bronte. 'I hope it's not burglars!'

The room was a jumble of clutter: open draws, topsy-turvy chairs, bits and bobs everywhere. Spike wasn't in the living room, but the shuffles and thuds were louder than before.

'Spike might be upstairs,' suggested Ranger Tabatha. She glanced towards the stairs which spiralled upwards. 'The burglars might be too!' said Bronte.

Snapper found a cricket bat protruding from the mess. He placed the brown package safely on the ground and gripped the bat in his hands. He raced up the stairs calling, 'Grandpa! Are you there?' The others ran behind him.

They burst into a bedroom. It too was a terrible mess: sheets twisted across the bed, clothes piled on the floor, and books jumbled in every nook. In the middle of the mess stood a lone figure. He held a walking stick in his right hand. His left hand pulled items from an open draw.

It was Spike. There weren't any burglars, only one wrinkled crocodile. Spike didn't notice the people in his bedroom. He continued to rummage inside the draw.

***Shuffle, shuffle, shuffle. Thud, thud, thud.***

He pulled out a pencil case, unzipped it and tossed it over his shoulder. A rainbow of coloured pencils scattered across the bedroom. Spike muttered to himself, 'They're here somewhere! I know they are!'

Toco watched in amazement as an alarm clock flew through the air, followed by a toothbrush and a polka dot necktie. They landed higgledy-piggledy on the bed.

'Grandpa!' cried Snapper. 'It's me!' Spike's hand paused mid-air at the sound of his grandson's voice. The old crocodile turned around and looked at his grandson. 'Hello, my boy,' he said. 'You've come just in time to help me. They're missing!'

'What's missing?' asked Ranger Tabatha. 'I've been burgled,' said Spike with a wrinkled brow.



‘So there are burglars!’ said Bronte. ‘They’re gone!’, said Spike with a tear in his eye.

Snapper dropped the cricket bat and placed a gentle hand on his Grandpa’s shoulder. ‘What’s missing, Grandpa?’ he said softly.

‘My medals are gone. I received them for my service in the Rainforest War,’ said Spike.

Ranger Tabatha, Blink, Toco and Bronte all gasped when they heard the medals were missing. But Snapper didn’t. Snapper laughed.

‘Wait there, Grandpa,’ he said. ‘You haven’t been burgled. I have a special surprise.’ Snapper ran down the stairs. The others felt curious and wondered about the surprise.

In less than a minute, Snapper returned, brown paper package in hand. He held it out to Spike. ‘This is for you, Grandpa.’ Spike hands trembled as he took hold of the parcel and unwrapped the crinkly paper.

‘Oh!’ he exclaimed. ‘You’ve found them.’ Spike held a small box in his hands. ‘The medals weren’t missing, Grandpa. I borrowed them. Open the box.’

Spike opened the lid and started to smile. ‘Your medals had become dull. They needed a polish to make them shine again,’ said Snapper. ‘That’s why I borrowed them. I wanted to make them shiny as a surprise for you.’

Spike placed an arm around his grandson’s shoulders. ‘A fine job you’ve done, my boy, a fine job.’

Everyone crowded around to admire the gleaming medals. They also admired an old photo. It was a picture of a young Spike, handsome in his soldier’s uniform. Spike still owned that crisp, green uniform. He wore it now.

Snapper pinned the medals to his Grandpa’s chest. They were ready for the Rainforest Parade. Dawn began to creep through the rainforest. Shadows disappeared as the sun climbed higher into the sky. The rainforest creatures gathered in a silent crowd.

Ranger Tabatha put a bugle to her lips. Its trumpeting call rang throughout the rainforest.

The Parade began. Soldiers marched in neat rows. Some had grey hair, some had no hair, and some were even in wheel chairs. But everyone was glad to see them. The rainforest was a peaceful place to live because of those soldiers. They fought the wolves, and the wolves went away.

‘There’s Spike!’ said Bronte. Snapper looked over. His chest bulged with pride. That was his Grandpa, and his Grandpa was a hero!

The medals glistened in the sunshine. Everyone cheered!