



The Possum Family

Everyone from the rainforest was invited to the picnic. Sunlight filtered through the trees, making the rainforest warm and bright. The day was perfect.

Snapper the crocodile was staying in a tree house. He finished packing a food hamper to share with friends. There were vegemite sandwiches, feather-light lamingtons and ripe bananas. Snapper packed them carefully into the hamper, covered them with a cloth and climbed down the tree house ladder.

Snapper was going to meet Ranger Tabatha, Bronte the butterfly, Blink the frog and Toco the toucan. The rainforest rustled and hummed with sounds of folk getting ready for the picnic. Claws scratched, scales slithered and paws scurried about with excitement.

‘Hello Snapper!’ a voice called from behind. ‘Ready for the picnic?’ Snapper turned around. There was Ranger Tabatha, Bronte, Blink and Toco; their arms laden with bulging picnic hampers. It was going to be a feast.

‘Silly baby possums!’ a voice called in the distance. ‘Look at your fur!’

‘Leave my family alone!’ cried a second voice.

Ranger Tabatha, Snapper, Bronte, Blink and Toco stopped at the sound of the voices. Each of them looked concerned. ‘I think we need to investigate,’ said Ranger Tabatha. ‘Sounds like help is needed.’ They all nodded in agreement and began to run towards the voices.

A young dingo sat below a large tree. His teeth snarled into a cheeky grin. A grey possum peered down from a hollow in the wood. Her gleaming eyes looked fierce. Two tiny white faces peeked from behind her furry tail. Tears dripped down their cheeks.

‘Silly baby possums! Look at your fur! Did you roll in flour?’ the dingo said with a chuckle. ‘Or did you fall into a pot of white paint?’

Loud sobs erupted from the baby possums. ‘Leave my babies alone!’ cried the big grey possum again.

‘Excuse me,’ said Ranger Tabatha. She stood with her hands on her hips. She recognised the small dingo. ‘What’s going on, Ringo?’

The cheeky grin vanished as surprise covered the dingo’s face. His tail drooped with shame at the sight of Ranger Tabatha. He didn’t want her to think badly of him. Ringo hadn’t really meant to be unkind, he only wanted to tease. With a whimper in his throat, he raced away and didn’t look back.

‘Thank you,’ said mother possum with a sigh of relief. ‘We’ve just moved to the rainforest.’ She rested a paw on each crying baby. ‘The dingo was teasing my joeys



because they aren't grey like most possums.'

The possum babies wriggled about until they nestled comfortably against their mother. They rubbed their eyes into her fur to dry their tears. Everyone could see how special the babies were. They were white and fluffy like a cloud in the sky, and their eyes shone with a reddish tinge.

'They're albino, aren't they?' asked Ranger Tabatha. Mother possum nodded. 'My little joeys have always had white fur.'

'They're beautiful!' said Snapper. 'Cute!' said Toco. 'Adorable!' said Blink. Smiles appeared on the tiny faces.

'Thank you,' squeaked one possum. 'Will you be our friends? My name's Blossom.'

'And I'm Nut,' said the other baby.

'And my name's Honey,' said the mother.

'We'd love to be your friends,' said Ranger Tabatha.

'Yes, we would!' chorused everyone else.

'Would you like to join us for a picnic?' asked Snapper. 'Everyone who lives in the rainforest is invited.' Blossom and Nut squealed with joy.

'We'd love to,' said Honey. 'But because we've just moved in, we don't have any picnic food.'

'No worries,' said Ranger Tabatha. 'We have more than enough food to go around.'

Blossom and Nut jiggled up and down, as Honey said to their new friends, 'You're all very kind.' The possums climbed down the tree trunk. Blossom rode on Snapper's shoulder, while Nut piggybacked on Blink. They walked to a large clearing where all the rainforest folk were spreading out picnic rugs. What a feast!

Blossom and Nut's eyes goggled at the sight of so much food. As well as Snapper's delicious food, plates bulged with meat pies, sausage rolls, quiche, damper, fairy bread, Pavlova, Anzac biscuits and Macadamia nuts. Jugs brimmed with lemonade, raspberry cordial and billy tea.

Everyone tucked into the banquet. Sounds of friendly chatter and laughter filled the air. Every face beamed with happiness. Except for one.

A young dingo sat by himself at the edge of the clearing. His head drooped low to the ground. Every so often he glanced towards the picnic rugs, and licked his lips.

Snapper refused to look at him. So did Bronte, Blink and Toco. Ringo had been very mean to the possums. He didn't deserve to be part of the picnic. 'Oh, dear!' gasped Honey. 'I didn't realise.' She stared long and hard at Ringo.



Although they didn't want to, every eye focussed upon the dingo. They all gasped when they realised how scrawny he was. Twigs and prickles stuck to scruffy fur, and his tummy rumbled and grumbled with hunger. Nobody had noticed before; they'd been more worried about the possums. Did anyone take care of the young dingo?

'Where are your parents?' Ranger Tabatha called to him. Ringo lifted a sad head, 'Don't have any now. They left me all alone.' He hung his head down low again.

'The poor dear,' murmured Honey. 'No wonder he doesn't know how to behave nicely. He's just a baby himself, and needs someone to care for him.'

Blossom and Nut whispered to each other. Before anyone could stop them, Blossom grabbed a sausage roll and Nut snatched a piece of fairy bread. They scampered over to the dingo. Nut dropped the sausage roll at Ringo's paws; Blossom dropped the fairy bread.

The dingo muttered, 'I don't deserve your kindness.'

'We'd like to be your friends,' squeaked Blossom and Nut.

Ringo gazed at the baby possums for a long time. 'Thank you...friends,' he finally said. With hungry gulps he swallowed the food. The picnic continued throughout the afternoon. Everyone ate until they were full, including Ringo.

They all played hide'n'seek through the trees, and sang songs until the sun disappeared and stars speckled the sky.

'I have an announcement,' said Honey at the end of the day. Ranger Tabatha gathered everyone around so they could listen.

'I've talked with my children, and we all agree,' Honey said. 'Ringo needs someone to care for him. I'm adopting him. Ringo will be part of the Possum family.' Blossom and Nut bounced with happiness. Ringo wagged his tail.

Ranger Tabatha, Snapper, Bronte, Blink and Toco walked home with the Possum family. They helped to make a bed with fern fronds for the dingo at the base of the Possum tree. Ringo snuggled into his new bed.

'I'm sorry, Blossom and Nut, for teasing you,' whispered Ringo. 'I just wanted to be your friend. I think you're both cute.' Blossom and Nut gave their new brother a kiss goodnight, and scampered up the trunk to their own bed.