

Girls in Grass Huts



being the story

of how a ferocious lion was tamed and became a gentleman.

19 March 2006 - Princess Katie's Birthday

by
Grandad

About This Story:

This was a "quickie", I'm afraid, to meet the deadline for Katie's birthday and it has little of the flair of some of the other stories. The girls change colour here, too.- the only time I've done that. The story is full of cringe worthy stereotypes and clichés including restless natives and cheeky monkeys. I had been reading a biography of Henry Morton Stanley whose exploration of East Africa and the Congo basin often depended on assistance from Arab slavers operating in the area for the Sultan of Zanzibar - hence the interest in the Arab villains. The story reads fairly well aloud

I used the comic sans font in the original and I have left it here. The daffy illustrations are also left in place.

Chapter 1: The Jungle Princesses

Once upon a time there lived in the jungles of Africa a ferocious lion. His name was Leo. He had the most beautiful shaggy mane of sandy coloured hair, a fine pair of whiskers, sharp, powerful claws and the most splendid teeth. His eyes were fiery and proud and when he curled his lip, he looked like the most proud and powerful lion you could imagine. He truly was the King of the Jungle.

Now this lion had not always been ferocious; as a cub he had a remarkably sweet nature and his mother was very fond of him and loved him more than any of the other cubs in the litter. She would give him a gentlelick with her rough tongue and if she caught a zebra or a gnu, mother lioness made sure that Leo always got a juicy steak to eat. The other cubs in the litter were fine, handsome fellows to be sure but mother lioness always thought that Leo was the sweetest.

As he grew older, his brothers and sisters were jealous of him and when their mother was not looking or away hunting a wildebeest for dinner, they took every chance they could to bully and hurt him. They called him spiteful names. Leo would try to wrestle back as lion cubs do, but there were two little lions and three lionesses in the litter and they all ganged up on Leo. Mother lioness would come back from hunting and Leo would have a black eye or a cut muzzle and his mother would gently nudge and lick him clean. Leo promised that when he grew up, he would not take bullying from anyone. By the time he grew to be a bigger lion, he was as much a bully as his sisters and brothers and now it was their turns to get black eyes.

You see, Leo had become a bully himself. He had to be so tough when he was a little cub that when he was a big adult lion he had lost his lovely gentle nature. No one would live with him. He didn't have any friends and he was always bad tempered. When he was grumpy, he roared a terrible roar and all the animals in the jungle knew that Leo was about. He was a great danger to everyone because he was so savage. The people who lived near the jungle didn't want to go into the forest any more in case they met up with Leo. He really was a ferocious lion.



Leo with his Mother, the Lioness.

Mothers who had naughty children would say, "Just you watch - I will put you outside tonight and the ferocious lion will eat you." Of course when they heard that the naughty boys and girls would be very good. From time to time the King who ruled over that country would think about sending a band of brave hunters to the forest to kill the lion but no one was brave enough to go and do that and Leo mostly lived a lonely, sad and solitary life.

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Princess Katie [left] and Princess Emily - the beautiful princesses

Now in a grass hut in a village near the jungle there lived two little girls who were princesses. Their names were Princess Katie and Princess Emily. Their father was a mighty hunter and wise man; their mother was a beautiful queen. The princesses were good sorts of girls with glossy black skin, wonderfully white teeth and lovely long limbs - just right for all the sports and games that were popular in the village. Princess Katie was brave and elegant. She could throw a spear further than any boy and she could swim across the rivers faster even than the crocodiles. She could wrestle a hippopotamus and climb trees better than any monkey. Princess Emily was a quieter, more genteel kind of maiden but she could run and wrestle, climb, swim and throw almost as well as her sister. Both of them could sing songs and do dances, paint pictures and use a computer. They were very clever girls indeed.



Princess Emily's and Princess Katie's Grass Hut in the Jungle

The girls had lots of jobs to do around the village, of course. They had to herd the goats and feed the chickens and make bread for the beautiful queen and the brave king. They also played every day in the forest. They loved the tall trees and the beautiful ferns and plants. They loved to gather mushrooms to eat and bananas and mangoes and pineapples and custard apples. They knew where all the forest animals had their homes especially the mighty python snakes, the giant spiders and the gentle monkeys. All the forest animals were their friends and Princess Katie and Princess Emily liked nothing more than playing in the forest and seeing all their friends.

Of course they were careful with some of the animals. The crocodiles were never much fun to play with and although Princess Emily would tickle their tummies and make them giggle she couldn't help thinking what nice handbags and shoes they would make. I think that the crocodiles more or less guessed this and were always careful to go for a swim if Emily wanted to play with them on the bank. They were wise to be careful.

Their father the King warned the girls that of all the animals in the forest, the one they had to be most careful of was Leo the Lion. There were other good sorts of lions, of course, but Leo was especially dangerous and ferocious. If they heard him coming, they should run home as quickly as they could. Katie and Emily always did what their father and mother said - they were very good girls - but they hadn't met a forest animal they didn't like and I think that they hoped that one day they would make friends with Leo.



Ms Gorilla, one of Princess Emily's Particular Friends in the Jungle

One sunny day the girls had finished all their jobs by afternoon tea time and they asked the Queen if they could go into the jungle to see if Mother Python's relations from Australia had arrived for their holidays. [This was to be an exciting time for everyone in the jungle; the python family was very large and they had cousins all over the jungles of the Amazon and New Guinea.] Mother warned them again about Leo and made them promise that if they heard his roar they would come straight home.

Their journey took them across the big river in a canoe and then hiking into the hills. Before too long, the girls heard what they thought was a waterfall up ahead. Imagine their surprise when they came around a bend in the deep trees to find an enormous lion caught fast in a terrible trap. A cruel net had dropped out of the trees and as the lion struggled, he had managed to wrap the net tightly around him. The waterfall the girls had heard was actually the lion howling with rage and fear.

Now I think that most little girls [and all little girls brought up in the quiet of Australia] would have been terrified at this point and wanted to run away. Princess Katie and Princess Emily both knew, I think, that this was Leo - the terrible Leo - and that they should run back to their boat as quickly as they could. Somehow, however, neither Princess Katie nor Princess Emily could do this. I think if you had heard the sadness in that poor lion's cry you would have wanted to help too.

When Leo saw the girls, he made the saddest cry of all. And that's when Katie and Emily heard another sound - an even more terrible sound - than the enraged lion.



The Brave Hunter With His Gun

There were drums, and trumpets and men shouting. The girls had heard these sounds many times. It was the hunters coming through the jungle. It must be their trap that had caught poor Leo and when he was caught, only terrible things would happen. Poor Leo would be put in a zoo, sold to a circus or worst of all, shot and taken to the hunter's home as a lion skin!

Princess Emily began to cry. She hated the hunters and even though it was Leo in the trap, no animal should be hurt in that way. The girls didn't discuss what to do for a moment; there was no time for talking. They ran forward and began to pull at the cruel ropes of the net. Leo did his best to help but he was so frightened himself that I think it would have been better if he had done nothing at all except stay still. The sound of the drums and the trumpets came closer and closer. The net was being loosened by just a little at a time; finally, when it seemed that the hunters would come through the trees into the clearing, the last rope gave way and Leo could leap out and shake his poor legs to make sure that nothing was hurt.

And now Leo did an extraordinary thing. He reached his wonderful head and all its splendid whiskers down and growled for the girls to clamber up on to his shoulders. Katie went first and Emily came on behind. "Hang on to my mane!" he called with a growl and the girls wrapped their long black fingers in his beautiful golden mane and hung on while Leo burst out like a spring, dashing away from the clearing just as the first of the hunters arrived to see his mighty tail disappearing into the jungle path.



Leo's noble face and beautiful mane.

The girls had had some wonderful rides in their lives: they had once crossed the mountains on the back of an elephant and had come down a waterfall in a canoe during a flood. But nothing was half as much fun as flying through the

jungle on the back of Leo. His mighty legs took a couple of metres with every leap. It was like riding on a golden thunderstorm and even though they hung on grimly with their hands in Leo's fur, it seemed at every moment that they might come off and tumble into the trees. It was frightening but it was so much fun!

The girls forgot all about their father's warning. And to be truthful, Leo forgot all about being ferocious and grumpy. You see, Princess Emily and Princess Katie were the only creatures to be kind to him since he was a little cub. Their kindness had saved him from the hunters and from the terrible fate of a cage in the zoo or the circus - or even worse, a rug on the floor of some proud hunter. Once they had reached the river and the girls' canoe with the hunters miles behind them, Leo could stop and pant and the girls could slide off his golden back to lie between his enormous paws. He bent down and gave them a lick with his tongue - the kind of lick he used to give to his mother such a long time ago.

What a lot those Princesses had to tell their mother the Queen and their father the King when they came home to the grass hut that night. At first, Mother and Father didn't believe them. It seemed such a puzzling story. Perhaps they had rescued a lion from the hunters but it can't have been Leo. Leo would have gobbled them up or roared at them in rage. It took all their powers to persuade the King and Queen to go back to the jungle the next day with half the village to see for themselves. Some of the villagers took their spears with them just in case Leo was dangerous still. They all crossed the river and trekked into the hills and when they found Leo, he growled to see the spears. It was a scary moment until the girls ran forward and gave Leo a mighty hug. Then, all the fear seemed to vanish away and Mother and Father ran forward too. Everyone was cheering and happy. Leo was no longer a ferocious lion; he was noble, and cheerful and brave.

There were many adventures in the jungle in the days after that. Leo and the Princesses loved to play together. The best game of all was racing through the jungle with the girls clinging to his back. They were always wary of hunters but now that Leo was no longer dangerous and grumpy, the monkeys who lived in the treetops and saw everything would call ahead to warn everyone of danger. Leo came to love all the animals but his favourite friends were Princess Katie and Princess Emily because they were his first friends.



One of Leo's Unfortunate Cousins, Albert.

Chapter 2: Danger in the Forest

Princess Katie and Princess Emily always enjoyed visiting their friend, Leo, in the heart of the jungle. Now that Leo had some friends he was a different sort of lion completely and the other animals in the jungle were very pleased to have him there. He regularly came to have a light lunch of cake and sandwiches with the girls at the grass hut; today he had invited the girls to visit him. Katie and Emily had seen Leo's idea of a nice lunch and they sensibly decided to bring their own sandwiches just in case Leo offered them a raw zebra steak or the hind leg of a gnu.

They paddled their canoe across the wide river and pulled into the little sandy beach on the wide bend. The crocodiles swam out to meet them, waving their mighty tails to say hello. When they saw that it was Emily in the canoe with her sister, all but the bravest crocodiles went scooting away through the river water. The jungle was strangely quiet as they climbed into the hills to the special cave where Leo lived. There were no monkeys chattering in the trees and calling to the girls. The birds seem to have become strangely quiet as well. If the girls hadn't been so excited about their lunch they might have noticed all of this but the girls stepped lively along without a thought for the terrible time ahead of them.

You see, there were many dangers in the jungle- even for brave and strong little girls like Princess Katie and Princess Emily. There were poisonous snakes and spiders; there were crocodiles and centipedes and nasty biting ants. None of these things worried the girls very much: they liked the snakes and the crocodiles and the spiders were always happy to spin their webs off the main path so that they didn't bother anyone.

The most dangerous things in the forest, of course, were people. From the East, Arab slavers would sometimes come, burning homes and villages, capturing everyone and taking them away in chains and ropes all the way to Zanzibar. The King [the girls' brave father] did everything he could to protect his people. There was a high thorn fence around the village and at night there were men watching to see that there was no one threatening the peace and security of the families. But the danger was always there.



Cruel Arab slavers at work in Africa

If the girls had been more alert as they came through the jungle, they might have noticed that all of the animals had taken shelter high in the trees or deep in the bushes. The girls stopped for a moment in one clearing with the deep jungle all around them. Princess Emily was suddenly anxious.

"Katie, why aren't the birds calling? Why aren't the monkeys ..."

At that moment there was a terrible whoosh and a thud and down on top of the girls fell a heavy rope net. It knocked them to the ground and held them there; they struggled and pushed but soon there was more than the net to worry about. All around them were dark, sneering men wearing long white clothes and turbans. They had spears and they laughed cruelly when the poor girls tried to struggle against the weight of the net. Finally the net was hauled away and the girls were seized by strong hands and pulled upright.

The girls struggled to their feet. They were standing in front of a large, lubberly boy with a piggy face. He was wearing a grubby white jellebah, a high, red turban and a matching red coat that came down to the floor. On his fat fingers were several big rings including one with an enormous ruby. He thought that he looked grand and important but Katie always said afterwards that she knew him straight away to be a bully and a coward.

"Well look at the little birds our fine net has caught," said the fat boy. "I believe that this is Princess Emily and Princess Katie. I hoped that I would capture you here in the forest. Ever since your father put the high thorn hedge around the village it has been hard to catch slaves at night. My good friend, Cheeky the Monkey, told me that little girls sometimes come this way."



Poor Cheeky, Katie and Emily's friend.

Princess Katie and Princess Emily couldn't believe that their friend, Cheeky, had told this wicked fellow anything like this but they looked across and saw poor Cheeky tied to a tree. His back and bottom were cut and bleeding; the wicked slavers had caught him and then beaten him until he told them about the forest folk and whom they might capture.

Katie and Emily were brave little girls but they were frightened now. If they didn't escape soon, they would be taken away for sure. But how to get away? Emily watched the fat boy carefully; sooner or later he would come into striking distance.

"I suppose you are wondering who has been clever enough to catch you?" the fat boy asked with a smirk. "Well let me tell you. My name is Dudley Dursley and I am the Vizier of the His Majesty Mustapha Scratch, the Sultan of Zanzibar. The Sultan has given me this beautiful gold and ruby ring to show everyone that I am his Vizier. The Sultan lives in a beautiful palace by the sea. He has one hundred and fifty wives and seventy five concubines in his harem. They are served by twenty black eunuchs and twenty white eunuchs who bring them drinks of sherbet and dainty sandwiches for lunch. And, my dears, it will be your honour to serve the Sultan and work in his court as a slave."

"Let us go!" yelled Princess Katie. "If my father the King hears about this, you'll all of you be caught and punished. He hates slavers."

"Yes," said Princess Emily. "You better let us go now or I'll bash you up."

"Why, my pretty," said the awful Vizier, "you'll need better manners if you're going to serve the Sultan. He has commissioned me to find him two pretty girls for the palace. Now you, Miss Katie, can work in the harem. Your job will be to paint the toenails of the wives and concubines of the harem every day! And you, Princess Emily with your bad manners and nasty mouth, will be the dhobi wallah in the harem. Every day you will collect the washing and you will be personally responsible for washing the Sultan's turban, the ladies' knickers and the eunuch's smalls. And mind that you do them well or .."

The fat Vizier didn't finish the sentence. Emily had been waiting patiently for the fat fool to wander closer to her as he made his nasty speech and when he was just in range, Emily aimed the hardest kick she could.

It caught the Vizier hard and low; he howled in anguish and doubled over with a groan.

"Now!" cried Emily.

The two girls lunged away from the hands that held them and dashed forward as fast as they could. I think that they would have got clear away, too, but for their kindness. They were dashing from the clearing into the jungle when Cheeky called out to them in a terribly sad voice, "Please, Katie and Emily. Don't leave me here with these wicked men!"

"Emily, we can't leave him. You run that way and I'll try to come back while they are chasing you," said Katie.

It almost worked but Cheeky was tied up too tightly and by the time Katie had loosened his ropes, they had all been caught. The cruel men dragged Katie and Emily back and Dudley made a great noise and ordered them all to be tied to the tree.

Now the cruel bully had the poor girls at his mercy and he made it very warm for poor Princess Emmy, telling her how mean some of the harem ladies were and how hard she would have to work. Dudley Dursley wanted Emily to cry but Emily wouldn't do that for anything. All she could think about was getting another kick at the bully but even though he were vain and silly he was careful enough to stay at a safe distance from Emmy's feet.

There was no lunch for the girls; the wicked slavers took their sandwiches and shared them among themselves. Cheeky, Katie and Emily were at last given a cup of water, then they were untied from the tree and tied together in a line. With the wicked Vizier leading the way, the party set off through the jungle towards the East. Along the way in the afternoon, the slavers added other people to the line of slaves. There were Ben and Jay, Katie and Emily's good friends from the next village. They had been caught when they were walking through the jungle on their way to have a swim. The wicked Vizier had told them that Ben was going to clean the Sultan's monkey cage and Jay was needed to shampoo the Sultan's elephants. It seemed a terrible fate for two little boys who wanted to be mighty warriors when they grew up. Everyone was sad and fearful. Cheeky was the saddest of all because the girls would have got clear away if he hadn't called them back.

Chapter 2: The Crocodile's Dinner

At last they stopped for dinner and to set up camp for the night. Many times during the afternoon Emily had been sure that she could hear drums in the distance; the girls were waiting for the drums to warn everyone that there were slavers about and perhaps even calling people together to rescue them but perhaps it was only the wind in the trees after all. Katie had been sure that once or twice she had caught a glimpse of a wonderful golden tail waving above a fallen tree trunk or in a thicket of tree ferns. No one else saw or mentioned it and her heart sunk. By the times they stopped, the girls and the boys were tired and heartbroken.

There was no dinner for them, either. Ben and Jay were untied and made to light a fire to brew the horrible Vizier a cup of tea but the children weren't offered anything. At last one of the slavers came over and gave each of them some water but as they were not untied, they had to kneel and lap the water up like a dog.

"I hate these horrible people," said Emily. "If they think I'm going to wash a lot of knickers every day, they're wrong."

"What about me?" said Princess Katie. "I have to polish all those toe nails. I'd rather die!"

"No you wouldn't, Katie," said Emily. "We're going to escape from the ugly Vizier and his miserable Arabs - and we're going to take Cheeky with us, and Ben and Jay! But we've got to have a plan. There must be something we can do. If only I'd kicked that Dudley Dursley really, really hard. Maybe we could have got away with Cheeky that time."

They all agreed that they had to do something but tied up to the tree, there was really nothing they could do. They were tied with leather rope and it was very strong. The Arabs were having their own party and drinking lots of beer. Finally the fire burned down and the girls could hear the slavers sleeping. Dudley Dursley was snoring loudly. It was the saddest time imaginable. Even though they were very uncomfortable, the girls slept for just a little while.

During the night, when the jungle was its blackest and the horrible thought of going off to Zanzibar to paint the toenails of ladies of the harem seemed too awful to think about, I think Katie had a little cry. She didn't want the horrible Vizier to see her cry and so she was very quiet but she cried all the same. She was uncomfortable tied to the tree and it seemed that their situation was just hopeless. They knew that Mummy and Daddy would try to rescue them - and they knew how bold and clever Mummy and Daddy were. Still, it all seemed dismal.



The natives in the jungle were always restless when the Arab slavers were about.

Then Katie felt Emmy squeeze her hand. "Don't cry, Katie", said Emily quietly. "I know it seems awful but we'll get out of this. And we'll rescue Ben and Jay - and Cheeky too. If that fat Vizier thinks that I'm going to be the dhobi wallah for a bunch of harem girls he's got another thing coming."

But all the same, Emmy had a little weep too and the girls held hands in the dark. And then a most remarkable thing happened. Katie could feel something warm and deep on her neck. Then she felt whiskers brush her face and then a most delicious slurpy lick. Then suddenly Emily could feel

the same. It only lasted for a moment and then it was gone. Both the girls knew deep down - and you must know too - that they were sure to be rescued. There were no more tears. Their darling friend, Leo, had found them and if he couldn't rescue them just at that moment, it wouldn't be long before he did.

The jungle drums started early in the morning, soon after Leo had come by to give them a reassuring but silent kiss. The drums were far away; then they were very close. There were other sounds as well. It was just getting light when they heard, far away, the deep, wonderful roar of a lion. He too seemed to be far away in the hills. But then there was an answering roar in the opposite direction. Then a roar quite close as if the lion were just around the corner. The drums became louder and more insistent.

The Arabs were really quite alarmed by all this noise. Dudley Dursley came waddling over in his pyjamas looking a little less confident than he had the night before. He was carrying a camel cane and trying to look ferocious. Emily couldn't resist saying sweetly, "Sir, I have lived in the jungle all my life. I know what the drums are saying."

"Well then, Princess Emily, if you tell me I will give you some bananas for breakfast," said the Vizier. He was a good deal more frightened than he wanted to show.

"Thank you, sir," said Emily sweetly. "Let me listen until the message is finished and I will tell you exactly what it says."

Dudley here gave orders for all the poor prisoners to be released from their trees and to stand together. Emily listened intently, then she said: "Here is the message from the drums. They say: A fat fool from Zanzibar has captured the princesses and that their father the king and queen are planning to feed this nasty Arab to the hyenas for dinner."

Katie, Ben, Jay and Cheeky -even though they were feeling miserable and frightened - thought that this was the best joke and the bravest joke that Emily had ever told. Dudley Dursley turned purple in the face and sprang at Emily with the camel cane. He would have beaten her terribly at that moment if he hadn't been startled by the loud, ferocious roaring of the lions from every direction at once. Dudley dropped the cane in fright and ordered the other Arabs to tie the children up and prepare to leave immediately.

"And as for you, Princess Emily," said the vizier, "When I get you to Zanzibar, I'm going to beat you so hard you'll wish you never met the great Vizier, Dudley Dursley!"

"You don't have to take me to Zanzibar for that," said Emily, "I already wish I'd never met you or your awful, bullying soldiers."

It was a frightened group of Arabs who set out with their prisoners all tied together. They were looking intently deep into the jungle and no one wanted to go last in the procession. Only the prisoners stepped out with confidence now.

You see, Emily was almost right about the drums. This is what the message really was: "Don't give up hope, boys and girls. Help is on its way. When we try to rescue you, run as fast as you can for the river." Ben and Jay knew what the message was; so did Katie and Emily. And as the drums continued and the roaring of the lions went on and on, their hopes rose wonderfully.

There had been six Arab slavers including Dudley. The first one disappeared about ten minutes after they set off. He was a horrible bully and used his rifle to push and shove the children forward. There was a very narrow path through some tall mahogany trees and the last of the Arabs never finished the journey through the trees. There was a strangled cry - and then a deep, lion's roar and then silence.

Ten minutes later, Katie called out to the Vizier who was leading the group that their guard seemed to have disappeared. Dudley made them stop. He was shaking with anger and fear and told one of the other Arabs to go back and find out what had happened to his companion. He didn't want to go and Dudley had to get the camel cane and chase him down the path a little. You can imagine how frightened the four Arabs left with the group were when they heard another strangled cry and then a lion's roar.

"Mr Vizier" said Katie sweetly, "Why don't you just let Ben and Jay and Cheeky and I go and you can run for your life? I'm sure the jungle people will be pleased to see you far away."



Leo's brother, Sandy, in angry mood.

Dudley roared with anger and used the camel cane to make the children start to move as quickly as they could through the jungle. The next Arab disappeared half an hour later. Dudley hadn't heard the lion's roar for a little while and he was beginning to think that he was clever and brave and had escaped the stupid jungle folk. One of the soldiers had been scouting for the trail ahead and Dudley, coming up a little hill, found the soldier's rifle and his turban lying on the jungle path. They also heard the unmistakable roar of the lion very, very close.

The other Arabs - only two of them now - dropped everything and ran away as fast as they could, leaving Dudley and the children alone in the forest. They had had enough of Dudley's bullying ways and they weren't going to be eaten by a lion just so their Vizier could take his prisoners all the way to Zanzibar. Dudley was now thoroughly terrified. He pleaded with the girls to spare him. He was still hoping that somehow he could cross the river and get clear away. And certainly, in the distance, they could all hear the unmistakable sounds of the river.

Dudley now did a very cowardly and nasty thing. He took the chain on which all his prisoners were tied and attached it to a tree so no one could run away. Then he said in as mean a voice as he could, "I'm leaving you here for the lions to eat. They seem very ferocious in this area and while they are eating you, I will get clean away. I have a canoe at the river and before you are all

eaten, I will be safe on the other side of the river. And I hope that the lions eat you last of all, Miss Emily, as a punishment for kicking me yesterday."

Dudley took his rifle and headed off for the river. Once he had picked up the gun, the children fell silent because he might have turned the rifle on the poor children; he was frightened enough to do anything. Emily was disappointed because she had a fair few wise cracks of her own to make about fat boys who come into the jungle to commit mischief but they had to be left unsaid. The children gave a shout of excitement because they knew that the lions were not interested in them; in just a little while someone would come to rescue them. In fact, Katie had almost managed to get her wrist though the chain when the most extraordinary of all the amazing things that had happened since their capture broke through the bush.

Not one but six wonderful, golden lions came bounding into the clearing and up to their tree. Leading the group was Leo - and beside him were his two brave brothers and three ferocious sisters. They were all the lions that had been born with Leo and when he called to them to help, they came- brave and determined to do their best. The children cheered and cheered; the lions roared and roared. The noise was deafening. A moment later, Mummy and Daddy burst through the bushes as well and soon the nasty chains were gone and Katie and Emily, Ben and Jay and Cheeky were hugging everyone and crying with joy.

Daddy, the Jungle King, told them that while the Vizier was still at large no one in the jungle was safe and so everyone hurried towards the river to try to catch him. Each lion took a child on his or her shoulders and through the jungle they bounded, Katie going first on Leo followed by Emily on Leo's beautiful sister, Rosebud.

At the river bank, the lions and children and King and Queen saw an amazing sight. The Vizier has jumped in his canoe and had paddled out into the stream. Once he was away, he became his usual awful self and had begun firing shots from his rifle back at the bank. Some monkeys who had come down to help rescue Cheeky had gone scrambling away in terror. When Dudley saw the lions, he shouted at the girls that he would be back to capture them and then he took his rifle and aimed it straight at Leo.

Before the shot came, however, there was a loud splash and a mighty thrashing in the water. The crocodiles who lived on the river bank had seen

everything and when they saw the horrid rifle and heard the first shots they were into the water silently. Emily said afterwards that she would never again think about handbags and shoes when she saw the mighty crocodiles on the river bank and she could tickle them now and play with them in a way that didn't frighten them at all.

What a lot happened that afternoon. Ben and Jay were united with their own mother and father who were very pleased indeed to have them home. Everyone was invited to a big jungle feast and everyone came except the lions and the crocodiles who said that they'd had quite enough to eat and would be much happier going home for a snooze. There were wonderful bananas for the monkeys as well as pineapples and mangoes. The girls and boys had had no lunch, dinner or breakfast so they were very pleased to eat the good Queen's pizza as quickly as it could come out of the camp oven. The girls had an enormous cuddle with Leo and his brothers and sisters before they headed home to the mountain to their den in a cave. Leo reminded them that the girls had once rescued him from the hunters; this was just his kind favour in return.

When the party was over, it was time for the biggest cuddle of all - with Mummy and Daddy. The King and Queen were so proud of their brave girls who had shown themselves true princesses in the time of danger.

Weeks later, one of the crocodiles told the girls that he had had a bad case of indigestion and showed them a lovely gold and ruby ring that he had coughed up. The girls wanted to keep it but Daddy had a better idea. He sent the ring with a note to the Sultan of Zanzibar, saying that the jungle animals [particularly the lions and crocodiles] had quite enjoyed the visit of the Vizier and his Arab slavers and if the Sultan wanted to send any more people to trouble the quiet of the jungle, could he please send more fat ones like the Vizier because they tasted best. The Sultan never did get his slaves to shampoo his elephants, to clean his monkey cage, to paint the toe nails of the harem girls or to wash the eunuch's knickers. The jungle was quiet and tranquil for a very long time and the good king and queen liked it that way - although Princess Katie and Princess Emily rather liked an adventure every now and then.

