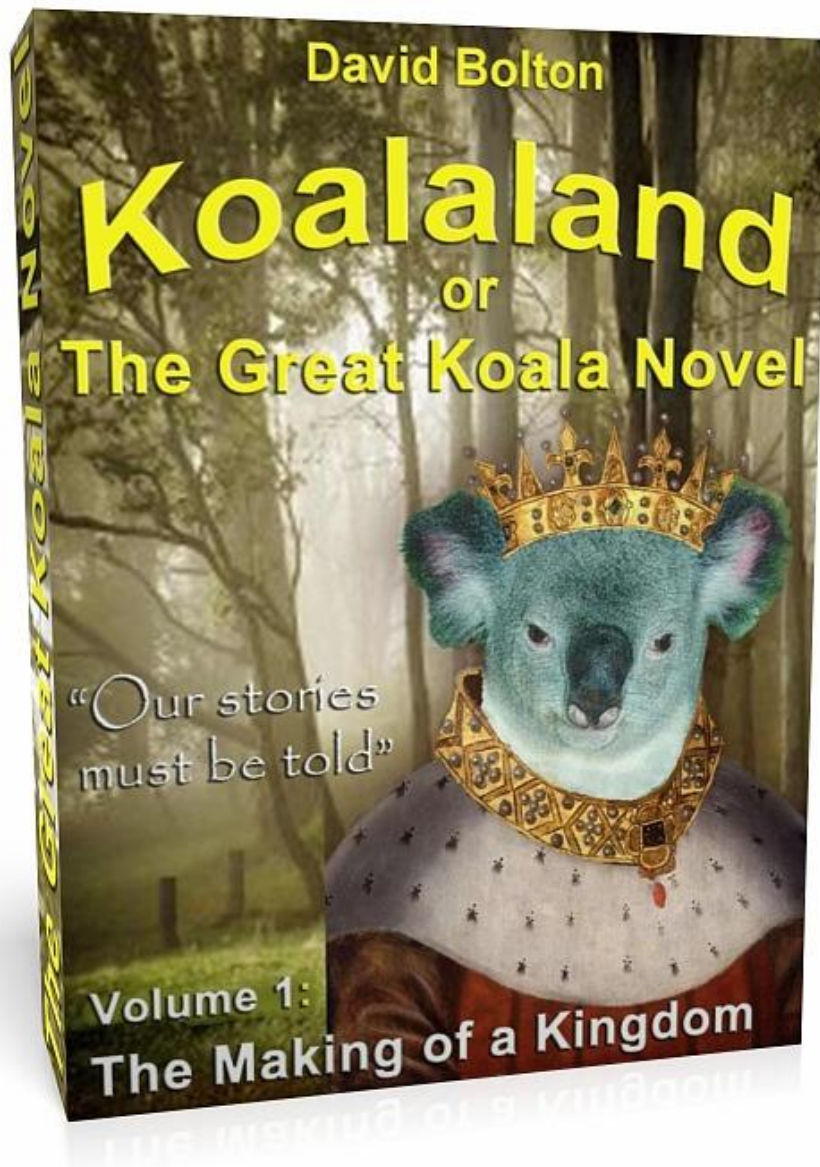


For the Young at Heart of all Ages  
(though Parental Guidance is recommended)



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**Koalaland**  
**or**  
**The Great Koala Novel**  
**Volume I: The Making of a Kingdom**

**by**  
**David Bolton**

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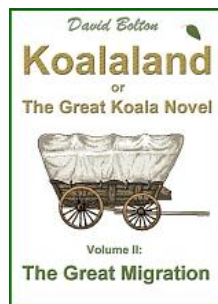
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Koalaland or The Great Koala Novel - Volume I: The Making of a Kingdom

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[Volume II](#)

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To Maki, who inspired this work

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# Volume I: The Making of a Kingdom

## Preface

*For the reflective reader, and most especially for those of the sceptical persuasion; providing definite, conclusive, and therefore indisputable proof that everything you will read in this book is without a doubt true.*

*Or, if you prefer...*

*A peculiar piece of scientific sophistry, being impossible to refute, and furnishing the koala-lover with information essential to the understanding of this work.*

In 1957, an ingenious physicist by the distinguished-sounding name of Hugh Everett III introduced a theory that he called the "relative state formulation", an insight that was, in the 1960s, popularized by another very erudite gentleman, the physicist Bryce Seligman DeWitt, who gave this idea a more catchy title: the "Many Worlds" theory. Also known as the "Parallel Universes" interpretation of quantum mechanics, it contends that there is in fact, an enormous, perhaps even infinite, number of different universes that exist simultaneously, though we, being trapped in one of them, are not aware of the vast multitude of others. According to this postulate, everything that could possibly happen in our world, but does not, does *indeed* occur in one of these myriad parallel worlds.

Why we usually cannot peek into these other universes and satisfy our curiosity as to what might be going on at this, or any other moment, is a question that only the most learned of scientists could answer; I, for my part, am unable to do so.

Nevertheless, I do not deny the validity of the theory, for I myself have envisaged a parallel world, one characterized by certain similarities to our dimension, yet that also reveals some striking differences. To give but a few examples:

In our world, koalas live only in Australia. They are about two feet high, walk using their hands as well as their feet, have a very limited mental capacity, possess no advanced language skills (let alone a high culture), and run around naked.

Yet in the realm we are about to explore, their situation is markedly different. There, the koalas are on average *three* feet tall\*, and the trees that they inhabit are correspondingly larger than the ones with which we are acquainted. Those koalas ambulate upright, and think as well as any of us. They use complex language and converse incessantly, occasionally with conspicuous eloquence. They have, in the astoundingly short time of about three hundred

years, developed a burgeoning culture, and they would never dream of running around naked. Well, they might in their dreams, but certainly not in everyday life.

On the earth we know, hyenas live in Africa. None has, to our knowledge, ever eaten a koala, alive or dead, since the two animals live on continents that are very far from each other. In the parallel reality we will explore, spotted hyenas live within a day's journey of the koalas, much to the latter's chagrin.

On our planet, those cute little bright-eyed, bushy-tailed creatures that live in trees and eat nuts are called "squirrels," not "scrills". In our world, hawks carry off rabbits, and other small animals. Yet in this other universe, these evil birds are so big that they can easily carry off a full-grown koala.

In the reality we know, humans do all they can to completely control, dominate and even tyrannize those species they consider mere "animals," all-too often going to the extreme of killing them: for food, in the name of scientific research, or just for fun. That humans would respect another type of being, and simply leave it alone in its own territory, without interfering in any way – this is almost inconceivable to us, and is perhaps the most amazing distinction between our actuality and the one you will soon discover.

Recalling that one common version of the "parallel universe" theory asserts that there is an *infinity* of worlds in existence, and that everything that *could* happen *does* in fact occur in one or another of these worlds, it follows logically that everything you are about to read in this narrative is factual, and therefore eminently true.

Yet logic is not always the best persuader. Often, one's own intuition and imagination are more trustworthy guides in our quest to recognize reality. Relax, therefore; breathe deeply, open your mind, and prepare yourself emotionally to encounter one of those zillions of universes that exist as surely as does our own.

You are about to enter Koalaland.

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\*Our scientists tell us that during the Pleistocene period (1.8 million to 10 million years ago), there existed on earth the so-called "Giant Koala," who was indeed three feet tall. Is it thinkable that it was this species that chose to continue its evolution in a probable reality that diverged from our own, perhaps about 50,000 years ago, when this type of koala became extinct in our world?

## Part I: Eucalyptus Grove

### The Dangers of Disobedience

(Shortly before the beginning of summer)

As Joey, the young koala, walked across the grassy, open field separating the two groves, he enjoyed the feel of the sun's rays warming the fur on his head and back.

It had been an exceptionally moderate spring, and the hot days of summer were definitely just around the corner, which meant that he and his friends would have all the more opportunities to bathe in the stream that ran along the eastern edge of Eucalyptus Grove, and even venture out beyond it, to cross the field to old Koalaville. The weather was, even now, warmer than he had expected, and he was wishing he had worn lighter, summer overalls. This blue pair, that his mother had given him to put on this morning, was fine for spring, but made him sweat on a day like today.

Old Koalaville, less than a hundred yards ahead of him, always was a place where they could find entertainment. Though virtually abandoned for a couple of months, there were still many things there waiting to be discovered by young adventurers such as himself: left-behind cups, plates, and cooking utensils, slightly damaged, and therefore not thought worth taking along to the new grove back when the great migration had occurred; pieces of wood, now left to rot, that never did become parts of the objects for which they were originally cut and carved; even the remains of a platform in a tree, the foundation of a tree house never completed. The last one the carpenter koalas had begun in that grove, it no doubt would end up covered with dead, brown leaves from the branches above it by the end of the year.

Today, he and his friend Koby were going to climb up to it and see whether they could find anything of interest on that platform. Koby wouldn't be able to get there for another hour or so, but Joey didn't mind. Once he got to Koalaville, he'd go to that tree with the platform, climb up and pick a few leaves for a snack, then take a little nap until Koby arrived.

Still walking at a leisurely pace, he suddenly felt the fur on the back of his neck stand up, and began to sense a fear that soon gripped him entirely even before he was fully conscious of that ominous sound in the sky above: a harsh shriek, still somewhat distant, yet whose slight crescendo revealed that it was getting closer – the shriek of a huge hawk, one of the koala's most formidable natural enemies.

It's hard to say whether it was the instilled memories of his parent's warnings, or just sheer instinct that now made Joey act in the way that would most increase his chances of survival. Without even taking a second to look up – for what good would that do? – Joey broke into a frenzied run, dashing towards some bushes right next to the nearest tree on the edge of Koalaville. Between him and that grove, there was no place to take shelter, not even as much as a small rock, or a hole in the ground. His only hope was to reach those bushes, burrow his way into them, and hug the ground.

A second shriek was considerably louder than the first; the hawk had already halved the distance between itself and its terrified prey. Joey was running for dear life, when this second cry of the savage bird made him realize that he would never be able to reach the bushes before being grabbed by the iron-like grip of the predator's claws. He nonetheless kept on dashing at full speed, though his thoughts, paradoxically, now became almost calm.

Despite his frantic pace, Joey felt that everything was going in slow motion. It was as if it would take an eternity to cross the forty yards or so now separating him from the bushes, but in his mind, time became blurred, with events from the past now intruding into his present. His legs were carrying him faster than they ever had, but he didn't sense any strain, only a tranquil, yet all-pervasive, sadness.

In his mind's eye, he was much younger now. It was dark in his mother's pouch, and so nice and warm! He reached up, grabbing hold of the rim, and slowly pulled himself upwards until his little head cleared the top of the pouch. Looking up, he saw his mother looking down at him, smiling, the love in her eyes filling him with happiness. He wished he could freeze the moment, and remain there forever, yet abruptly, the vision changed, and he saw both his mother and father. Joey himself wasn't there. He seemed to be watching them from a few yards above. His mother was weeping; the fur on his father's face was damp with the tears he had been shedding. He knew why they were crying. They had just received the news that he, Joey, their only son, had been carried away by a hawk.

Why hadn't he listened to the adults? How could he have been so careless as to cross the open field, especially on such a clear day? Hadn't he heard again and again about the sharp eyes of the hawk, who could spot even a small koala from a great distance, and who would then swoop down at an almost unbelievable speed, to sink its claws into your shoulders, sweep you off your feet, and carry you off into the sky, off to some distant mountaintop, perhaps, where you would then become dinner for the evil fowl and its hungry young ones?

Other koalas had been carried off before, but it could never happen to *him* – or so he had thought.

A rush of almost unbearable sorrow filled his being. He had had so much to live for, there were so many things he wanted to do in his life, so much to learn, to see, so much beauty in this world from which he was now about to be mercilessly torn away.

All at once, Joey was jolted out of both his melancholy visions as well as his remorse by another bone-chilling shriek of the hawk, now just a few yards above him. But this time, it was rather a sharp, pained cry, whose sound revealed that the flight of the bird had been abruptly arrested. A sort of desperate, optimistic curiosity momentarily overcame his natural instinct to simply keep staring straight towards his goal. He turned his head, looking upwards, and saw that the hawk, flapping its wings somewhat helplessly, had twisted around and was already beginning a slow ascent into the sky, up and away from him. Joey stopped to watch, suddenly flushed with relief and unexpected joy.

"Don't stop now! Get yourself over here before that bird has second thoughts!"

Joey looked again at the bushes towards which he had been hurrying, and saw the lone figure of Handy, holding his slingshot, primed with another stone, just in case the hawk decided to return. Joey scurried over to him, though he knew he was in big trouble.

Handy was not someone you'd want to cross. An adult koala in his best years, he was lean and strong, and had a no-nonsense approach to just about every task he tackled. Those traits, coupled with his common sense, strength of character, and scrupulous honesty, were perhaps the reasons why the elders of the Council in Eucalyptus Grove, of which Handy himself was the youngest member, had convinced him to take charge of security matters in that part of Southern Koalaland. His dark brown overalls seemed to underscore his uncompromising personality, and if Handy had a sense of humor, Joey had never seen any signs of it. Now, he looked sterner than ever.

"Why, you little rascal! What were you thinking of, leaving Eucalyptus Grove and walking over that open field, in plain sight of every creature that might want to eat you alive! Don't tell me you didn't know better: I know your parents well, and they taught you not to do such fool things. What do you have to say for yourself?"

"Oh, well, sir, I... You see, I thought... Well, I was just..." Joey stammered.



"That's what I thought. No excuse at all! And what did you want over here in Koalaville, anyway? You know that children aren't supposed to come over here without their parents," Handy scolded.

"Well, my parents never want to bring me over here, and there are a lot of neat things here, and..."

"Yeah, well, when your parents hear about what happened today, they aren't even going to let you leave your tree for a good month or so."

"Ooooh," Joey whined, knowing that Handy was right about that.

"This isn't the first little koala that has thrown caution to the winds, and crossed that field alone," a third voice added.

Both Joey and Handy looked over at the Judge as he approached them. Judge Granddaddy, as he was known, due to his advanced age, was one of the elders of Eucalyptus Grove. His fur was largely whitish-gray now, yet he was in remarkably good physical condition, though he did need a pair of spectacles for reading. Very few koalas had been around long enough to remember a time when Granddaddy was not aged, yet he kept going, year in, year out, and never really seemed to get any older than he already was. His dark gray overalls gave him a somewhat somber appearance, yet this wasn't the reason he preferred them. He simply felt that the color of one's clothing should match the fur on one's body. Granddaddy knew that several generations before, koalas had worn no clothing whatsoever, so he figured it would be mere foppery to flaunt colors that nature had obviously not meant for koalas to display.

"Really?" Joey asked, now perking up. "You mean I'm not the only one who did such a dumb thing?"

"Why, of course not!" the Judge replied with a smile. "As a matter of fact, it seems like just yesterday that some other foolish young koala did the same thing you did. We were living here in Koalaville back then, of course. The little fellow made his way over to Eucalyptus Grove, and then walked back here after a few hours. He crossed that field on a clear, summer day, and was attacked by a hawk. That one was even bigger and meaner-looking than the one that almost got you."

"Wow!" Joey exclaimed. "Did the hawk get him?"

"No, he managed to dive into a ditch, just to the right of that tree over there, if I remember correctly. The young rascal was really lucky, if you ask me!"

"Yeah, I guess he was!" Joey agreed. "What was that koala's name, Judge?"

"Uuh, this is no time for long conversations, and you certainly aren't going to change the subject," Handy interrupted sternly. "Joey, you climb that tree over there, eat some leaves, and take a little nap until the Judge and I are finished our business here in Koalaville, and then we'll take you home."

"Oooh, all right," Joey moaned, sulking as he walked over to the tree.

"Granddaddy, you shouldn't tell him stories like that," Handy said.

"Why not? It's true, isn't it? You were just as foolhardy as he was when you were his age, and if it hadn't been for that ditch, you would have been bird-feed right then and there," Granddaddy replied.

"Yeah, I know. The truth is, I see a lot of myself in that little Joey. That's why I worry about him sometimes. Sure, his parents take good care of him, but when a young koala has an adventurous spirit, it can get him into all kinds of trouble. And I'd just hate to see anything happen to him."

"Yes, Handy, I understand. But maybe you shouldn't be so hard on him. You don't have to tell his mother about today, do you? You know Hana. She'll give him a hard time, and his life will be miserable for weeks."

"Well," Handy drawled, "I guess I wouldn't have to mention it. Though I should, you know."

"Hey, I'm the Judge. Let me decide what's best, okay?"

"Right, sir, I'll keep quiet about it," Handy promised, bowing to the authority of the older koala. "I'll go put that wood in our wagon, and then we can have a snack before we head back to Eucalyptus Grove."

"Yes, you do that," Granddaddy replied. Then, as Handy began to walk away, the Judge, his voice softening, added with a hint of a smile, "That was one heck of a shot. The bird didn't know what hit him. Good job, Handy!"

"Thanks, Judge," Handy smiled in reply.

"Oh, and Handy. About what you and I saw when we were up in the forest..."

"You mean that big round thing?" Handy supposed.

"Yes, that... whatever it is. I'd like to ask you to keep quiet about it for now. Don't mention it to anyone, you hear?"

"Not even to the King?" Handy asked, feeling the monarch should be informed of what they had seen.

“No, not even to him. I’ll inform him about it myself. I don’t want anyone else to know yet, not a soul, understood?”

“Understood, Judge. I won’t say a word, I swear,” Handy replied.

“Now, why don’t you go get a little rest before we head back,” Granddaddy suggested.

“Good idea, don’t mind if I do,” Handy smiled slightly and walked away to find a good branch on which to take a nap.

Granddaddy didn’t feel like napping. The day had given him a lot to contemplate. Joey had almost been killed, and that would have been a terrible tragedy. Lucky Handy had been there! But he was thinking even more about what they had happened across in the forest an hour before. He wasn’t able to figure it out, but he sensed that its significance went far beyond what the koalas – even he himself – could ever imagine.

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The sun was setting as the Judge, Handy and little Joey arrived at the eastern edge of Eucalyptus Grove. Koby, Joey’s best friend, had seen them coming.

“Oh, no!” he thought to himself, “Joey must have gotten himself into trouble again. A good thing I hadn’t gone over to Koalaville yet.”

Joey spotted Koby standing between two trees, and asked Handy if he might go talk to him.

“I suppose so,” Handy replied, “but remember: no more crossing that field again alone or you’ll have to answer to me.”

“Oh, no sir. I won’t do it again, I promise!”

“Okay then,” Judge Granddaddy said to Joey, “run along now.”

“Bye!” Joey blurted out to them as he began to scamper over to Koby.

“Joey! What happened? How did you let them catch you like that? You know we’re not supposed to go over there. How could you be so dumb and let them see you?” Koby asked angrily.

“Hah! A lot you know! If Handy hadn’t seen me, I’d be dead right now,” Joey answered.

“Dead? What are you talking about?” Koby inquired.

“Well, if a big hawk picks you up and takes you home for dinner, you’re dead real soon, and that’s what almost happened to me!” Joey explained excitedly. He then went on to relate

the whole story, and Koby could tell that this wasn't another one of his tall tales; Joey was far too animated to be lying.

“Oh, wow! You mean that hawk almost got you?”

“Another few seconds, and I would have been history. That Handy shoots a stone like no koala I've ever seen. I think he hit it right on its ugly head, and it was flying really fast!”

“Well, when your mother finds out, you'll wish that bird *had* killed you,” Koby remarked. He knew how strict Hana, Joey's mother, could be, and how angry she could get when Joey made mischief.

“Yeah, I know. Not enough that I almost get killed, now I'm gonna get punished, too. Oooh, why did I go over there in the first place?” Joey whined.

“It was all your dumb idea. Why did you have to walk right in the middle of the field? Couldn't you have walked through the forest, like everybody else does?” Koby chided him.

“How was I supposed to know some bird would see me? Fine thing that is. You can't even walk across a field these days without having to fear for your life.”

“Yeah, but that's the way it's always been, and I guess it's the way it always will be. Just be glad you're still alive. I don't want to lose my best friend!”

“I don't want to lose me either, so we agree on that. Hey, why don't we get our anteaters and take a ride around the grove?” Joey suggested.

“Don't you think you'd better go home?” Koby asked.

“Home! And get punished right away? No way! There's always time for that. Let's go get the anteaters.”

The anteater was one of two animals that the koalas had managed to domesticate, and indeed, the long-snouted creatures were quite useful. They were raised by Choty and Mo, two diligent koalas who had become quite well-off by renting out the anteaters to koalas who liked to keep them tied to the base of their tree, so that the creatures would eat any ants that began to crawl up the trunk. Some smaller anteaters could even climb, and would comb the trees branch by branch, slurping up all the ants they found. Many koalas rented this type for a few days, for after all, there were few things more disagreeable than picking a leaf and biting into it, only to feel an ant wiggling around in your mouth as you chewed! With a hungry anteater at the base of your tree, and perhaps also a little one in the branches, your leaves would be virtually ant-free.

A few koalas had discovered that they could ride an anteater. True, the average anteater didn't like it very much when a koala first climbed onto his back; he would take little leaps, and swirl around in circles, trying to get the rider to fall off, but to no avail: a lifetime of climbing trees gave the koala a strong grip, and no amount of wild gyrations on the part of the anteater was sufficient to throw him to the ground. Invariably, the anteater would give in after no more than an hour or so, and after that, didn't seem to mind much when a koala wanted to ride him.

Joey, and his friend Koby, who was about a year older, were both still children. Yet they had the distinction of being among the very first koalas to become experts at riding anteaters. Not that they really needed to. They could walk from one side of the grove to the other in fifteen minutes or so, and weren't allowed to travel outside the grove on their own anyway. But for them, the anteaters were more like pets – even friends – than mere useful beasts.

True, anteaters couldn't talk, and to any objective observer, didn't seem very intelligent. But somehow, Joey and Koby felt that the anteaters understood them, in their own way. And ever since their parents had bought them their own anteaters, back when the prices were very low, both of the young koalas took excellent care of their pets, cleaning the anteaters' fur regularly with a special brush, giving them all the exercise they needed, and above all, making sure they found a sufficient number of ants to keep their bellies full.

That wasn't much of a problem, since the forest, which began at the northern edge of the grove and extended both eastward and westward, connecting Eucalyptus Grove with Koalaville in the east, and with Koalatown in the west, had more than its share of anthills. They had only to lead the anteaters into the forest, and before long, the creatures had sniffed out an anthill, and were soon using their sharp claws to dig up the entrance, after which they used their long, sticky tongues to slurp out the ants, sometimes catching as many as seventy or eighty with a single dart of the tongue. Not a very appetizing sight, to be sure, yet Joey and Koby knew that after all, anteaters had to eat ants, or they wouldn't be called anteaters, would they?

The two had tied their pets to Koby's tree earlier that afternoon. They now walked towards it, carefully peering upwards to see whether Koby's parents were there. They were there all right, but both appeared to be taking a nap, so they wouldn't give them any trouble. The two young koalas quietly untied their anteaters and led them by their reins away from the tree, walking for thirty or forty yards before climbing onto their backs and continuing northward.

“My anteater seems pretty hungry. He seems really anxious to get to the forest,” said Joey.

“Yeah, mine too,” Koby answered. “Not so fast, boy,” he said, patting his anteater on the head, “we’ll be in the forest before you know it.”

## At the Council Table

“Granddaddy! Where have you been? You know we couldn’t start the game without you!”

Doctor Koala was peeved, as he always was when their daily card game was delayed. He had them in his hands, and was shuffling them mechanically.

“Now, Doctor, don’t get upset, we have plenty of time to play. Have a seat, Granddaddy,” said the King, who was sitting on a chair at the head of the roughly hewn wooden table that was placed at the upper-right end of a small clearing at the lower edge of the “Royal Arboreal Complex,” that area at the southern tip of Eucalyptus Grove where the monarch lived, and carried out his official functions on a day-to-day basis.

The King was used to smoothing things out between his two older friends. His gentle demeanor, natural diplomatic talent, good will, tolerance for the weaknesses of others and generally noble behavior had, after all, been the main reasons why he had been chosen to be the leader of Eucalyptus Grove just before the migration several months earlier, even though he had barely reached middle age.

Of only average height, the sovereign was nonetheless physically quite strong, though this wasn’t immediately obvious. Despite his exalted position in the grove, he only wore his fancy royal garments and crown on solemn occasions. On normal days, he dressed quite modestly, a simple pair of navy blue, unadorned overalls being his clothing of choice. The dark blue bib of the garment formed a noble-looking contrast to the pure white fur on his chest, a genetic trait present in a number of koalas of all ages, even those whose other bodily hair was a darker shade of gray, as was the monarch’s.

“I’m sure Granddaddy has a good reason for being late,” the leader smiled.

“Well, this time I do indeed,” the Judge said. He then went on to tell the whole story of Joey, the hawk, and Handy’s expert shot.

“Why, that is remarkable,” the King wondered aloud. “Imagine, hitting a hawk in mid-air, right in the middle of its dive! Doctor Koala, remind me to commend Handy when I see him.”

“Pure luck, if you ask me,” replied the Doctor. “Oh, I know that Handy can handle a slingshot as well as anybody around, but to hit a hawk in the head at that speed? Pure luck, I say. That Joey can be glad he’s still in one piece, which he may not be for long, once his mother hears about it.”

“No need to worry about that,” said Granddaddy. “I convinced Handy not to tell Hana anything. You know how she is.”

“Good for you!” Doctor Koala exclaimed. “The last time Joey got into trouble, Hana was convinced he needed some medicine or another to ‘calm him down’, as she put it, and she bothered me for a half hour, trying to make me give her some potion that would make him behave better.”

“What did she say when you refused?” asked the King.

“Refused? Why, I gave her some mint tonic,” the Doctor replied.

“Mint tonic? Since when does that make a young koala change his behavior?” the Judge asked.

“Well, I know it doesn’t do any such thing, but the point is, I got her to *believe* it does, so I gave her a bottle of it. Only way to get rid of her.”

“Why, Doctor Koala!” the King laughed. “I do believe you’re an old charlatan!”

“An old charlatan that needs his daily nap,” Doctor Koala chuckled as he removed his spectacles for a moment and gently rubbed his right eye, “and that Hana has a knack for always calling on me just when I’m about to fall asleep.”

Doctor Koala, despite his occasionally gruff manners, was perhaps the most respected citizen of Southern Koalaland. Already past middle age, but not yet a so-called senior citizen, he seemed older than his years, no doubt the result of constant overwork. His brownish fur was now streaked with a softer, grey-white color. Never one to fret about how he was dressed, Doctor Koala nonetheless possessed two pairs of overalls, one brown, the other a very dark green, though both had faded over time, since they had been washed so often, this being a necessary measure where a medicine koala’s apparel was concerned. His pace was slow and somewhat deliberate when he walked, and sometimes showed traces of a limp, though as far as anyone knew, he had never been seriously injured. It was almost as if he were weary of walking from one end of the grove to the other, every single day, tending to those koalas whose debilities didn’t permit them to come to the little shack at the base of his tree which he affectionately, yet rather exaggeratedly, called his “hospital”.

But tired though he often was, nothing could ever stop Doctor Koala from making his rounds. His sense of duty had formed the habit, which had long since become a veritable addiction. Despite his frequent complaints, he would most probably be visiting the sick until he himself passed on to a better world. Countless nights of study, writing, classification of



thousands of medicinal plants and herbs, and scientific experimentation had taken their toll on his vision, which he corrected with a pair of spectacles that old Mr. Johnson, the koalas' only human friend, had given to him a couple of years before.

Doctor Koala didn't have much of the diplomat in him. He could be direct to the point of incivility, and wouldn't hesitate to insult a patient outright if he saw that his orders weren't being followed. He had argued, at some time or another, with at least half the koalas in the grove, but nobody could ever hold a grudge against him, for they knew that he had dedicated his entire life to helping the sick, and to doing his best to see to it that the healthy ones stayed that way. But that in no way meant that his patients didn't quarrel with him frequently, for despite his compassion, Doctor Koala could be quite cantankerous at times.

"Sometimes I think I should just go off somewhere to an island, where there isn't a sick koala to be found," the Doctor said to the King and Granddaddy. "After all, it's like fighting a losing battle here. Take that Warooey, for instance. He came to me last week with a cut lip, and bruises all over his face, and told me he had fallen out of his tree."

"Well," Judge Granddaddy commented, "no wonder his face was bruised."

"Hah! As if I didn't know the signs of an old-fashioned fistfight!" Doctor Koala continued in a sarcastic tone. "That no-good devil got himself into a brawl, then got beat up, didn't want to admit it, and to top it off, thought he could lie to me, his Doctor. And when I told him what I thought of that, he called me an old quack!"

"What did you say that made him say such a thing?" the King inquired.

"Why, I told him that if he lied to me like that again, I might just punch him in the snoot myself!" Doctor Koala answered.

The Judge and the King laughed heartily at that. "Well, Doctor, Warooey always did get himself into trouble, and for his kind, it's not easy to admit he lost a fight," Granddaddy explained. "And no wonder he calls you a quack if you threaten to punch him!" he added, still chuckling.

Even Doctor Koala couldn't hold back a smile. "Well, maybe I did exaggerate a bit, but the truth is, I'm getting sick of having to patch up koalas, give them potions, or whatever, just because they do everything they can to damage their health. I ought to go on strike some day. Then maybe they'd wise up and start taking care of themselves for a change, instead of always running to me for the least little thing."

“Oh, Doc,” the King smiled, “if you forgive me for saying so, you’ve been complaining for as long as I’ve known you. But do you know what? I think that deep down in your heart, you love every single koala in this grove. That’s why you chose your profession, and that’s why you’ll never give it up.”

“Hah!” the Doctor scoffed, “I just don’t want to see any of them drop dead before their time, that’s all. And if you’ll forgive *me* for saying so, you’re our King, not a psychologist, so I’ll thank you for stop trying to analyze me!”

The King and Granddaddy both broke out laughing again. There weren’t many koalas who would dare to speak in such a tone to their monarch, but the King could never take offence at anything Doctor Koala said. He knew him too well for that. The Doctor had been a friend of his family since before the King was a king at all, and even before that: Doc had been his physician since he was a small koala baby. For the King, Doctor Koala was almost family, and more so since all of the King’s immediate relatives had passed away.

“Now, if you two will stop bickering, maybe we can get this card game started,” Judge Granddaddy suggested with a smile, taking the cards from Doctor Koala and shuffling them deftly.

“It’s about time,” Doctor Koala agreed. “Deal them, Granddaddy. I can’t wait to beat you this time. You took me for all I was worth last week!”

“And I might just do it again this week, too,” the Judge replied, slowly and deliberately.

“Not if I can help it,” the King chimed in. “I plan to wallop both of you this time, so let’s get started!” The three friends chatted on as they began their daily game of “Lost Koala Found”.

After a couple of hours, Doctor Koala decided to go, for he wished to take his nap. The King was about to retire to his tree as well, but Granddaddy told him he would like to speak with him alone.

“Sire, as you may know, Handy and I were over in Koalaville this morning,” the Judge began.

“Oh, yes, you had said that you wanted to mark off some of the land there in order to improve our map. How did it go?” the King inquired.

“Very well, Sire. Handy hammered a number of stakes into the ground to mark off the main sections. Then we did some measuring. But that’s not what I wished to talk to you about.”

“Well, what is it, then?” the ruler was curious.

“Sire, Handy and I walked up into the forest, since we wanted to mark some territory there as well. A short distance into the forest, we saw a number of huge boulders, which form a sort of circle.”

“Oh, yes, those huge rocks. I saw them myself often, when I used to go up to the forest and collect berries,” the King reminisced.

“Yes, Sire, no doubt many of us have seen them over the years. Well, anyway, we walked around them, and saw that they did indeed form a circle, so we got curious about what was in the middle. Handy and I climbed up to the top of a boulder, and looked down into the space below. What we saw was most disconcerting.”

“Huh? What did you see?” the King’s curiosity was piqued.

“Sire, we saw a huge round object. I don’t know what to call it, for I have never seen such a thing before. Seen from above, it seemed to be perfectly circular in shape, and was flattened at the top, sort of like if you took a berry and squeezed it a bit. But this thing was huge, and seemed to be made of some kind of silvery-colored metal,” Granddaddy explained to him.

“How do you know what it was made out of?” the King wondered.

“Handy took a stone, and threw it down onto the object, and it made a metallic sound. It sounded as though it might even be hollow inside. And what was even more unusual was that the edges of the boulders extended inwards over the circumference of the object by a few inches, so that we couldn’t see any way how the thing could have ever fit into that space in the first place, unless the rocks were placed there after the object, yet those boulders have been there for as long as anyone can remember. We saw no signs that they had been moved, and besides, they are so big that nobody could ever move them anyway.”

“Granddaddy, are you sure this isn’t something you dreamed last night?”

“Oh, no, Your Highness, it was no dream. Ask Handy. He will confirm what I am telling you.”

“Well, if this is true – and I do believe you, of course – then why hasn’t anyone ever seen this thing before? All koalas are excellent climbers, so it is hardly conceivable that over all these years, no-one would have thought of climbing up on one of the boulders to see what was in the middle,” the monarch mused.

“That’s exactly what Handy and I thought, Your Majesty,” Granddaddy went on. “Neither of us could figure out why nobody had seen that thing before. When we got back here a few

hours ago, I asked two of our friends – Chashibu and Chosay, two of the oldest koalas in the grove, as you well know – if they had ever noticed the boulders in the course of their long lives, and both said they had, yet neither could recall ever climbing up to see what was in the middle, nor had they ever *heard* of anyone having done so. And even stranger was that they themselves were somewhat perplexed that they had never even been curious about it. I asked them to not mention this affair to anyone, as I wanted to discuss it with you, so that we could decide what course to take.”

“Yes, I see,” the King stroked his furry chin. “I don’t know what to make of it. Are we to believe that no-one, during all the years that we lived in Koalaville, ever climbed those boulders? Hardly thinkable, if you ask me. Yet if they did, why didn’t anyone ever report having seen that funny object? Surely most peculiar.”

“I don’t have any explanation either, Sire,” Granddaddy replied. “What do you suggest we do?”

“Nothing. Nothing at all, at least for the moment. You know, Granddaddy, many things are happening now in Eucalyptus Grove. We will soon have a school and a monetary system; we will be establishing closer relations with our neighbors... all this in such a short time. I see no sense in getting everyone excited about some strange object that even *we* can’t explain. If nobody noticed it before, maybe nobody will in the future, either. Nonetheless, when we have time, we can plan to send an exploratory group over there to investigate the matter further. Until then, I suggest we simply not worry about it.”

“Yes, Sire, I was thinking the same thing. Handy won’t tell anyone, and neither will Chashibu and Chosay. There was no sign that it’s dangerous, and as you say, there are many other, more pressing issues we will have to deal with in the next few months. We’ll just put it on hold for a while,” Granddaddy said.

“It’s agreed, then,” the King replied. “Have a nice nap, Granddaddy. Maybe I’ll see you later this evening.”

“Thank you, Sire. Have a good nap yourself. Till later, then!”

The Judge walked off towards his tree, his mind filled with unanswerable questions about the strange, inexplicable object that had made this day one of the most unusual in his long life.

## Maki Koala

“Maki! Maki Koala, are you up there?” Handy, standing at the base of her tree, called.

“Why yes, I am, Handy,” Maki, a carpenter koala, looked down at him from the window of her tree house. “I’ll be right down.”

She opened the trap door in the floor of the house and started down the ladder that led to the ground. After descending, she turned to him. “How are you today, Handy?”

“Fine, just fine. I thought I would come over and bring you that wood you ordered. It’s right here in my wagon.” He pulled a cover off the cargo in the rear of the open-backed wooden wagon, to which two sturdy anteaters were hitched in the front.

“My, that looks like wonderful wood! And some of the pieces are long enough to make floor boards!” Maki was delighted.

“Well, I know you have several orders for tree houses, so you’ll need as many long boards as you can get. I’m just sorry I couldn’t smooth them out a bit more.”

“Oh, don’t worry about that, Handy. After all, I’m a carpenter. I have all the tools I need to smooth down and sand the pieces, but without your help, we never could have brought them here from Koalaville. There is so much lumber we left there when we all moved over to Eucalyptus Grove, and I suspect it’ll be months before we’re able to have everything transported over here. Wait, I’ll go up and get your pay.”

“Oh, you don’t have to pay me now. I’ve got some work to attend to, and don’t need the almonds now.”

“All right, but they’re here whenever you want to come over and get them. I’ll tell my father how much it costs, so maybe he can pay you when you see him,” Maki assured him.

“Well, I’ll be over in Koalaville again in a couple of days. I’ll bring back some more wood, and you can pay me for the lot when I deliver it.”

“Fine,” said Maki. “Can’t I help you unload it?”

“No, it’s pretty heavy. I’d better do it.” Maki watched as Handy unloaded the larger pieces of wood. “Well, I can at least take out the small pieces,” she said, and began to do just that.

Handy couldn’t help but admire Maki, as did almost every koala who knew her. Always even-tempered and polite, she had built a reputation for herself by helping her father to craft the very first tree houses in Southern Koalaland, all of them based on their own designs. She had constructed her first one a few years before, back when they all lived in Koalaville, and

had made several others, though the last one remained incomplete, since the sudden migration to Eucalyptus Grove had rendered it senseless to even consider finishing it, for there would no longer be anyone there to use it.

Nonetheless, the experience she had gathered while making tree houses had taught Maki a lot about how to form the boards for the floor, shaping them just right so that they made a natural fit with the tree branches on which they rested, and had taught her the value of crafting wooden joints to hold the boards together, instead of relying on nails. Experiments had shown her that which her father had always told her: due to the gentle swaying of the branches, nails would eventually come loose, and the boards would separate. Joints, on the other hand, offered flexibility as well as strength to the construction; a tree house whose boards were held together by joints would almost always last for many years. Maki Koala was a perfectionist by nature, for whom quality was a must in everything she did.

Maki was a young adult koala in her best years, and though modest and unassuming, possessed an attractiveness of the kind valued by those who were capable of seeing beyond the superficial – which is not to suggest she was homely. Indeed, her grey fur was delightfully soft, and shimmered in the sunlight. Her nose, more pinkish brown than black, was relatively small. Her hands, skilled yet delicate, seldom gestured when she spoke, and when they did, they always moved with a sort of simple grace that revealed at once both great refinement as well as natural femininity, qualities not in the least diminished by the plain grey overalls she usually wore while she was working.

But her most attractive feature was her eyes: dark, very gentle eyes that reflected common sense and uncommon perception, as well as knowledge of the kind that isn't gained from books, but that seems to be innate, the sort of "knowing" that many equate with what we call wisdom. Maki Koala was wise beyond her years, and that quality, coupled with her compassion for all creatures, great and small, was what made everyone sense that she was truly someone very special.

"I guess I'll be going now, Maki," Handy said, climbing up onto the wagon's seat and picking up the reins.

"Good-bye Handy, and thanks again. You were such a big help!"

"Glad to oblige. I'll see you in a few days." He shook the reins, and the anteaters began to move, pulling the wagon with relative ease now that the wood had been unloaded. "Bye! And give my best regards to your father!" he called back to her.

“Thank you! I will!”

Maki picked up a large waterproof cloth that was neatly folded up next to the base of the tree. She carefully unfolded it and then spread it out over the pile of wood, in order to make sure it was protected. She would go to work sanding the boards the next morning. But now, she wanted to go prepare supper. Her father would be home soon, and she was looking forward to a nice meal with him. After supper, they would settle down for a good night's sleep. Maki always thought that was the best part of the day!

## Description of Southern Koalaland

Eucalyptus Grove had only been populated for a few months. Prior to that, it was off limits to koalas, as it belonged to a human who would only give it up for a rather large sum of money. Yet at that time, the koalas not only had no money: they didn't even know what it was. Thus, the central grove of the three that were placed from east to west, spaced at four or five hundred yards one from the other, and that were connected at their northern ends by a dense, uninterrupted forest, thereby forming the heart of Southern Koalaland, was virtually untouched – except for the occasional squirrel, and the birds that built their nests in the trees.

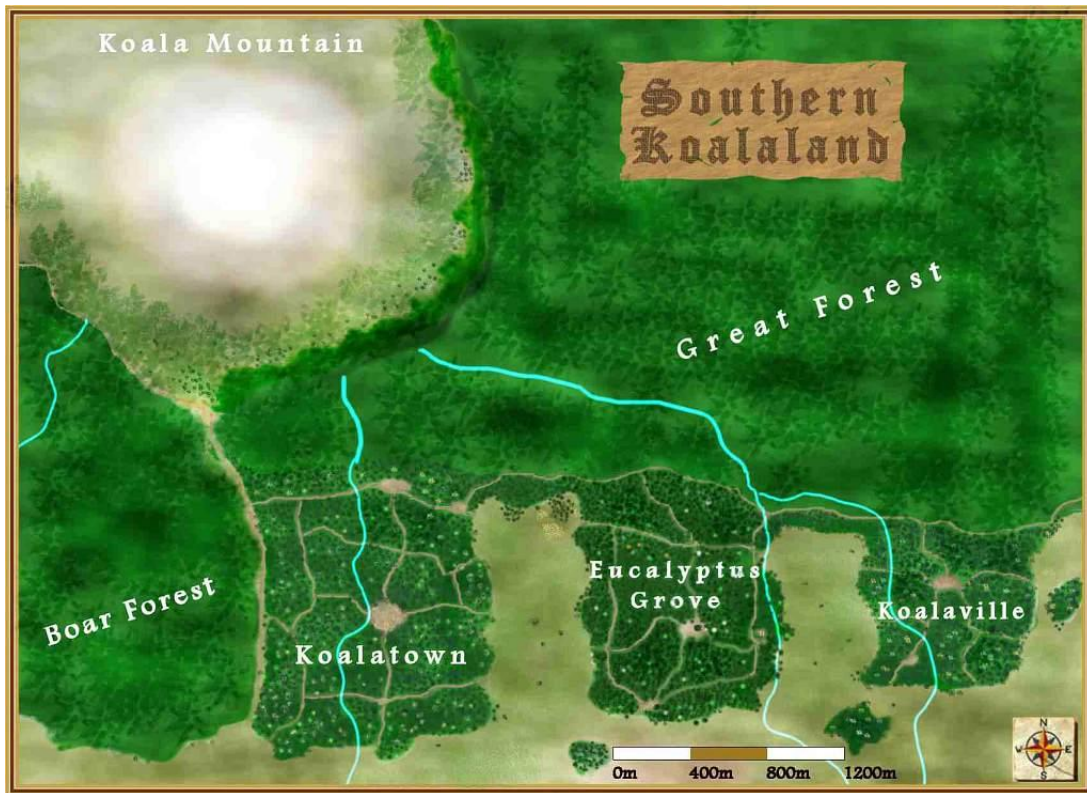
About four hundred and fifty yards to the west of Eucalyptus Grove was Koalatown, which was amply populated: nearly three thousand koalas were at home there. It was the largest of the three groves, yet it was certainly not the most beautiful. The trees not growing as densely as in the other two, it had less shade; the leaves of the eucalyptus trees there were not of the finest quality, though they were edible.

Koalatown might nonetheless have been a rather attractive place, if its inhabitants had cared for it more. But the truth be told, the tree dwellers of Koalatown were not koalas of the highest breeding. To put it plainly, they were for the most part a motley bunch. Some had ancestors that had lived there for centuries, yet others were the offspring of two or three wilder types of koala whose forebears had come from primitive groves far to the east, or else from ones now abandoned, located on the northern side of Koala Mountain, whose southern slope began its steep ascent only about fifty yards into the woods at the northern end of Koalatown. This assortment of semi-savage koalas, who often quarrelled and were even violent at times, was of course hard to keep under control, all the more so because most of them resented discipline of any kind, and were quick to rebel if anyone tried to limit their freedom.

This is no doubt why latter-day Koalatown had adopted a democratic system of government, which guaranteed a great deal of freedom to its citizens (more than some of the elders among them thought reasonable, to be sure), and whose electoral system provided them with the opportunity to choose a new leader if they got fed up with the present one. Looking out across the field east of Koalatown, the view was splendid, for Eucalyptus Grove could be seen there in the near distance, its dense green trees and other foliage providing a delight to the eye of any red-blooded koala.



To the north, as already mentioned, was the forest, dark and enticing, and offering a safe way to take a walk eastwards if any koala wanted to go over to Eucalyptus Grove to pick a basket of fresh leaves. All agreed that the leaves there were of the finest quality, their rich, refreshing taste fulfilling the promise made by their exquisite aroma. The human owner of the grove lived far away, in Human City, and though he refused to let koalas settle there – probably fearing that if he did, the law might soon grant them permission to stay permanently – he didn't seem to care if they went over to pick leaves, no doubt because he had no way of knowing that they did so.



At the western border of Koalatown was a road, leading south to north. Like all roads in Koalaland, it was unpaved, which made travel difficult when the rains came, and converted the soil into a sea of mud. But when the weather was nice, one could travel northwards up the road, between Koalatown on one's right and Boar Forest to the left, and journey past the western slope of Koala Mountain. Continuing even farther for a half hour or so by wagon, one came to the wide, majestic, though largely barren expanses of the Great Koala Plain, so forbidding in its vastness that it was only relatively recently that the koalas had begun to travel across it. But there was good reason to do so, for after a wagon journey of about a day and a half, moving steadily northwards, one arrived at the great Koala City, a huge grove that dwarfed even Koalatown, and whose population of over ten thousand Koalas far surpassed the entire population of Koalatown (almost 3.000) and Koalaville (about 980) put together. The

establishment of regular commerce between the southern groves and Koala City, that would begin almost a year after the migration of the Koalaville koalas to Eucalyptus Grove, would prove to be a major leap the development of civilization in the south.

Yet let us stay in Southern Koalaland for the moment. If one started out at the eastern border of Koalatown, travelled across the adjoining field, then walked all the way through Eucalyptus Grove to its other edge, one could see Koalaville in the distance, about five hundred yards away. It had been the home of almost one thousand koalas until a peculiar turn of events led to the resettlement of them all to their present home, Eucalyptus Grove, an event in recent koala history that the community thus affected refers to as “The Great Migration”.

We will now go back several months, to mid winter, at a time when those koalas were still living in Koalaville, and had as of yet no king, so that we can see just how these changes came about.

## Part II - Prelude to Monarchy

### How it all began

(Four months earlier: Mid-winter)

Mr. Johnson's Land Rover slowly made its way over the rough terrain of the territory to the south of the three groves. He was heading for Koalaville to bring the koalas there several books they had requested, and of course, to engage in some pleasant conversation with a few of the furry friends he had there.

Decades earlier, when the humans had finally officially recognized Koalaland as a protected reservation, and had granted it the right to full autonomy, the koalas had at once decided that no humans would be permitted to enter their territory.

Yet old Mr. Johnson was an exception. He had been a true friend for years, and had always kept the koalas informed about what was going on in Humanland, especially as far as any political decisions which could potentially affect Koalaland were concerned. He had also provided them with many books, from which they had been able to expand their knowledge of areas both practical as well as theoretical. They knew they could trust him, and he himself, now in the twilight of life, took great pleasure in conversing with his little friends about subjects as diverse as philosophy, medicine, how to build a good tree house, and which type of eucalyptus leaf was the tastiest – though he himself was not at liberty to enjoy them, since they were poisonous to humans.

Though the koalas generally abhorred the human vehicles called “cars,” they were in fact happy when they saw Mr. Johnson's Land Rover coming, for they knew he would be bringing them something of interest. Thus it was today. In addition to a number of books, he was also bringing a newspaper. Judge Granddaddy had expressed an interest in the concept of a paper that reported what had happened the day before. He couldn't imagine that there could be many things to talk about, for how much can happen in a single day?

The Land Rover pulled up to the southernmost tree of Koalaville, and Mr. Johnson, white-haired and lean, yet seemingly quite fit for a man his age, opened the door and got out.

“Hello, Granddaddy! And Doctor Koala, I didn't see you the last time I was here!”

“Hello, Mr. Johnson,” they both replied almost simultaneously, after which Doctor Koala continued. “Yes, that's right. The last time you were here they needed me over in Koalatown.

A drunken wretch had fallen out of his tree and broken an arm. Some koalas will never learn, it seems.”

“Well, I’m glad to see you both now. How is everything here in the grove?”

“Nothing much new, I suppose,” Granddaddy said. “A stray boar appeared up at the northern end the other day. Seems he got lost and walked all the way from Boar Forest over here. When he entered Koalaville and saw how scared the koalas were of him, he got a bit frisky, and amused himself by chasing a few up their trees. Nobody hurt, though. Handy and a couple of his friends got on their emus and chased the boar back into the forest, and we haven’t heard from him since. Must have found his way home.”

“That’s just the sort of story that would be in a newspaper, if you had one here. Do you remember me telling you about newspapers, Granddaddy?” Mr. Johnson asked. “I’ve brought one along to show it to you.”

“Why, that’s very nice of you. Here, I’ll spread out a blanket next to the table.” Granddaddy would have liked to offer him a chair, but the koalas’ chairs were much too small for him.

Mr. Johnson sat down cross-legged on the blanket in front of the table. When Granddaddy and Doctor Koala took their seats as well, he placed the newspaper in front of them.

“Here it is. All the news from the other day.”

“Mmmm,” Doctor Koala muttered while surveying the front page. “An accident... political corruption... a house torn down by mistake... Don’t the humans ever print good news in their paper?”

“Well,” Mr. Johnson laughed, “not very often. People seem to want to read the bad stuff more than the good.”

“Not the sign of a very healthy society, if you ask me,” Doctor Koala replied a bit haughtily as he turned from one page to the next. “Mmm, what is this? Mathematics?”

Mr. Johnson looked down at the paper. “Oh, no, that’s the lottery.”

“Lot of *what?*” asked Granddaddy, puzzled.

“Not a lot of something... *lottery*. It’s a kind of game. If you’re lucky enough to win, you get a huge amount of money,” the old man explained.

“Oh, yes, money. You told us about that a few months ago,” Granddaddy said. “If I remember correctly, it’s some kind of metal or paper that can be exchanged for things of *real* value.”

“That’s about right,” Mr. Johnson answered.

“Just how much of this money do you get if you win?” Doctor Koala wanted to know.

“Oh, it could be millions. Enough to live comfortably for the rest of your life.”

“But we are *already* living comfortably, aren’t we, Doctor Koala?” Granddaddy remarked.

“I would say so, absolutely,” the doctor replied. “How do you play this game, anyway?”

“Oh, well, you have to pick six numbers out of forty-nine,” Mr. Johnson explained.

“Which six numbers?” Granddaddy asked.

“Any six you want. Then, on Saturday evening, the state picks six numbers. If *your* six numbers match those the state has picked, you win the grand prize.”

“Hmmm, sounds simple enough. Maybe we should give it a try,” Doctor Koala suggested.

“Oh... but I’m reading here that you have to pay a dollar to play. I guess that rules us out. There isn’t a single one of these dollars in the whole grove.”

“Why, that’s no problem,” Mr. Johnson said, reaching into his shirt pocket. Here – here’s a dollar for you.”

“Oh, we couldn’t accept that,” Granddaddy held up his hand in refusal.

“But of course you can. It’s not much money at all,” Mr. Johnson insisted.

“Well, but we have to pay it back to you somehow. What can we offer you?” Doctor Koala asked.

“Forget it. Consider it a little gift,” Mr Johnson smiled. “Oh, but of course, if you want to play, you’ll have to pick out your numbers. Hey, I’ve got an idea. I have to go to the city on Friday. How about if I stop by here first, and pick you up. Then we can all go into the city together, and buy the lottery ticket.”

“Why, that’s kind of you, Mr. Johnson, very kind indeed,” Granddaddy responded, “but the truth is, I have no desire to go to that Human City. Too much stress and noise, you said so yourself. Maybe Doctor Koala here would like to...”

“No, not I. I have patients to care for. But I’ll bet some koala or another would love to go along with you. How about if I ask around? Would that be acceptable, sir?”

“Just fine!” Mr Johnson answered. “I’ll stop by at, say, nine am on Friday. Will that be okay?”

“Of course,” Granddaddy said. We’ll have those numbers picked out by then. Oh, but if nobody wants to go along, do you suppose that you could buy that ticket for us?”

“No problem,” Mr Johnson replied. “But as I said, I’d be glad to show somebody around the city, or even a few of you. I can fit five or six koalas in my Land Rover.”

“Well, we’ll certainly ask around,” Doctor Koala promised.

The conversation then turned to other topics, and a little later, Sticky, another member of the Council, though obviously younger than the judge and the physician, stopped by to join the chat. Mint tea was served, and a little dish of select walnuts and almonds was put on the table for Mr. Johnson to enjoy, the koalas preferring to eat leaves on this occasion. It was early evening before the human said his good-byes, got into his vehicle and drove off.

“Hmm, about that game,” said Granddaddy to his two friends. “What numbers do you think we should pick?”

“I have no idea,” Sticky replied. “Perhaps tomorrow we should ask some other koalas for their opinion. Maybe somebody will have an idea of what our lucky numbers might be.”

“Well, from what Mr. Johnson was telling us, the chances of winning are extremely slim, and I don’t see any way we could cheat,” Doctor Koala joked.

“Why, you old scoundrel!” Granddaddy exclaimed. “The first thing that comes to your mind is how to cheat! That may just explain how you won five games out of six yesterday when we were playing cards.”

Sticky laughed. “Oh, come on now, Judge. Doctor Koala is no cheater!”

“No, I’m not. But if I could cheat those humans, I might just do it for the fun of it, to show them they aren’t as smart as they think. Except for Mr. Johnson, of course. He’s a fine creature, to be sure. Friendly, honest, always willing to help. The world needs more humans like that, I say.”

“You’ve got a point there. He is a nice man,” Granddaddy agreed, then yawned. “Time for me to get some sleep. First thing tomorrow, I’m going to take a walk around the grove and ask every koala I see what his or her favorite number is. Maybe we’ll see a tendency to go for the same numbers, and then we’ll play those.”

“Sounds like a good idea,” Sticky replied. “I might just do the same thing. It’s always nice to win a game.”

## A Question of Numbers

The following morning, Doctor Koala was seated at a table in the little shack at the base of his tree where he received patients every day before noon. He was applying a salve to a bruise on the elbow of a female who had had a mild fall.

“That should make it feel better. Make sure you don’t rub it off before it can take effect, Muffy.”

“Oh, I’ll be careful, Doctor. I don’t know how I didn’t see that stone in the path. I was hurrying to get some cloth over to my tree so I could start to cut out the pattern for a new pair of overalls that somebody ordered, and I, well, I guess I just wasn’t looking where I was walking, and then my foot hit that rock, and...”

“Yeah, yeah, you told me already,” Doctor Koala interrupted her. “Just be more careful the next time. Oh, Muffy, before you go, let me ask you something.”

“What is it?”

“If I were to ask you to pick a really lucky number, what would you say?”

“Why, I think I’d say 192.”

“192? Now that’s a strange number. Why in the world would you choose 192?”

“Well, it’s kind of private...”

“Listen, I’m your physician, you can tell me,” Doctor Koala tried to persuade her.

“Okay, today it’s been exactly 192 days since I first met Hatchy, you see. Oh, not that’s it’s anything really serious, we take a walk together occasionally, that’s about all. He’s such a gentlekoala, so polite and considerate. And brave! Imagine, going up to that forest every day to look for bee hives to get the honey! Why, they could all sting him and kill him some day!”

“Don’t worry about that. Whenever I see him going up there, he always has his special suit with him, with that hood and the netted face mask. After that one time when two bees stung him in the nose and it swelled up like a balloon, I think he learned his lesson,” Doctor Koala laughed. “He won’t be getting close to bees anymore without protection.”

“Oh, I guess you’re right. Doctor Koala, you’ve known him longer than I have. Do you think he’ll ever seriously think about settling down, maybe starting a family...”

“Well, Muffy,” the Doctor replied with a smile, “that’s up to him, of course, but I will tell you one thing.”

“What’s that?”

Doctor Koala leaned a little closer to her, his tone of voice becoming a bit softer. “If I’m the keen observer I think I am, then I can tell you that if he ever *does* want to get married, it would be *you* whom he’ll ask.”

“Oh, my! Do you really think so? But where did you get that idea, did he tell you himself?”

“Enough questions about that! Let’s just say a doctor hears things others don’t, that’s all. Oh, about that number, 192. What I need is a number between 1 and 49. 192 is too high.”

“Oh, well then, how about...” Muffy paused, counting on the fingers of both hands, “12. Yes, 12 is a good number.”

“And why 12?” Doctor Koala queried.

“Oh, well, if I start with 192, then 1 plus 9 plus 2 equals 12.”

“I see. Okay, 12 it is! Thank you, Muffy. And check back with me if that elbow is still sore in three or four days.”

“Fine, Doctor. And thank you so much. Bye!” called Muffy as she walked away and headed for her tree.

“Let’s see...” the medicine koala muttered as he studied a piece of paper in front of him, “I’ve asked eleven koalas this morning, but only two of the numbers have repeated... 33 and 2. I wonder what Granddaddy and Sticky have come up with?”

Glancing out the window at the sundial on the ground some yards away from his tree, he thought to himself, “I guess it’s time to visit Claire and see if those liver pains of hers have subsided. Mmmm... She was always quite intuitive. Maybe *she* will be able to pick a few good numbers.”

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Walking slowly down the main path in the middle of Koalaville, Judge Granddaddy spotted his friend Sticky crossing the trail ahead of him.

“Sticky! Any luck with the numbers?”

“Oh, hi, Granddaddy. Well, I have quite a list here already,” Sticky said as he reached into the side pocket of his blue overalls and pulled out a piece of carefully folded white paper.

“The only thing is, not many koalas came up with the same numbers, so it doesn’t seem as if there is any general consensus about which ones might win.”



“Yeah, tell me about it,” the Judge replied, sounding somewhat frustrated. “I’ve been having the same problem. Every koala gives me a number, or even several, but only a few of them are repeated by other koalas, and so few that it looks like it’s coincidence.”

“You would think that we would be able to ‘feel’ the right numbers, wouldn’t you?” Sticky conjectured. “After all, winning this game would be a fine thing for our grove, so wouldn’t you think that we would be able to sense which numbers will be lucky? After all, there are only forty-nine of them in all.”

“True, but Mr. Johnson told me that considering the fact that we must choose six numbers out of those forty-nine, there are almost fourteen million combinations in all.”

“My, that does sound like a lot, doesn’t it? But no matter; that’s what luck is all about, and I just have the feeling that it is coming our way.”

“Oh, you are optimistic today!” Granddaddy laughed. “But then, maybe optimism is what we need. The truth is, it doesn’t matter much to me. After all, what do we need so much human money for? We already have everything we need!”

“Maybe so. But I just have this feeling…” Sticky repeated.

“Well, it’ll be fun one way or the other. Gives me the chance to strike up some conversation with a lot of koalas I haven’t spoken with in months. As a matter of fact, there’s another one. Sighbye, I believe his name his. Excuse me, Sticky. I’ll see you later.”

“Bye Granddaddy. Stop by for some tea later in the afternoon, and we’ll compare results.”

Sticky watched Granddaddy walk away, and then turned to his left, strolling over to the edge of the grove. Stopping at the westernmost tree, he looked over the field towards Eucalyptus Grove, a few hundred yards away. Perhaps Granddaddy didn’t know what they would do with the money, assuming that they did indeed win – but Sticky certainly did.

Ever since he was a koala child, Sticky liked to come over to the western edge and rest his gaze on the lush, dark green splendour of Eucalyptus Grove. Somehow, the green there was deeper, more genuine, reassuringly promising. Whenever he had the chance to eat some leaves from that grove, he could truly taste the difference. What a waste! The grove of their dreams, yet it was off limits for koala habitation.

If they could only win that money, then Sticky would somehow contact that human who owns it, pay him whatever he asks, and Eucalyptus Grove would be theirs. All the koalas of Koalaville would move over there, establish their new homes in those lovely trees, feast on the most delicious leaves in Southern Koalaland, and only have to lift their arms and pick

them in order to do so. Yes, that *would* be grand. And though everybody said it was highly unlikely that they would ever win, Sticky, for some inexplicable reason, had an inkling that it just might happen. After all, only six numbers separated them from the home of their dreams.

The only problem was, how could they come up with the numbers they needed? Though Sticky was no mathematician, even *he* could see that one in fourteen millions were not good odds.

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Doctor Koala found Claire napping on a low-lying branch of her tree, but even before he got there, her little Chihuahua started yapping, piercing the air with its staccato bark.

“What the devil does she see in that creature, anyway?” he thought to himself as he walked up and said to the dog, in an effort to quiet it down, “Calm down, boy! You should know me by now.”

“Oh, Doctor Koala! Here so soon?” Claire called down, having been woken by the Chihuahua. Claire was in the twilight of middle age, as attested by her white-streaked gray fur. She had put on a few too many pounds these last years, especially since the death of her mother, to whom she had had an exceptionally close relationship. Her lavender-colored overalls had side pockets that were outlined in a darker shade of purple; the single, larger breast pocket, perfectly centered in the bib of the garment, was decorated with a yellow stitched embroidery of her chihuahua, an embellishment she herself had added in her spare time.

“Why, I’m right on time, as a matter of fact. Wanted to ask you about those pains you were having.”

“They’re much better now. I’ve been taking that potion you prepared for me, and that seemed to help.” She moved from the branch to the trunk of the tree and climbed down to the ground. “Have a seat, Doc. Should I make us some tea?”

“No, I can’t stay long today. Just wanted to check that... Hey, what’s that?” Doctor Koala interrupted his own thought upon noticing a little bottle next to the trunk of the tree. Claire quickly reached over, picked it up and put it behind her.

“Oh, that’s nothing. Just a water bottle,” she explained.

“Let me see it,” said the Doctor firmly.

“Why, it’s just for water, I tell you. What’s the big deal?”

“Claire, give me that bottle right now!” he insisted, raising his voice a bit.

“Oh.... okay, here,” she moaned as she handed it to him. Doctor Koala smelled the rim of the bottle. “Water, huh? This had eucalyptus liquor in it. You’ve been drinking again!”

“Well, I... you know, I just need it at times,” Claire stammered.

“And then you wonder why you have liver pains? I’ve warned you again and again to lay off that stuff. You’re going to ruin your health even more if you keep that up!” he scolded. Then, in a softer, more compassionate tone, he went on. “Claire, don’t you see what you’re doing to yourself? I’ll be honest with you. You’ve aged more in these past two years than in the five years before that, and if you don’t stop drinking, you’ll end up in an early grave. Is that really what you want?”

“I know, I know...” Claire groaned in despair. “But ever since mom passed away in the last wet tail epidemic three years ago, I just haven’t been able to cope. So many died back then! I don’t have any close relatives here anymore. They’re all dead. Oh, Doctor Koala, I don’t see any reason to go on...”

“Don’t you dare talk like that, I forbid it! Claire, you’re a very special koala. You’ve helped so many around here with that special gift of yours. It’s rare that someone can get glimpses into the future, as you can, and see so many things that other koalas can’t. Why, I know many here in the grove who cherish the advice you give them more than anybody else’s. That should be what you focus on. Look towards your own future, and dedicate yourself to helping others. Stop feeling sorry for yourself. Do you think you are the only one who lost loved ones in that epidemic?”

“Oh, Doctor, I know you’re right. I’ve wanted to stop drinking so many times now. But I never seem to be able to,” Claire said, the tears welling up in her soft brown eyes.

“It’s not just a question of health. You know eucalyptus liquor is against the law in Koalaville. Do you want to legal have problems? I’ll bet that Bumpy and Humpy have been smuggling it in from Koalatown for you. Or was it Waroey and Usotsky?”

“Well, I promised I wouldn’t say anything, you understand...”

“Yeah, I understand,” said Doctor Koala sarcastically, “protecting the ones who are helping you ruin your life. I won’t try to pry it out of you, but I *will* see to it that Judge Granddaddy gives Handy permission to check up on those lowlifes. I can’t prove it, but I know for a fact that those four koalas make regular visits to Koalatown, and they don’t do it to admire the scenery. They’ve been smuggling that liquor in here for some time now, I’d bet on

it. Oh, by the way, speaking of betting...” Doctor Koala changed the subject, remembering the lottery. “There’s this game we want to play, and I thought that, well, considering your abilities, you might have some intuition about the numbers we need,” he went on to explain their plan to play the lottery.

“Well, Doctor Koala, I’d love to help you, but I’m afraid it doesn’t work that way.”

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“You see, when I am with somebody, I often get these visions in my mind, things related to that particular koala, or to a situation. But numbers are so abstract, I wouldn’t pick up anything. Of course, I could give you my favorite number: 7. I don’t know if that will do you any good though...” Claire said apologetically.

“Oh well, I thought it’d be worth a try. I’ll write that down. Another vote for 7. That’s the second one today. Oh, yes, and about that liquor. I’m going to think about it, about what we can do to help you. And I’d like to stress the ‘we’, because if you don’t want to help yourself, nobody else can help you, either. Do you understand that, Claire?”

“Yes, I suppose I do, Doctor. I wish I weren’t such a disappointment for you,” she said sadly, lowering her furry head in embarrassment.

“Oh, nonsense! You’ve got an illness, that’s all,” Doctor Koala said, trying to lift her spirits, “...and since I’m a physician, it’s my job to figure out what we should do. I’ll give it some thought, and drop by here tomorrow, same time. Will that be all right with you?”

“Why, yes it will, Doctor, and I thank you so much for your concern!”

“Claire, we’ve known each other since we were children. That’s a bond that can never be severed. You’ll always have a friend in me.”

“Oh, thank you so much, Doc!” Claire said, almost crying when she heard his kind, reassuring words.

“But as far as those other ‘friends’ of yours are concerned – Bumpy, Humpy, Waroey, Usotsky, or whoever it was who brought you that liquor – you stay away from them, do you hear me?” he admonished her.

“Okay, I will,” Claire promised.

“All right, Claire, I’ll see you tomorrow, then. And don’t forget to take some drops of that potion throughout the day.

“I won’t forget, Doctor. Thank you so much! Good-bye!”

“Bye, Claire. See you tomorrow.” Doctor Koala walked away, reaching up to wipe a small tear from the corner of his left eye. He really cared for Claire. He had known her for so long, and knew that she was very sensitive. No wonder she had trouble coping at times. But he had seldom known a koala who cared so much about others. Claire was always willing to give advice to those who needed it, and her extraordinary perceptive powers allowed her to pick up things about others that no one else could see. Yet when her old mother died so miserably in that last epidemic, her spirit seemed to break, and now, for more than two years, she had been trying to drown her sorrows with that eucalyptus liquor. Of course she had liver problems; you can’t drink such quantities of that stuff and go unpunished.

But he would think of a way to help her. Meanwhile, he was going to see to it that the mangy koalas who brought her the stuff were found and duly punished. He was sure that his friend the Judge would agree wholeheartedly.

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That evening, Doctor Koala, Judge Granddaddy and Sticky were sitting at the base of a tree, carefully studying the numbers on the papers they were holding.

“Let’s see,” Granddaddy glanced down his list, “three koalas chose the number 33. That could be a good sign. I also have three votes for 9, but no other number occurs more than twice on my list.”

“I have four votes for the number 5,” added Sticky. “Do you think that’s significant? Maybe 5 should be one of the numbers we play.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t put too much faith in that,” answered Doctor Koala. “They probably said 5 just because everyone has five fingers on his hand. Oh, but wait... I have three votes for 5. Who knows, maybe we should play it. And you, Granddaddy?”

“I have two votes for 5. Should that be one of the numbers we play, then?”

“Might as well be,” replied Doctor Koala, “since it looks to me as if this whole thing will end up being a guessing game anyway. Not a single koala seemed to intuit anything special. Not even Claire, and if she can’t peek into the future, nobody can.”

“True,” said Granddaddy, “if Claire didn’t pick up any vibes, it doesn’t seem as if our chances of getting those numbers are very great. And the truth is, I’m getting tired of writing down numbers and studying them. Why don’t we just pick out some that seem good to us, and decide to play them?”

“No objection to that. I’m pretty bored with this myself,” Sticky remarked.

“That makes three of us,” Doctor Koala agreed. “So, let’s say 5 will be one number.... 33 another...”

“...and then 9, and how about 21?” Granddaddy asked.

“Okay, 5, 33, 9, 21,” Sticky jotted down, “...and we’ll add 3 and 27. Sound good to you two?”

“Fine, whatever,” Granddaddy said.

“Okay then, we’ve got them,” Doctor Koala concluded. “5, 33, 9, 21, 3 and 27. Six numbers. Mission accomplished.”

“As long as they win,” Sticky said.

“Only time will tell that. And now, the best part of the day: time to get some sleep!” Granddaddy said with a yawn.

“All right then,” Sticky responded, “I’ll keep these numbers till Mr. Johnson comes on Friday, and we’ll play them. Oooohhh,” he too yawned, “I’m pretty tired myself. I’m off to my tree. I’ll see you two tomorrow.”

“Bye, Sticky!” the Judge and Doctor Koala called.

“Well then, get some ‘koalaty’ rest, Granddaddy.”

“I surely will, Doc. And you sleep well, too,” Granddaddy answered.

With that, each of them walked off to his tree. They had had a very active day, and now wanted nothing more than to drift off into Dreamland.

## The Golden Leaves

“Doctor Koala! Doctor Koala!” Claire cried as she hurried over to his tree just as he was about to leave to make his daily rounds.

“Claire, what are you doing here? I said I’d visit you today. Oh no, are those pains worse again?”

“No, no, they’re almost gone. I just had to tell you about a dream I had,” Claire said excitedly.

“Nightmares, huh? Well, alcohol can have that effect, you know.”

“No, no, Doc. It wasn’t a nightmare. It was about those numbers for that game.”

“Oh yes, the lottery numbers. Well, we already have the numbers we’re going to play. 5, 33, 9, and three more. They’re on this paper,” he said, reaching into his pocket and taking it out, “21, 3 and 27. That’s the six of them.”

“33, yes, but not the other five.” Claire corrected him.

“What are you talking about, Claire?” Doctor Koala asked, puzzled.

“Well, let me tell you about my dream. I was sitting on the ground, leaning up against my tree, and dozing...”

“Claire! You know you shouldn’t sleep on the ground! Those pains might come back!” Doctor Koala scolded her.

“No, no, Doctor. I was sleeping on my branch, as always, but in my dream, I was dozing, sitting on the ground,” she explained.

“Oh, I see,” her physician muttered in a calmer tone.

“As I was saying, in my dream, I was sitting there, my back against the tree-trunk, dozing, then I opened my eyes – in the dream, I opened my eyes – and saw a golden leaf gently falling to the ground.”

“And...?” Doctor Koala inquired.

“...And there was a number on that leaf. The number 47.” Claire continued. “Then, as soon as it reached the ground, another leaf began to fall from a branch. It was also golden, and the number on it was 4. Then another fell, and it had 33 on it. That’s why I said that 33 was a good number for us.”

“Go on,” said Doctor Koala, now visibly intrigued.

“Well, three more leaves fell, all were golden, each had a number. One had number 7, the next, 41, and the last was 25. I wrote them all down as soon as I woke up. Here they are.” She pulled a small piece of paper out of the bib pocket of her overalls, and handed it to him.

“Mmm. 47, 4, 33, 41, 25, 7. Six numbers in all. Quite interesting, to be sure,” Doctor Koala murmured. “Claire, I’m going to confer with the Judge and Sticky. I’m pretty sure they will agree with me. That dream of yours has all the hallmarks of something magical. I think it won’t be hard to convince them that these are the numbers we should play!”

“Well, I don’t know, but that was the dream, and it was so beautiful... those golden leaves falling right down in front of me! I had the feeling that the dream *was* magical, just as you said!”

“I thank you very much for coming over, Claire. I’ve got a better feeling about this lottery now. Let’s hope that the magic becomes reality!”

“Yes, wouldn’t that be nice?” Claire added.

“Well, as long as you’re feeling better today, I guess I won’t have to visit you. But I’ve been thinking about what we can do about that problem of yours,” said the doctor, lowering his voice discreetly so that no passersby could hear. “I’ll get back to you in a few days. I’ve got an idea, but have to give it some more thought.”

“Oh, thank you so much, Doctor. I’ll be awaiting your visit. And I promise I’ll only drink water till then,” she said with a smile.

“Good girl!” Doctor Koala chuckled. “I’ll see you in a couple of days, then. Got to be off for my rounds now. Have a good day. And thanks so much for telling me that dream!”

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Around noon, Doctor Koala stopped by Judge Granddaddy’s tree. Sticky was already there.

“Mr. Johnson will be here tomorrow, and we’ll be ready. I think we have some pretty good numbers,” Sticky remarked.

“Forget *those* numbers. *Here* are the numbers we’re going to play,” the doctor said, placing the list of Claire’s “magical” numbers on the table in front of them. He then went on to tell them about her dream, of the numbers engraved on the gently falling golden leaves.

“My word!” Sticky exclaimed. “That is a remarkable story. Why, I do believe we should play these. What do you think, Granddaddy?”



“Sounds good to me. Claire always was able to see more than anybody else. Do you remember a few years ago, when she had that dream that koalas were losing consciousness and falling out of their branches, dead as doornails?”

“Yes, indeed I do,” Doctor Koala answered. “It was only one week later that the wet tail epidemic struck, and that is exactly what happened. They began falling like flies.”

“What a terrible time that was,” said Sticky sadly, “but we must look towards the future, and perhaps these numbers will be a good beginning.”

“It’s settled, then. These are the numbers we will play,” Granddaddy stated firmly.

## A Visit to Humanland

At a quarter past nine the next morning, Mr. Johnson's Land Rover pulled up to the southern tip of Koalaville. Judge Granddaddy, Doctor Koala, Sticky and a few more koalas were there to welcome him.

"Hello, my friends!" the human greeted them jovially. "Has anyone decided to go to the city with me today?"

"Well, sir, after thinking about it for a while, I thought that I would, if you have no objections."

"Of course not, Sticky. Nobody else want to go?"

"Thank you for the offer," Doctor Koala responded, but I must make my rounds. Granddaddy seems to think he's too old to travel, and he just may be right," he added with a laugh.

"Oh, I'm not *that* old, but no thanks. The truth is, I don't care much for humans – present company excepted, of course – and from what I've heard, Human City isn't exactly a paradise of peace and tranquility, which are perhaps the two things I value most in life," Judge Granddaddy explained.

"Well, you're right there," Mr. Johnson agreed, "and I can well understand that you'd prefer to stay here. Nonetheless, I think Sticky and I will have a fine time. It will no doubt be quite educational for you."

"You're making me even more curious, sir," Sticky said. "Would you like a bit of breakfast before we go?"

"No, thank you. I ate before I left the farm. I have a few errands to make in the city, so I'd just as soon start out now."

"Fine, sir. Well then, good-bye, all!" Sticky waved to his friends. "I should be back by this evening, isn't that right, Mr. Johnson?"

"Oh, yes, no problem. Hop in!" the human invited him, opening the door of his vehicle. Sticky climbed into the Land Rover and took his place in the passenger's seat.

"Oh, wait," Mr. Johnson said, opening the back door and taking out several very thick telephone books. Asking Sticky to move over a bit, he placed them on his seat. "You might want to sit on these. That way, you can look out the window while we're traveling."

“Why, that’s very thoughtful of you, sir!” Sticky replied gratefully just before climbing up onto the books. “Oh, yes, now I can see right out the windows!”

Mr. Johnson helped Sticky buckle his seat belt, closed the door on the passenger’s side, then walked around and got into the driver’s seat. Looking over to the right, they waved good-bye to their friends, who waved in return. Mr. Johnson started the motor, and the Land Rover slowly drove off southwestwards. The human highway was about ten or eleven miles away in that direction; until they got there, they would have to drive over the rough terrain, but Sticky didn’t seem to mind at all.

“My, this is an impressive vehicle,” he marvelled. “It’s almost scary, that noise it makes.”

“That’s the motor, Sticky,” Mr. Johnson explained. “It’s what makes it move.”

“Well, if I may be honest, I think I prefer an anteater wagon, or a cart pulled by an emu, but I’m sure your vehicle does have its advantages.”

“Yes, I suppose it does!” Mr. Johnson laughed. “I can travel hundreds of miles with this, over just about any terrain. Of course, you koalas never have to travel such distances.”

“No, we don’t, and it’s just as well. I wouldn’t feel right, being so far away from my beloved Koalaland for any length of time.”

They continued to converse all the way to the highway, and when they finally were within sight of it, Sticky was amazed.

“Why, there must be hundreds of these vehicles on that road. I never imagined there could be so many!”

“Oh, of course there are, and millions more like them in the human world.”

“But isn’t it dangerous, with so many humans driving at such great rates of speed? I hate to admit it, but I am a bit frightened,” Sticky confessed as Mr. Johnson pulled out onto the highway and increased his speed.

“Don’t worry, Sticky, we’ll be fine. But you are right. Thousands of people are killed every year because they aren’t careful when driving. At such high speeds, an accident can be fatal, you know.”

“Well, there’s no need to go exceedingly fast on my account,” Sticky said, visibly nervous. “I’m in no great hurry!”

Mr. Johnson laughed a bit. “No need to worry. I’m only going fifty. Sit back, relax, and enjoy the view!”

“There aren’t many trees in this landscape,” Sticky noticed. “What happened to them all?”

“People cut them down, for farmland, or for construction.”

“Well, the constructions around here aren’t very beautiful,” Sticky remarked. “How *could* anything be really beautiful with so few trees around?”

“You may have a point,” Mr. Johnson agreed. “I suppose that from a koala’s perspective, a lack of trees makes everything seem very barren.”

“Absolutely. As we koalas have always said, ‘A life without trees would not be worth living’.”

“That’s a beautiful sentiment, it is,” Mr. Johnson smiled.

They continued to converse until they arrived in the city. The things Sticky saw there caused him to drop his jaw in amazement: entire blocks of buildings, streets filled with cars and trucks, traffic lights, shop after shop, shrill neon lights blinking incessantly, humans, more humans, humans everywhere... and noise. A nearby car blew its horn, and Sticky’s hands went instinctively to his furry ears. “Oh, it’s so loud here! How do you stand it!”

“Well, we humans don’t hear as well as you koalas do, so it’s somewhat easier for us to tolerate. But the truth is, I couldn’t stand living here. That’s why I prefer to stay out in the country, on my farm. I only drive up here every week or two to buy food and other essentials.”

“I do believe I will have quite a few stories to tell about all this when I get back to Koalaland!” Sticky said.

“Now that’s looking at the bright side!” Mr. Johnson laughed.

After driving through a series of streets, Mr. Johnson parked his vehicle in front of a shop.

“Well, here it is. The lottery shop. Get your numbers ready, Sticky!”

“I have them right here,” Sticky replied, patting the breast pocket of his navy blue overalls.

Mr. Johnson got out, walked over to the curb side, opened the passenger’s door, unlocked Sticky’s seat belt and extended his hand to help him out.

“No, thank you. We koalas need no help when climbing,” Sticky remarked, then quickly climbed off the books and seat and leapt out onto the ground.

“No, I suppose you don’t!” Mr. Johnson chuckled. “How about if I let you buy the ticket yourself. It might be an interesting experience for you.”

“Why, that would be pleasantly exciting!” replied Sticky enthusiastically.

They entered the shop. The shopkeeper, an older man wearing a visor cap, was behind the counter. He had his back turned to them, as he was placing some cans on one of the shelves on the wall behind the counter.

“Excuse me, sir,” Sticky said.

The man turned around, yet saw only Mr. Johnson five or six yards away, next to the entrance, looking at some magazines.

“Did you say that?” he asked incredulously, since the voice had not sounded like that of a man, and had certainly not come from that distance.

“No sir, it was I,” Sticky explained.

The shopkeeper looked down over the outer edge of the counter, and saw two furry ears on top of an equally furry head. He bent forwards to see what it was. “Was that you?” he asked with a tone of disbelief. “Or are you one of those ventriloquists?” he inquired, looking over at Mr. Johnson again.

“No, I’m no ventriloquist,” Mr. Johnson laughed.

“And it *was* I who spoke to you,” Sticky confirmed.

“Well, I’ll be! You must be one of those talkin’ koalas! I read about your kind in the Geographic Journal a few years ago, but I’ve never seen one of you in person... I mean, in koala, I guess.”

“Sir, I would like to express an interest in purchasing one of those...” Sticky was interrupted at this point by the shopkeeper...

“Oh, listen to that! He can’t only talk, he talks real fine at that! ‘Express an interest in purchasing’! Now that’s a dandy way of sayin’ you wanna buy somethin’, isn’t it? I do believe he talks better than my human customers!” the shopkeeper said with obvious delight, reaching over the counter and patting Sticky on the head as if he were a dog. Sticky didn’t like it, but courtesy forbade him to protest, for he didn’t want to insult the first human he had met in the city.

“As I was saying, sir, I would like to purchase a lottery ticket. I have my numbers right here,” he said, pulling the paper out of his pocket.

“A lottery ticket!” the shopkeeper marveled. “A talkin’ koala buyin’ a lottery ticket! My friends’ll call me a liar when I tell ’em this one! Oh, I’ve got to get a photo, sir...” he said to Mr. Johnson while reaching under the counter and taking out a camera. “Would you mind takin’ a picture of me with this little feller? Nobody’ll believe me if I don’t have a photo.”

“Well, I suppose so,” Mr. Johnson said, walking up to the counter and taking the camera from him. The shopkeeper walked around to the front and offered to lift Sticky up so that he could sit on the counter, in order to fit into the picture. Sticky declined the help, deftly pulled himself up onto the counter, and sat on its edge, the man standing right next to him.

“Say ‘cheese’, you two,” Mr. Johnson said just before snapping the photo.

“Thank you, sir,” the shopkeeper said. “I think I’ll have this picture framed and put it right up here on the wall,” he said, pointing to a vacant space between two sets of shelves. “Good publicity, the way I see it. If people see that even koalas buy their lottery tickets here, I’m sure to make more sales!”

“About that lottery ticket, sir...” Sticky said hesitatingly, not knowing quite how to dampen the man’s enthusiasm long enough to get him to actually sell him the ticket.

“Oh, right, one lottery ticket comin’ up,” the shopkeeper reached under the counter, took out a form used to mark the numbers, and explained to Sticky how it had to be filled out.

“I’ll mark in the numbers if you want, little feller. I don’t suppose you know how... Why, I’ll be! Look at that! He’s actually markin’ them off, one by one!”

“I do know how to write, sir,” Sticky said, trying to hide the resentment he felt at the man’s presuming his ignorance.

“You surely do! You got ’em all marked in just fine! This one’s on me,” said the man, reaching into his pocket and taking out a one-dollar bill.

“Oh, no, I wouldn’t think of it!” Sticky protested, taking the dollar that Mr. Johnson had given him out of his side pocket.

“Amazin’! He even has money!” the man exclaimed. “Well, I wouldn’t want to wound your pride, so if you wanna pay, that’s fine with me.”

Sticky handed him the bill, and the man ran the form with the numbers through a machine which immediately produced the lottery ticket itself.

“Now, you take good care of this,” the shopkeeper advised. “If you get the numbers right, you’ll need this to claim your prize.”

“Yes sir, my friend Mr. Johnson here explained the entire procedure to me.”

“Oh, that’s somethin’! Listen to how he can talk!” the shopkeeper flashed a big grin. “Is there anything else I can do for you fellers?”

Mr. Johnson bought a couple of cans of soda and a magazine called “Better Farming”. Then he and Sticky said good-bye to the shopkeeper and left the shop.

“Well, Sticky, you’ve just made your first purchase in Human City.”

“Yes, though I must admit it was somewhat stressful. Are all humans as excitable as he is?”

“No, of course not!” Mr Johnson replied. “Though a lot of them will be when they talk to you. After all, there has been practically no contact between people and you koalas, those of the intelligent variety, that is.”

“I’m beginning to think it was a wise decision our elders made when they decided that we koalas should have as little contact with humans as possible. Somehow I think socializing with them would significantly increase our stress level, and as you know, we koalas are not able to tolerate excessive amounts of stress.”

“Yes, I see what you mean,” Mr. Johnson expressed his understanding.

Walking around the streets, Sticky began to feel paranoid. Almost every human that passed them gave him a funny look. Some smiled, others laughed, still others stared in disbelief, especially when they heard him say something to Mr. Johnson. The worst were the children, who would walk up to him unashamedly and stroke his fur, or would block his path and start yelling things like “Look, ma! It’s a real koala! Can we take him home with us?” Most mothers would take their children by the hand and lead them off, but a few patted Sticky’s head, obviously as delighted to see him as their children were. Mr. Johnson took Sticky’s hand in such cases, and quickly led him away, saying they had to get to an appointment.

“Sticky, it looks like you’re a real celebrity!” Mr. Johnson joked.

“I might start to get used to it, if they didn’t pat me on the head. That is a most disagreeable feeling, it is,” Sticky complained.

“Oh, I can imagine, but people think you’re cute, and that’s what they do when they’re with somebody who is cute.”

“Perhaps I should try to look ugly, or make some horrid sound to scare them off?” Sticky mulled.

“Oh, don’t worry. We’ll go into that restaurant over there and get something to eat, and then drive around a bit. They can’t pat your head when you’re in the Land Rover.”

Sticky liked being in the restaurant a lot better than walking around the streets. There weren’t many customers there at the moment, so it was relatively quiet. The waitress was

friendly, though very surprised to see a koala there. Mr. Johnson ordered a steak with potatoes and some vegetables. Then the waitress asked, "Can I get something for your pet, too, sir?"

"Pet? Oh, you mean my friend here. No, he can order for himself."

"Yes, miss, if you don't mind," Sticky said.

"Oh, it's one of those talking ones! I heard something about your kind on TV! Say... could I have your autograph? My little sister just loves koalas! Not that I don't, I mean..."

"Why, yes, I suppose so," Sticky pulled a pen that Mr. Johnson had given him out of his pocket, and the waitress gave him a piece of paper.

"There you are," he said after signing his name.

"Oh, 'Sticky'! That's a cute name, it really is!" the waitress smiled with delight.

"Oh, thank you, I guess," Sticky looked at the name tag on her dress. "Jenny is a cute name, also. It sounds like a koala name, as a matter of fact, though I have never met a koala named Jenny."

"Oh, that's nice of you to say! I never thought of my name as a koala name, but then, why not? Oh, I'm sorry..." the waitress picked up her order pad again. "What can I bring you to eat?"

"Well, I thought I might try one of these grilled cheese sandwiches, and to drink, a root beer," Sticky told her.

"One grilled cheese and root beer, coming right up," she smiled again as she hurried off to fill the order.

"A very nice human, I think," Sticky opined. "I hope the sandwich agrees with my stomach."

"Oh, I'm sure it will," Mr. Johnson said. "You koalas eat more than just leaves these days, and some bread and cheese surely won't hurt you."

When their meal was served, Sticky took a sip of the root beer.

"Why, this tastes just like some medicine Doctor Koala once gave me," Sticky remarked.

"Don't you like it? It's true that some people say that root beer tastes like medicine," Mr. Johnson said.

"Or perhaps medicine tastes like root beer?" Sticky speculated. "In any case, I think it's delicious. As you know, we koalas don't drink much, but in this case, I think I'll make an exception," Sticky took a big gulp, after which he burped. "Oh, I'm sorry, that wasn't very polite..."



“That’s all right,” Mr. Johnson laughed. “I guess you’re not used to that carbonation.”

For dessert, Sticky ordered a small hot fudge sundae, and loved it. “That was one of the most delicious things I have ever eaten in all my life. But can something so tasty be good for you?”

“Well, it might not be the most nutritious food in the world, but there’s nothing wrong with splurging on occasion,” Mr Johnson reassured him.

The long ride back to the grove was partly spent in amiable conversation. Sticky had a hundred questions to ask Mr. Johnson about all the things he had seen that day in the city, yet all the excitement had understandably made him weary, and after about a half hour, Mr Johnson noticed that he was silent. Looking over, he saw that Sticky had fallen fast asleep.

The sun had almost gone down when they arrived in Koalaville. Mr Johnson gently awakened Sticky, who was surprised to see that he was home again. They got out of the vehicle, and Sticky thanked him for a memorable day.

“Don’t mention it, Sticky, it was my pleasure. Whenever you want, you can go along with me again.”

“Thank you kindly, sir, but I think I’ll need a few months to assimilate all the impressions I had today.”

“Oh, I quite understand!” Mr Johnson smiled. “Well, I’ll be going now. Keep that lottery ticket in a safe place.”

“Indeed I will, Mr. Johnson. Thanks again for everything!” Sticky waved as the human got into his Land Rover and drove off towards his farm, several miles to the southwest, just on the other side of the border to Koalaland.

Sticky first thought of finding his friends Granddaddy and Doctor Koala to tell them about everything he had seen in Human City, but he was completely exhausted, so he decided that there would be enough time to socialize the next day. He headed straight for his tree, climbed up to his favorite branch, curled up, and was soon in Dreamland.

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The next morning, Sticky met with his two friends and told them all about his experiences in the city.

“That all sounds quite fascinating,” said Judge Granddaddy, “but I think it would be too much for me. All that noise!”

“Yes, surely,” Doctor Koala agreed. “We koalas are better off right here. Nonetheless, I suppose it is good to know more about how the humans live, if only so that we can avoid imitating them.”

“True, true,” Sticky replied. “Well, in any case, we have our lottery ticket. Mr. Johnson said he’d be sure to let us know if we win. The drawing is tonight, you know.”

“Let’s not count on that,” Granddaddy said. “It’s only a game, after all. Speaking of games, how about a round of cards?”

“You took the words right out of my mouth,” Doctor Koala responded, taking a deck of cards out of his pocket, “I just happen to have them right here.”

The three indulged in an amusing session of six games, after which nobody could complain, since each had won two hands.

## Interlude: The other Side of the Grove

Elsewhere, in a less privileged section Koalaville...

“Hey Chigow, what’s in that big basket?” Blimpy asked as he approached his friend, who was sitting at the base of his tree.

“I’m glad you asked. Look here!” Chigow answered, removing a cloth that was covering the contents of the basket.

“Walnuts! And without the shells! It must have taken a long time to gather ’em, and especially to crack all the shells. How long did it take you to do that?” Blimpy asked as he reached over, took a walnut from the basket and stuffed it into his mouth.

“It didn’t take me any time at all. I traded for ’em. All these walnuts for one bottle of eucalyptus liquor,” Chigow responded, “but it was our last bottle.”

“Oh, no! Well, these are good, anyway. Quite a good deal you made, I’d say. There must be hundreds of ’em in this basket. If we don’t eat ’em ourselves, we could trade ’em for at least three bottles over in Koalatown,” Blimpy suggested.

“Just what I was thinkin’. Maybe we should take a little stroll over there today, and make the trade,” said Chigow. “But let’s make sure nobody sees us comin’ or goin’. I heard that Doctor Koala is tryin’ to figure out how the liquor is getting’ into our grove. He suspects it was Warooey and Usotsky, or maybe your brother Bumpy and his homely gang. Nobody suspects us, and let’s keep it that way.”

“Right,” Blimpy laughed, “let those other mangy koalas take the heat! My brother deserves any trouble we can get him into. The last time I saw him, he punched me in the snoot just ’cause I said he was as dumb as he is ugly. It still hurts a little. You and me should concentrate on doin’ business as we see fit. We’ll be better off for it! Why, we traded the last batch of eucalyptus liquor for all those nice berries and a beautiful wooden box with real metal hinges. It’s even waterproof!”

“Yeah, that’s a real beauty. It’ll last us a lifetime, unless we trade it for more liquor. Uh, you know, I was thinkin’, maybe we shouldn’t trade after all...” Chigow said slyly.

“What? This is goin’ great! Why should we stop now? There are a few koalas here in Koalaville who would give us *anything* for that liquor. Who are *we* to disappoint them?” Blimpy protested.

“Oh, don’t worry,” Chigow tried to calm him down. “I didn’t say we shouldn’t smuggle in any more liquor. I just said maybe we shouldn’t be *tradin’*.”

“Well, that Tama who makes the stuff over in Koalatown isn’t gonna give it to us for free. Eucalyptus liquor is legal over there, and it’s his business to make it and trade it for stuff,” Blimpy explained.

“Yeah, I know, but what I mean is, suppose we sneaked over to Koalatown some night when everybody’s asleep, went to Tama’s supply shack, and helped ourselves without anybody noticin’?” Chigow said with a devious smile.

“Oh, you mean we should steal it? Hmmm, that would have its advantages,” Blimpy thought out loud, “but suppose they catch us?”

“If we’re clever about it, they won’t, and when they notice it’s missin’ the next day, they wouldn’t suspect us. After all, there are more than enough crooks who live right there in Koalatown, and who steal things all the time: Chuppy, Guppy and Moldy, just to name a few. They’re always the usual suspects when somethin’ happens over there. Nobody would think that *we* were behind it.”

“Hmmm, that sounds logical, and it might be fun, too!” Blimpy seemed to like the idea.

“It’s settled, then,” Chigow concluded. “We’ll sneak over around midnight. Let’s take these walnuts and put ’em into a bag. Then we can take the basket with us tonight. It should hold a bunch of bottles.”

“Good idea,” Blimpy said, and they began putting the walnuts into a cloth sack that Chigow had next to him. Then, after carefully making their plans for their nighttime visit to Koalatown, they both ate a few leaves and a couple of walnuts, and then took a wonderfully long nap.

## A Surprise Visit

On Moonday afternoon, several koalas who were sitting on high branches in their trees noticed Mr. Johnson's Land Rover in the distance to the south; he was obviously going to pay Koalaville an unexpected visit. One of them, Crabby, thought to himself, "Oh, it seems like we'll never be able to get rid of that human. Now he's coming back every few days!"

The koalas on the ground, among them Sticky, Judge Granddaddy and Doctor Koala, also noticed the approaching vehicle.

"I wonder why Mr. Johnson is coming here today?" Granddaddy said. "Do you think he forgot something the other day?"

None of them dared to say it aloud, but all were asking themselves the same question: Could this visit have something to do with the lottery?

Soon the Land Rover pulled up and stopped. Mr. Johnson quickly got out, carrying the daily newspaper.

"Hi, my friends! I just had to come over right away!" he greeted them.

"What is it, sir?" Sticky asked.

"Well, I've been anxious ever since I bought the newspaper. You see, I forgot to write down the numbers that you played the other day. I could only remember three of them: 33, 4 and 7. And today in the paper, I saw that in Saturday's drawing, these were three of the numbers that were picked. But what were the other three that you played?" he asked excitedly, sitting down on the ground in front of their table and placing the open newspaper on it.

"Oh, I'm not quite sure," Sticky answered. "Wait here – I'll go back to my tree and fetch the ticket." With that, he turned and began to jog up through the grove. His mind was racing: could it be that they had won? No, that would be too much of a good thing. But suppose he couldn't find the ticket? Or suppose someone had stolen it? True, nobody had ever stolen anything from him before, and none of the koalas in the grove would have known what to do with the lottery ticket anyway, but he'd feel better once he had it in his hand. Reaching his tree, he leapt onto the trunk and scurried up to the branch where he kept a little box with a number of articles inside. Carefully laid out on the bottom, beneath a folded piece of paper, a little bottle of ink and a feather pen, he found the ticket. He looked at it with a smile, then carefully put it into his pocket, climbed down the tree, and jogged back to his waiting friends.

“I’ve got it!” Sticky announced when he got there. He took his place at the table, and began to read the numbers. “As you said, Mr Johnson, three of the numbers we played were 4, 7 and 33. The other three were 25, 41 and 47.”

Mr. Johnson looked down intensely at the open page in the newspaper, and then asked, with growing excitement in his voice, “Did you say 25? And 41? And 47?”

“Yes, I did, sir,” Sticky replied.

“Give me that ticket, please,” Mr. Johnson took the ticket from Sticky, studied the numbers on it; then he looked back at the newspaper. He couldn’t believe what he saw.

“You’ve won! You’ve actually won the lottery!” he cried out so loudly that the koalas were almost frightened at his outburst.

“What!” Doctor Koala gasped. “Are you serious?” he leaned over to take a look at the ticket, and compare the numbers on it to those in the paper. “Why, he’s right. They’re the same numbers!”

“Well, I’ll be!” Granddaddy blurted out. “Who would have thought it? I guess Claire picked our lucky numbers after all!”

Only Sticky was speechless. Doctor Koala and Granddaddy were happy, to be sure, but mainly because they had simply won a game. They didn’t fully realize the implications of what had happened, but Sticky did, as did Mr Johnson, who, beside himself with joy, exclaimed, “You have really won! Eight million dollars! Do you know what that means?”

“Let’s see,” Doctor Koala muttered, “eight million sounds like a rather large number, but what good is having eight million dollars, if we koalas don’t even know what we could do with one or two of them?”

“Well, *I* certainly wouldn’t know. Maybe you would like to have them, Mr Johnson?” Granddaddy offered.

“Oh, no, I couldn’t accept that. It’s your money. You picked the numbers, and Sticky here bought the ticket himself.”

“Uh, Mr. Johnson, didn’t you tell me a few months ago that the human who owns Eucalyptus Grove would like to sell it?” Sticky asked.

“Yes, he does. His problem is that no human wants to buy it, since the state won’t allow the trees to be cut down, so they wouldn’t be able to build anything on it anyway,” Mr Johnson explained.

“And how much money does he want for it?” Sticky asked, as it gradually dawned on his friends what he was getting at.

“He wants a million dollars, the last I heard,” Mr Johnson answered.

“In that case, it is clear,” Sticky replied with a sudden burst of determined enthusiasm. He quickly got up out of his chair and took a few steps away from the table.

“My friends,” he announced in a tone of joyous resolve as he lifted his left hand and held out his arm straight, pointing directly between two trees, and over towards Eucalyptus Grove in the distance. “Behold! *That* is going to be our new home!”

Granddaddy and Doctor Koala looked at each other for a moment, surprised and almost bewildered, then looked up at Mr. Johnson. “Would that be possible, sir?” Doctor Koala asked him.

“Of course it would be!” Mr Johnson replied, laughing merrily. “You have more than enough money. You can buy it whenever you want!”

“Why, I never thought I’d live to see the day...” Doctor Koala muttered. “Imagine... we can all move over to that beautiful grove! Pinch me, Granddaddy, I think I must be dreaming!”

“Not before you pinch me,” Granddaddy replied, “because I’m having the very same dream.”

The conversation that followed was long and animated, though interrupted by occasional pauses during which all involved merely stared at each other in a daze, hardly able to fully comprehend the luck they had had.

At one point, Sticky suggested, “I do believe this would be a good moment to call a special session of the Koalaville Council, don’t you?”

“Why, of course, you’re right,” Granddaddy agreed. Then, calling out to a young koala who was walking nearby, “Hey, you! Would you come over here?”

The koala immediately trotted over to them. “Yes, sir, Judge. I’m not in any trouble, am I?”

“Well, hello, Wheezy!” Doctor Koala greeted him. “How’s that asthma of yours?”

“Oh, it’s somewhat better, Doctor Koala, since you gave me that mint flavored eucalyptus tea to drink.”

“Glad to hear it,” the doctor replied.

“Wheezy,” Granddaddy said, “I’ve got a favor to ask of you.”

“What can I do for you, Judge, sir?”

“Go to the members of the Council – those who aren’t here already, naturally – and tell them to come over right away.”

“Oh, well, I’m not so sure who all the members are...” Wheezy said, a bit embarrassed about his ignorance.

“Yes, of course. Let me write them down for you.” Granddaddy took a feather pen out of his breast pocket, opened a little bottle of ink that was on the table in front of him, dipped the pen into it and began to write on a piece of paper.

“Chosay and Chashibu. They live in the trees next to mine.”

“Yes, I know them, sir,” Wheezy commented.

“Then there are Kashy and Gruffy. Gruffy lives in the center of the grove, Kashy in the west, about twelve trees up from here. Then there’s Claire, over on the western central edge, and Tecky, he lives up in the northeast...”

“Oh yes, I know him well. Just the other week I traded with him for a bunch of berries I had picked. He gave me a nice little box in exchange. I use it to keep my medicine in. This asthma really slows me down sometimes,” Wheezy wheezed as he strained a bit to take a deep breath.

“Wheezy, if you don’t feel up to the task, we could find somebody else to round up the members,” Doctor Koala expressed his concern.

“Oh, no, Doctor,” Wheezy answered, “I would be honored to be of assistance, and I’m doing all right today. Besides, I’ll get my brother Queezy to help me find them.”

“Excellent, Wheezy. I like your spirit. Tell them all we’ll meet here three hours from now. Oh, wait a minute,” Granddaddy hesitated, “say it’s important that all are present.”

“Will do, Granddaddy,” Wheezy said. “Should I go now, or is there anything else?”

“No, that will be it. Go get your brother Queezy, and make sure all the koalas on this list are informed. Wait a second... let me see if I remembered everybody. Sticky, Doctor Koala and myself are already here. On the list, we have Chosay, Chashibu, Kashy, Gruffy, Tecky, and of course Claire. She’s the one who dreamed up the numbers, so she simply must be told. Oh yes, I forgot our youngest member, Handy,” Granddaddy said, jotting down Handy’s name on the list below Claire’s. “Three members here, seven on the list to be rounded up. Ten in all, the complete Council. Here it is,” Granddaddy said, handing him the piece of paper.

Wheezy took a quick look at it, folded it, put it into the pocket of his overalls, said good-bye to all and walked away.



Granddaddy, Sticky and Doctor Koala then continued their conversation with Mr. Johnson, who began to explain to them how they could claim their money, and about the importance of opening a bank account.

“Hmmm... a bank, you say?” Doctor Koala questioned him. “You mean, like a river bank?”

“Huh? Oh, no!” Mr Johnson replied. “Not that kind of bank. A bank is a financial institution.”

All three koalas were silent, and looked a trifle bewildered.

“Oh, well, you see, humans deal with money, as you already know.”

“Yes, you told us,” Sticky said, “and I saw how we bought things in the city using this money. But what we don’t understand is, why don’t they just trade one thing for another, as we do? For example, the man at a shop gives you a box, and you give him some nuts or berries?”

“That is hard to explain,” Mr. Johnson answered. “Let’s just say that in most cases, money makes everything easier. Now, as I was saying, if you have money, you should give it to a bank so that they can keep it for you.”

“Why is that?” asked Granddaddy, confused. “It’s *our* money, isn’t it? Why should we give it away to humans we don’t even know?”

“Well, you’re not giving it away. They just keep it for you, in a safe place.”

“But we have safe places here,” Doctor Koala suggested, “for example, that cave up in the forest. We could hide it there.”

“No, Doctor Koala,” Mr. Johnson said. “It’s safer in a bank, believe me. Even if some robbers stole it, you wouldn’t lose it, since the bank has insurance.”

It took him a good five minutes to explain to the koalas the concept of bank insurance, for none had ever heard of such a thing. After then elucidating another important banking concept – that of getting interest on money one has in the bank – the koalas seemed quite pleased.

“Do you mean to say that if we put eight million dollars in the human bank now, the amount would grow to maybe eight million, three-hundred twenty thousand by next year?” Granddaddy asked, amazed.

“At four percent, for example, that’s exactly what I mean,” Mr. Johnson told him.

“Sounds good to me,” Doctor Koala opined, “but Mr Johnson, I was thinking – and I’m sure my friends will agree – you should get at least half of this eight million dollars.”

“What?” Mr. Johnson reacted, surprised.

“Yes, of course,” Sticky went on. “After all, you told us about the lottery, you took me to the city so that we could buy the ticket, and you even gave us the dollar to pay for it.”

“Oh, why thank you, thank you so much,” Mr Johnson said, touched by their generosity, “but I cannot accept that. You had the right numbers, not I, and that’s by far the most important part. Besides, I have enough money to live well, and I don’t need more, but you koalas can do many wonderful things with so much money.”

As much as Granddaddy, Doctor Koala and Sticky tried to convince him, Mr. Johnson remained firm: he would not accept their unselfish offer.

“Well, sir,” Judge Granddaddy then said in a somewhat authoritarian tone, “it is clear we can’t convince you, but keep in mind that I am the Judge here in this grove, where you, too, find yourself at the moment.”

“Well, yes,” Mr Johnson uttered, not sure of what Granddaddy was getting at.

“Therefore, I will have the final word in this matter. Here’s my decision. Since you won’t accept any of the eight million, I hereby decree that you shall have one half of the interest we collect on the money annually, and for as long as we have that money.”

“Oh, no, really, I...” Mr. Johnson demurred.

“It’s not up for discussion!” Granddaddy interrupted him, blocking any further protest on his part by holding up his hand. “That is my decision, and you don’t have to feel bad about it, for along with the money, you will have your obligations.”

“Which would be...?” Mr Johnson asked.

“You can help us manage the money, choose the best bank, get a high rate of interest, et cetera.”

“But I would have helped you with all that anyway!” the human replied.

“I know,” said Granddaddy, “but where a service is rendered, compensation should be offered, so you shall have fifty percent of the interest, and that’s that. No more complaints, or I might just fine you! I’m the Judge here, I can do that, you know,” Granddaddy smiled slyly.

“Well, I don’t know how to thank you...”

“No need to thank us. We all agree it’s the right thing,” Sticky added, “so you’ll just have to accept it!”

“In that case, I do accept, and with my most sincere thanks,” Mr. Johnson said, nodding his head in a gesture of reverence to them.

They then talked about the details, about how Mr. Johnson would invite a notary to come with him the next time so that the koalas could give him, Mr. Johnson, power of attorney. That way, he would be able to claim the money for them, open the bank account, and do everything else related to managing their money. They were going to have all these things taken care of over the next few days, and they planned that within a week or so, their prize money would be claimed and transferred to their new bank account, after which they would immediately arrange to purchase Eucalyptus Grove. To make sure they'd get it, Mr Johnson was going to call the owner that very evening to set up an appointment for the following week.

After a couple of hours of fruitful planning, Mr. Johnson made his farewells and left them. He would come back in two days to inform them of how things were going, as well as to bring the notary so that the necessary papers could be signed.

“Good bye, Mr. Johnson!” the koalas called in chorus. “We give you our most sincere thanks!” Granddaddy added, reflecting the sentiments of them all.

After waving good-bye to him as he drove off, they went back to their table.

## Initial Plans

“Hmm,” Doctor Koala said, “maybe we should eat a few leaves before the others get here. We only have about forty-five minutes before the meeting begins.”

“Good idea,” Sticky agreed, standing up and walking towards the nearest tree. “I’ll climb up and collect some fresh leaves for us.”

Sticky soon returned with a bunch of fresh eucalyptus leaves, and the three had a delicious late lunch.

Soon thereafter, the councilmembers who had been invited to the meeting began to arrive. Claire was the first to get there.

“Don’t tell me, let me guess,” was the first thing she said to them. “We have won that lottery, haven’t we?”

“Claire, we couldn’t keep a secret from you even if we wanted to, which certainly isn’t the case here!” Doctor Koala replied. “How did you know?”

“I had another dream. All the koalas in the grove were very happy, and were making plans. In the second part of the dream, we were all living over there,” she replied, pointing over towards Eucalyptus Grove in the distance.

“Amazing!” said Sticky. “Claire, you do have remarkable abilities!”

“True, true,” Granddaddy added, “you’ve hit the nail on the head, as Nory the carpenter koala might say. That’s just what happened, and is exactly what we’re planning. Have a seat.”

Claire sat down next to Doctor Koala on one of the benches next to the table. Within the next ten minutes or so, the others arrived. Chosay and Chashibu, two of the elders who were long-time friends of Granddaddy, had been summoned, as had been the other notable koalas, Granddaddy having felt that the leaders of the grove should be the first to know all the details. Kashy and Gruffy, the grove’s two lawyers, were present. Handy was on time, as he always was; punctuality was one of his many admirable qualities. Tecky, the last to get there and take his seat, was the most successful businesskoala in Koalaville.

Judge Granddaddy, Sticky and Doctor Koala filled them in on all that had happened that day, about how they had won the lottery, their talk with Mr. Johnson about the next steps to be taken, and especially about the plans for purchasing Eucalyptus Grove in order to make it their new home. All except Claire were quite astonished at this unexpected turn of events, and everyone agreed that Eucalyptus Grove would be a magnificent place to live.

It was Tecky who broke the stream of expressions of joy with a few comments of a more serious nature. Tecky, a vigorous, healthy, middle-aged koala with brownish-gray fur who wore beige-colored overalls with brown trim, was both very practical-minded as well as ambitious, and was able to clearly comprehend the importance of the transformation that was soon going to take place.

“Friends and colleagues, if we really are able to purchase Eucalyptus Grove and move over there, we should realize now just how many fundamental changes we will be experiencing.”

“For example?” Chashibu inquired.

Chashibu was perhaps the oldest koala in the grove, and was certainly the eldest on the council. Most of his once-gray fur had now turned a snowy white, and had even thinned out noticeably on his head. Tall and slender, there was definitely something distinguished about him, and he would have looked quite the aristocrat, had he dressed accordingly, yet Chashibu wore plain, dark gray overalls; he never did think much of fashion. His eating habits were similarly plain. He always said that simple food was the best, and he was never one to overeat. Chashibu was in excellent shape for his age, and kept that way by taking extended walks through the grove, and even through the woods, on a daily basis. He liked to say that his strolls not only helped him maintain his physical strength, but also sharpened his mental faculties, for he liked to think, ponder, and meditate about life as he walked. If Eucalyptus Grove had had an official philosopher, it would have been Chashibu, for in him, age was adorned with a penetrating mind, and with a perspicacious wisdom that he was always willing to share whenever somebody needed his guidance.

“Perhaps you could tell us of some of these changes you envision, Tecky?” Chashibu was curious.

Doctor Koala added, “Of course, the grove will be a different one, but will things really be all *that* different?”

“Indeed they will be, Doctor,” Tecky began. “Even once we’ve settled there, our lives will be affected in every way imaginable. First of all, we will possess not one, but two groves: Eucalyptus Grove, where we will all be living, and Koalaville, that we will have abandoned. Nonetheless, it will be our right to continue using its resources, since it will still belong to us. Thus, our supply of fresh leaves will be twice what it is now. We’ll be able to store more leaves for the winter, have access to the entire forest region stretching from Eucalyptus Grove

over beyond the eastern part of Koalaville. We will be able to use the large field between the two groves for any purposes we see fit. In short, we will possess the resources necessary to multiply the prosperity of our community, far beyond what we have known to date.”

“That’s just like you, Tecky,” Chosay laughed, “always thinking of how to make a profit!” Chosay could be very direct, most notably when it came to making a humorously sarcastic remark. Almost as old as his life-long friend Chashibu, Chosay was shorter in stature, and a bit stout, as evidenced by the slightly tight fit of his worn, brown overalls. Despite the occasional age-related ailment, Chosay was still quite active. He seldom, if ever, missed a council meeting, and never refused to join in a good card game, either.

“I admit that I have been successful in my trading with Koalatown,” Tecky answered, “but what I am talking about here has little to do with any ambitious plans of my own. What I am trying to say is that because of the expansion we are soon going to experience, we should be aware not only of our possibilities, but if I may say so, of our obligation to use the resources we will have as wisely as possible, and when we do that, we will inevitably experience an increase in our development at all levels. In other words, all of our koalas will be called upon to play their role in improving our society, and that improvement will perhaps change the way we live more than we can even imagine right now. We must make sure that we are psychologically ready for it, and that our government – represented by those in the council meeting we are having right now – that our government, I say, has taken all the measures necessary to ensure that the transition be as smooth as possible. Isn’t that right, Grandaddy?”

”Oh, huh?” Grandaddy muttered, only partially aware that he had been asked a question.

“Did Tecky’s speech put you to sleep, Grandaddy?” his friend Chashibu laughed.

“No, not at all. I was listening to you, Tecky, but at the same time, I was thinking about something we really need, something we have needed for a while now.”

“What’s that, Grandaddy?” Tecky asked.

“A leader. A supreme leader. Someone who represents us, our system, and everything we stand for. Someone who has the final word when important decisions must be made.”

“But Grandaddy, *you* are more or less the leader in Koalaville,” Sticky spoke up. “After all, you are the Judge; you define the laws, make sure they are enforced, and when an important decision must be made, we meet in the Council and always decide what course should be taken.”

“I know, I know,” Granddaddy replied, “but how often has it happened that we disagreed on something, and spent days or weeks trying to decide? We’ve lost a lot of time that way. Besides, I may be the Judge, but somehow it isn’t right for a judge to have the final word, yet because there are a number of us in the Council, we often can’t agree on what must be done. And please consider my age. No, no, what we need is a real leader, someone respected by all, and younger than I.”

“You’re right there, Granddaddy!” his old friend Chosay interrupted him. “We’re no spring chickens, you, me and Chashibu!”

“That’s just what I was getting at,” Granddaddy responded. “Sure, I am healthy enough, but at my age, I could drop dead when we least expect it. We should have a leader who is youthful, more energetic, and as I said, someone all koalas could accept and respect.”

There was a moment of silence as all present pondered his words.

“That may all be true Granddaddy,” Sticky said after a moment’s thought. “May I suggest that Tecky be our leader? He seems to have a good understanding of all the important issues.”

“Oh, no, not me!” Tecky protested. “I love doing business, and besides that, peace and quiet is all I desire. Don’t you remember? It took you all a while to even convince me to be on this Council. And though I may see some things clearly, I don’t want to dedicate myself to leading an entire koala community. But thanks anyway for the endorsement, Sticky.”

“Well,” said Granddaddy, “no need to rush things. It’s starting to get a bit late. I suggest we plan another meeting tomorrow, but not just a council meeting. We’ll spread the word tomorrow morning that any koalas who wish to attend as observers may do so.”

“Wow!” Chosay exclaimed. “It’s been a long time since we’ve had a Grove Plenum!”

“True,” Gruffy, one of the grove’s lawyer koalas, agreed, “yet this occasion certainly merits it.”

“I usually disagree with Gruffy, but in this case, he’s absolutely right. All the koalas in Koalaville should be present at the next meeting, for we may just end up selecting a leader,” added Kashy, who, as the grove’s only other lawyer koala, was always on the opposing side of any legal argument.

Gruffy and Kashy, now both approaching the threshold of middle age, had been friends since childhood, though even back then, they engaged in heated debates about everything from whether moss does in fact only grow on the north sides of trees, to what would be the best possible system of government in this imperfect world.

Kashy was tall and slender, and wore fine, dark gray overalls whose straps and seams were black, as was some of the fur around his mouth area, a feature that might have given a human the impression that the koala had a rather stylish moustache and beard. This somehow corresponded to his natural vanity, a trait that both humored and irked the slightly shorter, yet physically more powerful Gruffy. Gruffy's overalls, that were more often than not wrinkled, were a plain leaf green, and seemed to reflect his pleasant, down-to-earth nature. Gruffy found Kashy's sporadic displays of haughtiness to be rather silly. Nonetheless, he was not above engaging in duels of witty one-upmanship with his proud colleague, and this made the trials in Eucalyptus Grove, in which Kashy represented the prosecution, and Gruffy the defense, both mentally stimulating, as well as entertaining for all those present.

"Exactly, we should invite all of our citizens to attend," Granddaddy confirmed. "Until tomorrow evening, then, all ten of us on the Council should think about who that next leader should be. Then, at the meeting, suggestions can be made by any one of us who would like to nominate somebody."

"Sounds like a very sensible plan," Handy thought aloud. "Uh, Claire, maybe you could already tell us who the leader will be?" he added jokingly.

"Oh, no!" Claire replied. "I don't have any visions about that yet. And even if I did, I wouldn't say anything now. It might ruin all the fun we're going to have at tomorrow's plenum!"

They all laughed at this, then engaged in some animated conversation until it was time for each of them to retire to his or her tree for a good night's sleep.



## The Making of a Monarch

Judge Granddaddy was up early the next morning, and immediately went over to Handy's tree.

"Handy! You awake?" he called up.

"Just barely, Judge," he called down. "What is it? Climb up, we'll have a few leaves."

Judge Granddaddy made his way up the tree and sat on the branch next to Handy, accepting from him a handful of fresh leaves, two of which he immediately began chewing on.

"I wanted to ask you if you could round up some other koalas, as many as you can find, and tell them to go to all corners of the grove to tell them about this evening's meeting. Naturally, not everybody will feel like coming, but everyone should at least know about it."

"Of course," Handy replied. "I'll get Wheezy, his brother Queezy, Pringly, Choty, Mo, and maybe a few others. We'll get the word spread by mid-afternoon, at the latest."

"Thank you, Handy. I'll talk to some koalas myself, but I'm too old to spend hours walking around again, like I did the other day trying to get opinions on the lucky numbers. My left foot is still sore! I really do appreciate your help."

"My pleasure, Judge. Always glad to assist you, especially in such an important matter."

Handy and his friends did indeed spread the news quickly, and though they were only supposed to tell about the upcoming Grove Plenum, news of the lottery win somehow leaked out as well. Granddaddy had wanted to announce it as a surprise at the meeting, but it was no doubt better that someone had spilled the beans, because the joyous excitement caused by the rumors of the prize money, and of the plans to move over to Eucalyptus Grove, made all the more koalas want to attend the meeting, in order to learn the details about the great future they were all going to have.

Early that evening, koalas from all corners of Koalaville began to appear in the clearing next to Granddaddy's tree at the southern end. The ten members of the Council were already there, and were seated on the two benches at the long table they always used for meetings. All in all, over six hundred koalas showed up for the meeting, which was a record number, as far as anyone could remember. Those who got there early enough, and who wanted the best view, climbed nearby trees and lined up on the branches. Most, however, simply sat on the ground, forming a long, thick semicircle around the Council's table, and extending back quite a few yards.

When all had arrived, Granddaddy began: "Koalas of Koalaville, we have several announcements to make."

“We won the lottery!” a boisterous chap yelled out from the crowd.

“And we’re all going to live in Eucalyptus Grove!” shouted another merry voice from a tree. All the koalas then began talking excitedly among themselves. “Is it all true, Granddaddy?” a sceptic called out.

“Well, I see that the news has already reached you,” Granddaddy responded with a smile, “and so I’d like to say that yes, it *is* true!”

At that, a spontaneous cheer arose from the crowd, and wild clapping as well.

“Okay, okay, quiet down, now,” Granddaddy called out, holding up his hands to signal silence. “There’s another matter we must attend to, a decision we must make here in the Council, and we wanted all to witness it.”

“What is it, Judge?” an anonymous koala shouted out.

“We on the Council have decided that we need a leader,” Granddaddy answered, “and we are here to decide who among the councilmembers should be raised to that distinguished position.”

“But aren’t you our leader?” asked another koala from the multitude.

“In a way, maybe he is,” Doctor Koala answered for Granddaddy, “but he is really just the Judge. His job is to interpret and uphold the law. What we need is someone who could represent us in all capacities.”

“Exactly,” Granddaddy continued. “We need someone who is younger than I, someone who could tend to all matters pertaining to our well-being, someone who can make final decisions if need be, who would act whenever necessary to protect the best interests of the grove.”

“Who would that be, Granddaddy?” another koala from the crowd inquired.

“We councilmembers have been thinking about it all day, each one on his own, without conferring with the others. We will now make nominations, and then vote. Doctor Koala, would you like to nominate someone?”

“Well, I had someone in mind, but I would rather not be the first to speak...”

“Just like you, Doc,” old Chashibu spoke up, “hemming and hawing as always!”

This comment made many koalas laugh heartily.

“Then what about you, Chashibu?” Doctor Koala asked. “Whom would you like to nominate?”

“I have my ideas, but the truth is, I think that since all of this was Granddaddy’s idea, *he* should be the first to make a nomination.”

Chosay, together with Chashibu and Granddaddy one of the oldest koalas on the Council, agreed. “Yeah, Granddaddy, speak up! Whom do *you* want to nominate?”

Granddaddy was silent for a few seconds, then slowly stood up from the bench and took a few steps away from it, positioning himself so as to be able to speak more directly to the assembled crowd. He realized that the next few minutes would be some of the most significant in recent koala history, and that he should therefore carefully weigh his words.

“My fellow koalas, I have been thinking long and hard on this matter, especially since it is a subject that has been going through my mind for a few months now. We are a great community, and therefore deserve to have a leader who is truly worthy of the position we are about to bestow upon him. The way I see it, we need someone who is honest, who thinks of others more than of himself. Someone who is willing to make personal sacrifices for the good of the grove. A koala who is practical, down to earth, yet who also has the vision to inspire others, so as to ensure that future generations fulfil the great hopes that we have for them. Someone who is still relatively young, and who will thus be able to live long enough to establish the good reputation of the new grove to which we are soon going to move, and to make it a respected member among the family of groves that comprise greater Koalaland. A koala who is brave, intelligent, dedicated, compassionate, prudent, of noble spirit... a koala who is above all, wise.”

“Come on Granddaddy, tell us! Who is it you’re talking about?” an impatient koala yelled from a branch.

“Patience, friends!” Gruffy admonished. “Let Granddaddy finish.”

“For some time now, I have had just such a koala in mind,” Granddaddy continued. “Many of you will remember the last time the hyenas attacked us. This koala fought as well as anybody, and killed one of those beasts with a well-aimed arrow.”

This hint offered little clue, since a number of koalas had distinguished themselves in the course of that terrible battle, which had taken place several years earlier.

“Then, during the last great wet tail epidemic three years ago,” Granddaddy went on, “at a time when many of us were cowering in our trees, or going off to the forest to keep from being infected, this koala helped Doctor Koala tend to the sick, risking his life to do so. And if I had had any doubts at all about him being the best one to lead us, they were dispelled yesterday, when we learned we had won all that money. I was right here on this spot, when he walked over there,” said Granddaddy, indicating a place between two trees, right on the edge of

the grove, “...pointed over to Eucalyptus Grove, and said, ‘Behold! That is going to be our new home!’”

Doctor Koala, who had been there when that happened, now knew to whom Granddaddy was referring. “Yes, of course! I was thinking of nominating him myself!”

Sticky was almost numb with shock at this point, hardly believing what was taking place.

“Yes, we know whom you mean,” Chosay added, “and it’s a great choice!”

“Of course!” Gruffy exclaimed. “He’s the right one to be our king!” This was the first mention of the title of “King”, as Granddaddy had only spoken of selecting a “leader”, yet everyone there seemed to be quite comfortable with the concept.

Even Kashy, who had secretly been hoping that they would pick him, chimed into the growing enthusiasm, for once he realized whom they were talking about, he knew that Sticky was truly the king they should have. “Yes, right! He’s the one!”

Granddaddy took a few steps forward. “Koalas of Koalaville, I hereby present you with my nomination for King of our community: Sticky Koala!”

Sticky was stunned. Was this a dream? He almost would have liked to run away and hide, for he was by nature far too modest to feel comfortable in such a situation.

“Yes... Sticky!” a koala cried out from a low-lying branch.

“Naturally! Sticky, who else?” another yelled out from the crowd.

“Sticky, Sticky! Sticky should be our king!” the cries of many koalas mingled, then became synchronized to form a repetitive chant. “Sticky! Sticky! Sticky will be our King!”

There wasn’t a koala in Koalaville who had any ill feeling towards Sticky. He had always treated everybody fairly, and politely. Even-tempered by nature, he never argued with anyone, nor even raised his voice, and was always the first to offer help wherever and whenever it was needed. Yet for him, this was “normal” behaviour. It was only now that he realized how much he was respected – and even loved – by his fellow citizens, and this realization suddenly made him feel very humble.

“Sticky it is!” Granddaddy shouted, echoing the common feeling of every koala there gathered. He then walked over to the table where Sticky was seated with the other councilmembers, took him by the hand and helped him up, then led him to the center of the little clearing. “Koalas, is this the leader you want?” he asked the crowd, in order to be sure that the choice was unanimous.

“Yes, yes! Sticky is our King! We want Sticky!”

The atmosphere was vibrant with enthusiasm, and it seemed that not a single koala could even imagine anyone else being the king who would reign over them from this day on.

“Quiet, quiet, there’s one more thing,” Granddaddy said, raising his hands to silence the joyous crowd. “Our new King should have a name, a title that is worthy of his position. Now, I hope Sticky doesn’t take this the wrong way, but…” Granddaddy continued, turning to Sticky, “the name you have perhaps isn’t one that would inspire the respect that you truly merit.”

At this, some of the koalas began to laugh. “Yeah, Sticky sure doesn’t sound too dignified, does it?” one yelled out.

“Oh, I remember well how he got that name,” Granddaddy explained to them with a smile. “He was just a koala baby, with only one vice: he simply loved honey. Trouble was, he always ended up getting more on his fur than in his mouth. His mother spent many an hour trying to wash it off him. That’s why, when he grew from a baby to a koala child, and it was time to choose a name for him, his parents thought ‘Sticky’ was quite appropriate. So Sticky it was, and the name, not surprisingly, stuck!”

More laughter ensued, and even Sticky joined in now.

“So I would like to suggest that we come up with a new name for him. I invite anyone here, whether someone on the Council, or from the crowd, to make recommendations. Can anyone think of a name fit for our King?” Granddaddy asked.

The koalas looked at each other, murmuring suggestions to those sitting next to them, trying to find just the right name. “How about King Koala?” one called out.

“Well,” councilmember Chashibu spoke up, “that might get confusing, for after all, the leader of Koala City in the north uses that same title.”

The crowd continued to buzz as further ideas were considered. After a couple of minutes, a lone furry hand in the crowd went up.

“Yes, you there,” Judge Granddaddy called, straining his old eyes to see if he could recognize the koala who wished to speak. “Please stand up and have your say.”

She rose to her feet and spoke, albeit somewhat shyly. “Excuse me, Judge. My name is Maki Koala.”

“Oh yes, Maki Koala, one of our carpenters, the daughter of Nory. Would you like to make a suggestion?”

“Well, yes, I suppose I would, if I may.”

“But of course, Maki,” Doctor Koala reassured her. “Speak your mind, please!”

“Oh, well, I was thinking... We are soon going to move over to Eucalyptus Grove, which, of the three groves in Southern Koalaland, is no doubt the most beautiful, and therefore certainly the most, one might say... the most prestigious.”

“Yes, indeed,” old Chosay agreed. “No doubt about that at all.”

“So, I was thinking,” Maki Koala continued, “that perhaps our new leader could be called the ‘Prestigious Koala King’”

“Prestigious Koala King...” Granddaddy repeated slowly, savoring the words.

“Prestigious Koala King,” the councilmembers at the long table also reiterated, just as slowly and ponderously.

“Prestigious Koala King,” countless koalas in the crowd murmured softly to themselves.

“Yes, I do believe that’s a fine name!” Granddaddy finally said.

“No doubt,” Tecky agreed. “It sounds great!”

“A marvelous title!” Claire added.

“It’s wonderful!” an anonymous koala from the crowd shouted out. “I like it!”

“Yes, we love it! It’s just the name our leader should have!” A koala on a limb cried out enthusiastically, as several others began a rhythmic chorus, a general crescendo ensuing as others joined in, till the chant filled the whole southern end of Koalaville:

“Prestigious Koala King! Prestigious Koala King! Prestigious Koala King!”

Only Sticky remained silent, as he listened to the overwhelming sound of hundreds of his grovemates calling out the title, which, as unbelievable as it seemed to him, was going to be his new name from that moment on.

Granddaddy raised his hands to silence the multitude, though it took a good minute to do so.

He walked over to Sticky, who was still standing there trying to look dignified, despite the fact that he was nearly dumbfounded by the events that were unfolding before him.

Putting his right hand on Sticky’s shoulder, and stretching out his arm towards the koalas assembled in an all-inclusive gesture, the Judge announced in a loud voice:

“Your Majesty, here are your loyal subjects!”

All of the koalas emitted a wild cheer of assent. Then, taking a few steps forward towards the crowd, turning to face Sticky, and gesturing towards him by holding up his open hand, Granddaddy went on:

“And here, my fellow koalas, and other creatures here assembled,” – for there were also several emus and a few anteaters present – “behold your Prestigious Koala King!”

At this, those koalas who were not already standing rose to their feet. Looking at Sticky, they all, simultaneously as if by instinct, bowed ceremoniously to their new monarch, as they once again repeated, this time in voices dampened by reverence and awe:

“Prestigious Koala King!”

A moment of almost complete silence followed, the koalas sensing that they had all been witnesses to one of the most significant events of their lives.

“I think that this would be a good time for you to say a few words,” Handy called over to Sticky.

“Yes, speech! Speech!” many in the crowd called out excitedly.

Sticky moved forward a few steps, looked from left to right at the koalas gathered around him, and then spoke these words:

“My friends, I feel both touched as well as deeply humbled by the great honor you have bestowed upon me today – an honor I neither sought, nor expected. I wish I could say that I am worthy of it, that I deserve it, but the truth is, Koalaville in fact owes me nothing, though I owe so much to Koalaville. I accept your decision, for it would be arrogant of me to assume that all of you are mistaken. I can only say that I promise – nay, I swear, by my honour, and by everything that is sacred to the koala species – I swear, I say, that I will dedicate myself to the good of our community, that I will always put your interests before my own. May I – with the help of the Koala Sun and Koala Moon that gave us life – may I prove worthy of the faith you have placed in me!”

All present cheered when he finished his speech. It was Doctor Koala who finally interrupted the jubilant outburst.

“We have selected our new leader. I would say it’s time to celebrate. Let’s have a party, and let it begin now! Long live the Prestigious Koala King!”

The crowd roared its approval, as a great joyous cry rose up. Those on the ground walked forward, those in the branches climbed down, all moving towards their new monarch to give him their congratulations and to bow before him, after which they went about fetching large baskets of leaves, refreshing eucalyptus drink, berries, and nuts for the feast. Musicians began to play their instruments, koalas began to dance merrily, and joyful, animated conversations began, even among those who didn’t know each other. Happiness reigned among them as they enjoyed a party the likes of which few had ever seen before.

Sticky graciously accepted the kind words of all the well-wishers. He kept shaking hands with one koala after the other, even when his own was becoming sore from the strain.

Night fell on Koalaville, though hardly anyone even thought of retiring to his or her tree. It was almost sunrise before exhaustion had subdued the merriment enough to convince an ever-growing number of koalas to go get some sleep.

Sticky was one of the last to leave. After all, he owed them his presence till the very end. Finally, only he, Gruffy and Grandaddy remained; even Doctor Koala had succumbed to weariness and left twenty minutes earlier.

“Do you think I could go get some sleep now?” Sticky asked them somewhat hesitatingly.

Gruffy laughed a bit, “I’m glad you suggested it!”

”Right!” Grandaddy agreed. “It would have been impolite of us to leave our new King alone.”

“Well, then,” Sticky said jokingly, giving his very first royal command, “I hereby decree that this celebration has ended, and that we three should go get a good ten hours sleep!”

“Your wish is our command, Your Highness,” Gruffy said with a bow. Sticky – that is, the Prestigious Koala King – smiled warmly and gave him, then Grandaddy, a hug. The three wished each other a good night; then each walked back to his tree. Sticky was in a sort of daze, and if he had been able to think clearly, he might have asked himself if the entire day had been merely an odd dream. Once he reached his tree and climbed up to his favorite bough, he snuggled up in the fork where the branch met the trunk and, overcome with exhaustion, drifted off to sleep before he had time to reflect on the day, or on his future, which was now set on a path he never would have been able to even imagine a mere twenty-four hours earlier.



## Part III: Planning the Migration

### The Devil is in the Details

Not much was undertaken in Koalaville the next day. Almost everybody slept well into the afternoon, as the all-night festivity had left them in dire need of recuperation. Later that evening, Chashibu and Chosay, who inhabited two trees next to Granddaddy's, suggested to him that they plan another council meeting for the following morning, since there were going to be many issues that had to be settled within the next few weeks.

"I was thinking the same thing," Granddaddy said to his two old friends. "Exactly what is on your minds, though?" he asked them.

"Well," Chosay began, "the way I see it, as far as the upcoming migration is concerned, there are several matters that should be decided as soon as possible."

"For example?" Granddaddy asked.

Chashibu explained, "Above all, it seems to us that there could be a problem as far as the choice of trees in the new grove is concerned. Imagine: all the koalas will want to have the very best trees in Eucalyptus Grove, and there may be a heap of arguments over who gets which tree."

"Full-fledged fights might even break out," Chosay continued. "It is up to us to see that things are decided fairly, and that the transition goes smoothly."

"Yes, I do see what you mean," Granddaddy agreed. "I will call a meeting of the Council for tomorrow at noon, and we'll discuss the matter thoroughly."

"Fine, Granddaddy," Chashibu said. "As for now, how about if we three make ourselves a cup of hot eucalyptus tea, and get in a few hands of cards?"

"Now that *is* a fine suggestion!" Granddaddy smiled. "Let's go over to our table and get started!"

The three old koalas went to the council table, lit a little oil lamp that had a metal grid fixed to the top of it, then set a kettle of water on the grid to heat it up. Chashibu took a deck of cards out of his pocket, and began to shuffle them. They were going to enjoy a few rounds of "Lost Koala Found," their favorite game. Official matters could wait till tomorrow's meeting, for after all, a life without a bit of relaxation and enjoyment is hardly worth the trouble of living it.

Bright and early the following morning, a lone koala could be heard knocking on the King's tree.

"Sire – Prestigious Koala King – I have a message for you."

Sticky, who still had one foot in Dreamland, was wondering why somebody was bothering him at this hour. It took him a few seconds to realize that *he* was the King.

"Uh, yes, sorry, I was asleep."

"Oh, no Your Majesty, it is I who am sorry in that case," Queezy apologized, "but Judge Granddaddy told me to tell you there is a council meeting at noon."

"Oh, yes, fine. Tell him I will be there well ahead of time."

"Of course, Sire. Have a nice day!" said Queezy as he walked away.

All ten of the councilmembers arrived at the meeting punctually. Or perhaps we should say all nine councilmembers, and the King.

"With His Highness's permission, I will state the order of business for today," Granddaddy began, looking over to the King.

"Why, of course, Granddaddy," the new monarch assented.

"First of all, I would like to move that there shall henceforth be only nine councilmembers, since the King will naturally hold a position superior to that of any member. Furthermore, I believe this new rule should be duly noted in the Koalaville Book of Laws. Any objections?"

Everyone agreed to this proposal, though Kashy presented a detail to be considered.

"About the Book of Laws," he began, "since we shall soon be moving to the other grove, obviously the Koalaville Book of Laws will no longer be completely valid."

"What? You lawyers always want to complicate things!" old Chosay retorted. "Law is law. Why can't we use the same laws in Eucalyptus Grove that we have been using here for decades?"

"Well," Kashy began to explain, "officially, it would not be proper – and perhaps not even legal – to apply laws designated as belonging to Koalaville, once we are living in Eucalyptus Grove. At the very least, therefore, we must officially change the name to the 'Eucalyptus Grove Book of Laws'."

"Sounds simple enough," Handy remarked. "Let's just change the name, then."

"Not so fast," lawyer Gruffy joined in. "It's not as simple as that. Certain laws in our present book pertain to the specific situation of Koalaville. For example, Article 14, Section 3, which expressly forbids allowing privately owned emus to... just a second, I want to be sure I

get it straight,” he said, opening the Book of Laws to the relevant page, “...that forbids privately owned emus to wander more than one thousand yards over the field to the east of the grove.”

“So?” Handy asked.

“So, the field to the east of Eucalyptus Grove, that is, the field between there and here, is not more than five hundred yards wide, so obviously such a law would make no sense.”

“Or for instance,” Kashy added, “the law that forbids any koala to take up residence in Eucalyptus Grove. That law made sense when it didn’t belong to us, but now it does, and unless we change it, that very law would prevent any of us from moving over there, even though we own the grove.”

Sticky listened in silence, hoping he was displaying a royal demeanor. In truth, he found all of this somewhat boring. He could now fully understand why it is said that the devil is in the details.

“You’ve both made your points,” Judge Granddaddy said. “What do you suggest, Sire?”

“Well, it would seem to me that these fine koalas have thought about the matter at length. Thus, I would like to request that they both collaborate in studying the existing laws, and that they re-write any passages which need to be changed, modified, deleted, or whatever. Further, that they then present the new version – one that is adequate for regulating legal matters in our new home – to Judge Granddaddy for his perusal, and to the other councilmembers, as well as to myself. We shall all then study the modifications, and adopt them by Council vote if we see fit.”

Most of those present thought this was a fine idea, maybe because it meant they wouldn’t have to deal with any further legalistic details that day. Only Gruffy and Kashy seemed somewhat less delighted, since they realized that their suggestions meant that they would now be in for several weeks of rather intense study, for the Koalaville Book of Laws had, over the years, grown to a rather formidable size.

“There’s another matter we must attend to,” Chosay then spoke. “Chashibu, Granddaddy and I were talking about it yesterday. The issue of how we decide which koalas get which trees when we move to Eucalyptus Grove.”

“Doubtlessly a difficult subject,” Tecky said. “This could be the source of a lot of tension. After all, everybody will be scrambling to get the very best trees, and it will be impossible for everybody to be satisfied.”

“Hmmm, how can we settle this matter peacefully?” Claire asked. “Some koalas will be content with what they are given, but others may well feel they got a bad deal, and envy can easily lead to fighting.”

After a few minutes of expressing their concerns, Sticky, or rather, the Prestigious Koala King, who had been silent during this part of the discussion, suddenly spoke up.

“I wish to offer a suggestion,” he announced.

“Of course, Your Majesty,” Granddaddy said.

“I think the problem isn’t as serious as we have been fearing. Why don’t we simply assign a tree to each koala that corresponds to the geographical position of the tree he or she already has in Koalaville?”

“I don’t believe I follow you, Sire...” Handy said.

“It’s simple,” the King continued. “I will give you an example. Granddaddy, for instance, lives in one of the southernmost trees in the western part of Koalaville. Therefore, when we move to Eucalyptus Grove, he should have a tree in the southwest *there* as well. Tecky, your tree is in the north-central part of our grove, on the eastern edge, I believe. Thus, in Eucalyptus Grove, you would get a tree in the same geographical location there: in the easternmost part of the upper central sector.”

“Hmm,” Chosay pondered, “that sounds very good to me.”

“Indeed,” Granddaddy added, “I would say it’s a very wise decision.”

“I do believe the number of trees over there is greater than the number we have here,” Gruffy said, “which means that there will be a wider choice: each koala can get the best tree in the corresponding sector.”

“Yes, of course,” Handy agreed. “Koalaville is smaller than Eucalyptus Grove, which also has a higher density of trees; there are certainly a lot more of them over there. More trees, more choice.”

“I was afraid this issue was going to take us all day to settle, but thanks to our King’s astuteness, we may already have our solution,” Chashibu remarked.

“I believe both Gruffy as well as I myself agree,” Kashy spoke up. “Nonetheless, perhaps we could refine our plan a bit.”

“Please, Kashy,” the King requested, “say what you think.”

“Well, the first thing we need is a sort of census. We should send out some koalas to take note of exactly where everybody lives here, and also of the approximate geographical position

of their trees. Then, we should commission a map of Eucalyptus Grove, to determine the corresponding positions of the trees there, so that we can assign each and every koala a tree in that grove that corresponds most precisely to the one he has here.”

“Of course,” Granddaddy said, “that makes perfect sense. We should find a number of koalas to whom we can give these tasks, and get them working on it right away, for they will need many days to complete the work.”

“Naturally,” opined the King. “It’s settled: between ten to fifteen koalas will be recruited, today if possible. Some will visit all the trees here, and make note of the koalas’ names, and also of the geographical positions of the trees in which they live. Others will visit Eucalyptus Grove daily and prepare a map of the entire grove, making sure they include all the trees there.”

“But we haven’t yet received word from Mr. Johnson that the grove has been purchased and signed over to us!” Chosay said.

“No matter,” replied the King. “We should know that within a day or two, and the koalas who go to Eucalyptus Grove will only be there during the day. I see no harm in that.”

All agreed it was a good plan, yet Handy had something else that they had to consider.

“Not every koala can make a map. That takes drawing skill. May I suggest that Nory be assigned to that job? As a carpenter, he is used to making detailed technical drawings.”

“Oh, yes,” Doctor Koala added, “and Nory is the father of Maki, who is also skilled at drawing. They can work on the project together. I’m sure that they will be able to produce an excellent map of our new home.”

No-one could deny that this was a splendid idea. The pressing business having been tended to, and important decisions having been made, the King and his councilmembers poured themselves some warm, refreshing eucalyptus tea, made with fresh spring water. Nibbling on some leaves, and occasionally popping a berry or two into their mouths, they enjoyed an appetizing lunch while conversing about lighter matters.

## An honorable Commission

“Maki! Climb down! I have some news!” Nory called to his daughter. He was slightly past middle age, his fur graying, yet he was in surprisingly good physical condition, perhaps because his job as a carpenter kept him very active.

“What is it, father?” Maki asked while making her way down the tree.

“I was just talking to old Chosay. He has asked us to accept the job of making a detailed map of Eucalyptus Grove!”

“But how can we do that? We don’t even really know Eucalyptus Grove,” Maki replied.

“Which is why they want us to go over there these next few days and study it carefully, tree by tree, making drawings, and even taking careful notes about the size and apparent quality of each individual tree.”

“Why, that sounds like an enormous job. Do you really think we’re qualified?” Maki was unsure of herself.

“Well, I couldn’t refuse. It was the Council itself that made the request through Chosay. Besides, you should never forget: where there’s a will, there’s a way. Always trust in your abilities, and they will be up to just about any task,” Nory encouraged her. “I should also mention that they are giving something in return. They are going to let us get wood from the trees in the forest north of Eucalyptus Grove.”

“Oh, that would be wonderful!” Maki exclaimed. “There are some first-rate trees up there, yet we’ve never been allowed to make use of them.”

“Now that Eucalyptus Grove is being purchased by our community, that part of the forest will also belong to the koalas,” Nory explained.

“Father, we should make a list of all the things we will need. Pencils, enough paper, measuring tools...”

“Sure. Let’s do that right now, and start out as soon as we can. It’s still early, but I figure we might as well get as much done today as we can.”

Maki and her father went back to their tree, climbed up, and continued to chat about the commission they had received.

“Why, this is quite an honor!” Maki exclaimed. “Imagine, the Grove Council selecting the two of us for such an important duty! I suppose we should feel proud, father, but in truth, I feel rather awed by the faith they are placing in us.”

“I know what you mean, dear,” Nory agreed. “Awed, and honored. Yet let’s not feel any pride before we finish doing the work, and then only if it turns out well.”

There had never been any doubt but that Maki Koala would follow in her father’s footsteps. When she was a mere koala baby, she used to sit silently for hours at the base of their tree, watching her father intently as he cut the wood, shaped it, then assembled it into chairs, tables, boxes, whatever his customers had ordered. She often felt the urge to participate and help her father, but of course, her parents thought it too risky to let a koala baby handle the dangerous tools. For this reason, Nory always kept them locked in a wooden, waterproof toolbox at the foot of the tree. Often, when the weather was hot, baby Maki would jump onto her mother Foey’s back, and Foey would then climb down to the base of the tree where it was cooler. Maki would crawl over to the toolbox and try to open it, only to find that it was locked. “Ma, ma...” she would moan, looking up to her mother, “key, key!”

“Oh, no, Koala Baby! Your father has the key. There’s nothing in that box for babies.”

But Maki would insist, whining, almost crying: “Ma, ma, key..key.... Ma, key... Ma... key!”

That’s why, when Maki had grown from a koala baby into a young toddler, her parents thought that the name “Maki” was the one which should be bestowed upon her at her naming ceremony. And “Maki Koala” had a special ring to it, one that they both found delightful.

Just before Maki reached adulthood, her mother died, a victim of wet tail, the dreaded, all-too often deadly, disease. Her father had sent Maki up to the forest with many other young koalas whose parents did not want them to catch the fatal illness. When Maki returned from the woods a few weeks later, she found that an atmosphere of great sadness was weighing heavily upon the grove, for almost every family had suffered a loss. Arriving at her family’s tree, she looked for her father, but he wasn’t there. Almost in panic, she asked around until someone told her where he was: a bit further south, on the western edge of the grove, in the koalas’ graveyard, performing a heart-rending task. She found Nory there with a shovel in his hands, smoothing the dirt on top of a new grave. Her father looked up at her when she got there. His face looked much older than it had only a few weeks before, and his eyes were red from weeping. Maki, too, began to cry, and her father walked over, knelt down, and hugged her warmly, though neither of them said a word. From then on, Maki and Nory would be living alone, for Foey, her mother, had gone on to a better world.

When still a child, her father had taught her the basics of carpentry, and let her help him sand the wood to make a smooth finish. This work was monotonous and tiresome, but Nory figured that if she got fed up with it, it would be a sign that she should not go into carpentry. Yet Maki never tired of it. She sat for long stretches of time, carefully sanding down the pieces until the finish was so smooth that it didn't even feel like wood when you ran your finger over it, but almost like satin. Even at that age, Maki displayed great patience, and was an obvious perfectionist: two qualities essential for a good carpenter koala. By late childhood, she was helping Nory with practically all stages of furniture construction, except of course, the carrying of heavy pieces of wood. Now, as a young adult koala, she had become her father's full partner, and the two of them worked many an hour making what was considered by all to be furniture of the very highest quality.

Of course, not all koalas felt a need for tables, chairs, or other pieces of furniture. Yet the number who did was steadily growing, perhaps because many wanted to "keep up with the Joneses", or maybe because they had sat at a table when visiting a neighbour, and felt that it was a luxury that they too should have. More popular than such pieces, however, were boxes.

Maki and Nory fashioned boxes of different sizes, and for a variety of uses. Almost every koala wanted to have at least one little box, mainly to store food such as leaves, berries, nuts or mushrooms. Nonetheless, now that more koalas were learning to read and write, there was a growing demand for boxes in which they could store pens, pencils and paper, not to mention hand-copied pages of the manuscripts in the grove's collection, which was a small, yet valuable treasure-trove of information about koala history, the geography of Koalaland, practical information on foods that were safe to eat, which animals were to be considered dangerous, and the like.

Though only about two-thirds of the adult koalas in Koalaville could read at the moment, the grove's elders were sure that within a generation almost all of them would join the ranks of the literate. Thus, it was not surprising that Maki and her father had a long waiting list of customers who wanted boxes for their writing utensils and manuscripts.

Since Koalaville had no monetary system, barter was all the vogue. For a small wooden waterproof box, for example, a koala would give Nory a large basket of berries that would supplement his family's meals for at least a week. A big box would be more costly, and for such a one, payment might consist of a month's supply of walnuts, without the shells, of course. Other koalas might offer services in return for their box. For instance, they would



offer to chop wood in the forest and carry it back to Nory's tree for him. Hatchy, who spent his time collecting honey from bee hives in the forest, paid Nory and Maki with jars of honey in exchange for the boxes he needed to store his jars in. Doctor Koala, of course, needed several pieces of furniture: a table, a few chairs, and a big cabinet in which to keep his medicinal plants, herbs and roots. It had taken Maki and Nory several months to complete all the pieces he required. In return, Doctor Koala had promised Nory's family free medical care for many years.

All in all, the barter system worked very efficiently for the koalas. It would only be after they moved to Eucalyptus Grove that their expanding needs – or what they perceived as needs – would require that they adopt a monetary system.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves...

Nory and Maki had placed everything they required into two bags with shoulder straps. Then, each one picking up a bag, they began the walk over to Eucalyptus Grove. They first went north through Koalaville, since they planned to keep close to the edge of the forest while crossing the field: they knew only too well that large hawks would be able to sight them easily if they crossed the middle of the field, and that there would be no place to hide if they were attacked. Walking at the edge of the forest meant that in case of danger, they could quickly jump into some bushes, or scurry around to the back of a tree, or perhaps hide behind a rock.

“This will be fun, father!” Maki remarked happily. I do love to draw, and there will be so much to draw once we get started!”

“No doubt, Maki. Let's just make sure we get all the distances right. The map we make will be the basis for determining the trees that the koalas will inhabit, once we make the move over here.”

“Why, that is important!” Maki exclaimed. “If we make a single mistake, some poor koala could end up living in the wrong tree. Imagine!”

“...which is why we will be careful not to make even the slightest error,” Nory replied.

“Of course, father. We will design a map that we will be proud of. Who knows? Koalas might be referring to our map for years to come!”

“That is a definite possibility,” Nory responded with a smile.

After a while, they arrived at the northeastern entrance of Eucalyptus Grove. This grove was darker than Koalaville, due to the higher density of trees, but it was truly lovely, and had

an almost magical atmosphere. “Father, isn’t it wonderful? And to think, we will soon be living here!”

“Yes, it is really beautiful. But we have a lot to do. Let’s start by measuring the outer dimensions,” he suggested, reaching into his shoulder bag and pulling out a large ball of string. “I’ll do the measuring, and you take note of what I say.”

They then began their work, and spent the entire day measuring, jotting down results, and taking descriptive notes about one tree after another. It was plain that they would need many days to complete their task, but they didn’t mind, for they knew that this would be one of the greatest contributions they had ever made to koala society.

## Among the socially challenged: Bumpy and his pals

(The first day of spring)

“Hey you two, wake up!” Bumpy called to his friends as he climbed up to the branch where Humpy and Dumpy were sleeping in their tree, located in the north-central part of Koalaville.

“Huh? Oooh, it’s you,” Humpy moaned, opening his eyes. “Why are you bothering us at this ungodly hour?”

“Gee, Bumpy, huh-huh-huh,” Dumpy mumbled with his usual slow, low-voiced drawl and giggle, “what are you doin’ up so early?”

“I’ll have you know that I’ve been lookin’ out for our best interests. You’d think you two sloths would show a little gratitude,” Bumpy acted insulted.

“Okay, let’s have it. What have you been doing?” Humpy asked, sitting up and rubbing his eyes.

“Well, I just happen to have a plan that you’re gonna love,” Bumpy began to explain. “I heard yesterday that a number of koalas were gonna be doin’ a census, writin’ down the names of everybody here in Koalaville, and takin’ note of the trees they live in.”

“You woke us up to tell us that? What’s the big deal, anyway?” Humpy was a bit peeved.

“Just shut up and listen,” Bumpy went on. “I was walkin’ through the center of the grove just now, on the lookout for one of those census koalas, and I found one: Queezy.”

“Uuuh, he’s Wheezy’s brother, isn’t he?” Dumpy asked.

“Right,” Bumpy replied, “and I managed to get some valuable information out of that dumb koala. He told me that the new trees we’ll be inhabitin’ in Eucalyptus Grove are gonna correspond to the locations of the trees we have here. If our tree here is, for example, 145 yards from the eastern border, and 290 yards north of the southern tip, then that will be more or less the location of the new tree we get over there.”

“Gee, Bumpy, huh uh huh, I don’t think I know what you’re talkin’ about,” Dumpy muttered.

“Never mind. Let me make it a little easier for you. If somebody had a first-rate tree *here*, he will get a first-rate tree *there*, but if his tree here isn’t too great, the one he gets there won’t be too good, either.”

“Just our bad luck!” Humpy said with disgust. “Our tree here is one of the worst in this part of the grove, so I guess we’re gonna get stuck with a lousy one over in Eucalyptus Grove, too.”

“Oh, not so fast,” Bumpy flashed a sly smile. “We *would* get stuck with a lousy tree if I weren’t so smart.”

“Whad’ya mean, Bumpy?” Dumpy asked.

“Well, that Queezy knows we live up here in the north, just west of center, but...” Bumpy inserted a short pause for dramatic effect, “he doesn’t know just what tree we live in.”

“So?” Humpy asked, seemingly bored.

“So, stupid, his ignorance is gonna be our gain!” Bumpy retorted.

“Hey, pal, if you don’t get to the point soon, I’m gonna go back to sleep.”

“Just keep listenin’, fool!” Bumpy said angrily. “Believe me, you’ll thank me later. Here’s what I did: I said to him, ‘Well Queezy, I guess you really have to work hard to find out exactly where each and every koala lives – walkin’ around all day, askin’ names, writin’ down locations of trees...’ Then he said: ‘Yeah, it’s really tiring.’ So I said, ‘My friend, I’m gonna make your job a little easier. Lemme tell ya what I’m gonna do. I’m gonna go back to our tree, make a little sign with our names on it – Bumpy, Humpy and Dumpy – then I’ll stick it to the trunk of the tree. That way, when you stop by, you won’t have to bother to ask us a lot of questions, or go around lookin’ for us if we’re not home. You’ll know it’s our tree, and you’ll only have to write down its position, and our names.’ Then he said, ‘Wow, Bumpy, that’s really nice of you! If every koala did that, my job would be a lot easier.’ Hah hah hah!”

“So, you’re doin’ that Queezy a favor. Why should we jump for joy? He’s no friend of ours!” Humpy said with a touch of criticism.

“Oh, I have to explain *everything* to you two numbskulls. Don’t you get it? All we have to do now is make a little sign with our names on it, then instead of tacking it to *our* tree, we find a *nearby* tree that’s uninhabited, yet a lot better than ours, and we stick it on *that* tree instead!”

Humpy and Dumpy were silent for a moment as they pondered the idea.

“Oh, yeah,” said Humpy when he realized what Bumpy was getting at, “that way, Queezy will think we have a really good tree, and so we’ll get a really good tree in the same location over in Eucalyptus Grove!”

“Exactly! And I know just the tree where we should hang up the sign,” Bumpy continued, pointing towards the east. “That one, two trees down, the one we always wanted.”

“Oh, the one that Granddaddy didn’t want us to have, since he said so many koalas wanted it, that they might get mad if we got it, huh uh huh,” Dumpy remembered.

“Right! The best quality tree in this sector, and nobody lives in it. Well, when Queezy comes around this afternoon and sees the sign we’re gonna make, he’ll think *we* live in it!”

“Bumpy, I’m afraid I owe you an apology,” Humpy admitted. “That plan is really clever!”

“I knew you’d come around,” Bumpy replied in a tone of confident haughtiness. “Now alls we gotta do is make a sign with our names on it, and go over and tack it up to the trunk of that tree.”

“Gee, that sounds easy enough, huh uh huh. Lemme get somethin’ to write with,” Dumpy said as he climbed up to the branch above, fetched a piece of paper and a pencil from a small box they kept there, and then came back down to the bough where his friends were sitting.

“Okay, let’s get started,” Bumpy suggested, taking a piece of paper and placing it on a small board he had placed on his lap. “First, Bumpy...” he began to write.

“Hey, wait a minute,” Humpy said when he saw what his friend had scribbled, “you wrote ‘Bumpy’ with a ‘P’.”

“Yeah, sure. My name has a ‘P’,” Bumpy defended himself.

“But not at the beginning. You wrote ‘Pumbe’, not ‘Bumpy’. The ‘B’ should be at the beginning,” Humpy corrected him.

“Oh yeah, right,” Bumpy stammered. “The light here is pretty bad, too much shade. No wonder I got those letters mixed up.” He turned the paper over and wrote his name again, this time carefully naming each letter immediately before writing it. “B...U...M...P...E.”

“That should be ‘Y’, not ‘E’,” Humpy once again pointed out a mistake.

“Oooh, I’ll never understand why an ‘E’ sound should be the ‘Y’ letter. It just ain’t natural, but okay,” Bumpy said angrily, then added, with a hint of insulted arrogance while he crossed out the ‘E’ and added a ‘Y’, “Let’s just hope you’re right!”

Okay, now let me write mine,” Humpy took the paper and wrote his name below Bumpy’s. “Now you, Dumpy.”

“Uh, gee Humpy, maybe you could write mine for me...” Dumpy suggested shyly; the challenged koala had never quite been able to learn how to form the letters, and much less to spell.

“Oh yeah, sure,” Humpy said as he wrote Dumpy’s name. “There we are!”

“Okay, now we need a tack,” Bumpy said.

“Oh, I brought one down from the other branch,” Dumpy told them. “Huh uh huh, where did it go?”

They all carefully searched the limb, but could not find it anywhere.

“No matter, we’ll find another way to hang up the sign. Let’s go,” Humpy said, and they all climbed down the tree. Upon reaching the ground, Humpy had an idea. “Wait a minute. We should add something to the sign. Let’s write ‘live here’ after our names. ‘Bumpy, Humpy and Dumpy live here’, just so it’s really clear.”

“Good thinkin’!” Bumpy agreed. “Let’s have a seat here on the ground, and you can add it to the sign.” He sat down on the grass next to the tree, but immediately jumped up with a loud cry. “Ooooooww!” Reaching behind him, he pulled something out of his backside.

“Huh uh, gee Bumpy, I think you found that tack, huh uh huh,” Dumpy chuckled.

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About an hour later, the three saw Queezy heading towards the beautiful tree on which they had tacked their sign. Not wanting to have to answer any questions, they hid behind another tree, peeking out to see what he would do. Queezy approached the tree, saw the sign, wrote something down in a notebook, then looked around in all directions, no doubt estimating the tree’s approximate position in that sector of the grove. He then walked eastwards, stopping at other trees to talk to the koalas who lived in them.

“Wow! It looks like it worked,” Humpy exclaimed. “He just wrote everything down, and didn’t suspect a thing!”

“Hehehe, just the way I planned it,” Bumpy grinned with satisfaction.

“Gee, Bumpy, I guess we’re gonna have a really nice tree when we move over to Eucalyptus Grove, huh uh huh,” Dumpy smiled.

“Yeah, we no doubt will! And till then, the two of you can think about how you’re gonna express your gratitude.”

“Oh, I see what you’re gettin’ at,” Humpy replied. “Okay, how about if we head over to Koalatown to celebrate. I’ve got a bag of walnuts that we can trade, so the eucalyptus liquor is on me!”

“My friend, that’s the best suggestion I’ve heard all day!” Bumpy responded contentedly. “Let’s get those walnuts of yours and head over there now, so that we can make the most of

the day, not to mention the night, for I think this might be a good time to look up those three lovely females we met there a few weeks ago, remember?”

“Gee, Bumpy, huh uh huh, how could we forget them?” Dumpy chuckled as the three walked away, feeling satisfied with the clever trick they had managed to pull off.

## **Whoever said that scrills are stupid?**

Bumpy, Humpy and Dumpy decided to take the forest route over to Koalatown. The woods, which ran east to west, connecting the northern sections of all three groves in Southern Koalaland, were dense and dark, but there was a path near its southern edge which had been there for as long as anyone could remember.

The route was enchantingly scenic: huge tree branches, extending out from both sides of the path, formed a sort of canopy above it that was, during the months when the leaves were fully grown, so thick that one could walk along the trail when it was raining and hardly get wet. There were only about a hundred yards separating the path from the lower edge of the forest, yet one would never know it, for in addition to the trees, there were so many bushes that it was not possible to look through to the fields beyond, which separated Koalaville from Eucalyptus Grove on the one side, and Eucalyptus Grove from Koalatown on the other.

There were seldom any dangerous animals in the forest. True, an occasional boar from Boar Forest, west of Koalatown, might wander over and get lost, and no koala enjoyed meeting a boar. This was not because the wild swine were their enemies, but was simply due to the fact that the boars were a coarse breed and easily excitable, so they might run amok and hurt somebody, even though they had no evil intentions.

There had been rumors that several koalas had seen a mountain lion in the forest, but these were unsubstantiated, and nobody had ever been attacked by one. The only animals that could be seen regularly during a stroll through the woods were rabbits, birds, an occasional deer, and scrills – squirrels, to us. The language of the koalas, though practically the same as ours, nonetheless had certain words that differed slightly, and “scrills” was one of them. The scrills were not afraid of the koalas, and the koalas felt a certain affinity for them, perhaps because the scrills, too, were tree-dwellers. For a koala, you see, living in a tree was not only the most natural thing in the world, but also the most practical, since it made eating leaves all the easier. The scrills were not seen as competition, for they were not interested in leaves, but only in nuts.

The koalas themselves had added nuts to their diet some decades earlier, but usually collected them from the ground beneath the trees when no scrills were around, for they would never have thought of depriving the harmless little creatures of their main foodstuff.

“Hey Bumpy, why don’t we sit down here to rest a bit,” Humpy suggested.



“Yeah, okay. We can have a seat right here by this tree,” he replied.

The three sat down, leaning their backs against the trunk of the tree. Humpy placed his basket of walnuts, which was covered with a thin white cloth to keep the bugs off, next to him on the ground.

“Gee, Bumpy, look at that cute little guy, huh uh huh,” Dumpy noticed, pointing to a wide-eyed brown scryll that was sitting motionless off to their left.

“Oh, he *is* cute, isn't he?” Humpy smiled. “I'll give him a walnut. He'll like that.”

He pulled back the cover, reached into the basket, and took out two pieces of walnut, then held out his hand towards the scryll, offering them to him.

The scryll darted forward, and then stopped to size up the three koalas, who were staring at him as well. Then he dashed forward, snatched the two pieces of walnut, ran back a few yards, sat down, and quickly gobbled them up.

“He is a cute one!” Bumpy was delighted. “And he sure liked those walnuts!”

The scryll scurried up a tree and disappeared. Our three friends decided that this would be a good place to take a little nap, so without further ado, they leaned their heads back against the tree-trunk, stretched out their legs, and soon dozed off.

“Uh, Bumpy, Humpy, wake up!” Dumpy shook his friends' shoulders.

“Huh, what is it?” Bumpy muttered.

“Gee Bumpy, we'd better get goin', we must've been sleepin' for an hour, huh uh huh,” Dumpy drawled.

“Oh, yeah. Humpy, you awake?”

“Yeah, I am... aaaaaoooooh,” he yawned. “I guess we'd better get on over to Koalatown and buy that liquor before dark. Then it's party time!”

“Right, let's go!” Bumpy said as he stood up and stretched.

Humpy picked up the basket of walnuts, and the three started down the path westwards.

They got to Koalatown soon thereafter, entering the grove in the northeast, where the forest path ended.

“So, if I recall, we can trade for the liquor at the tree of... uh, what was his name again?” Bumpy couldn't recollect.

“Tama, I believe,” Humpy answered, “but I'm not sure I remember where he lives. Somewhere in the center, maybe a little towards the west.”

“We'll just walk towards the center of the grove, and ask some koalas along the way.”

After walking for a few minutes, Dumpy commented, “Gee, Koalatown sure isn’t as pretty as Koalaville, is it? Huh uh huh.”

“Naw, it sure isn’t,” Bumpy replied, “and it’s a real far cry from Eucalyptus Grove. Hah! These koalas here are gonna turn green with envy when they see us livin’ over in that high-class grove!”

“Gee Bumpy, that’s funny, green koalas! Huh uh huh!” Dumpy laughed.

“Ooh, I think I see one of them coming now,” Humpy said, not seeming too pleased. “A koala of the green persuasion, I mean. It’s that mangy Moldy!”

“Oh no, his friends Chuppy and Guppy are with him,” Bumpy noted. “Quick, let’s hide behind this tree!” They did just that, and waited until the three undesirables had passed.

“That was close! The last time we saw them over here we ended up in a fight,” Bumpy recalled.

“Huh uh huh, yeah, Bumpy, that was some fight, too. One of ’em bit me in the ear, and I didn’t even see which one it was,” Dumpy remembered, rubbing the ear in question.

“Yeah, that gang is bad news,” Humpy added. “Not that I mind a decent brawl, but those low-down koalas just don’t fight fair.”

“Yeah, but I did give that Chuppy a good punch in the snoot,” Bumpy laughed, “and that *was* fun!”

“Maybe so, but it was that punch you gave him that started the whole fight, if my memory doesn’t fail me,” Humpy said with a frown.

“Well, whad’ya expect? He said my mother eats rotten leaves!” Bumpy defended himself.

“Well, your mother has been dead for years, so he wouldn’t know, anyway,” Humpy remarked, “but I see your point. He deserved it.”

“Yeah! Why, I oughta run after him and give him another good punch!” Bumpy snarled.

“No you won’t! We don’t need any trouble here. We wanna have some fun. So let’s go get that liquor, and then go find those girls!” Humpy insisted.

“Yeah, you’re right. But if he ever gives me any trouble again, why, I’ll...”

“Yeah, I’m sure you will. But let’s go!” Humpy said, and the three continued walking towards the center of the grove.

“Excuse us, good koala,” Humpy greeted someone who was walking down Koalatown’s main path towards them.

“Yes? How can I help you?” the stranger asked.

“We would like to know how to get to the tree of a certain Tama,” Humpy inquired.

“Oh, need some eucalyptus liquor, huh?”

“You guessed it! Bumpy’s the name, this here is Humpy, and that’s Dumpy. We’re from Koalaville.”

“My name’s Swinky. I thought you weren’t from these parts. I know a lot of koalas here in Koalatown, but I’ve never seen you before.”

“We only come over here every once in a while,” Humpy explained. “What part of the grove are you from?”

“South central, a bit to the west. I work for Mayor Koala, so it’s convenient to live near his tree.”

“For Mayor Koala, huh?” Bumpy replied, impressed. “Sounds like a good job you have.”

“Well, it *would* be a good job, if he paid decently. I only get one basket of nuts a month, and two of berries, but whenever I ask for a raise, he says it isn’t in the budget.” Swinky complained.

“Uh, gee, just what is your work?” Dumpy asked.

“I’m a translator. I can speak – besides our language, of course – primitive koala, boar, and a little bit of the emu tongue as well.”

“Considering some of the citizens we’ve seen here in Koalatown, your knowledge of the primitive koala language no doubt comes in handy!” Bumpy joked.

“No, I mean *really* primitive. I can talk to those koalas who aren’t as developed as we are. Like the snow koalas up there on Koala Mountain,” Swinky explained, pointing to the mountain just north of Koalatown.

“Oh, I wouldn’t want to meet one of them,” Humpy shuddered. “I saw a couple of them from a distance last winter. They had come down from the mountain and were roaming around the forest, looking for something to eat. I was nearby, collecting berries. Why, they’re big, ugly, and all that long, shaggy white fur – that really gave me the creeps! So as soon as I saw ’em, I turned around and ran as fast as I could.”

“Well, they usually don’t mean any harm, but I understand why you were afraid. I don’t enjoy dealing with them, but Mayor Koala says he needs somebody to communicate with them when they come down in the winter. After all, the first place they come is Koalatown, since it’s the closest.”

“I’m just glad they aren’t here now,” Bumpy said. “I trust them about as far as I can throw ’em.”

“Gee, Bumpy, you mean you used to throw snow koalas?” Dumpy asked innocently.

“No, of course not!” Bumpy replied impatiently.

“Then why can’t you trust ’em?” Dumpy wanted to know.

“Oh, it was just an expression. I mean since I can’t throw ’em, I can’t trust ’em.”

“Well, you probably couldn’t throw me too far either. Does that mean you don’t trust me?” Dumpy, looking sad now, inquired.

“Yeah, of course I trust you, even if I can’t throw you... Oh, this is ridiculous! I only wanted to say that I don’t like snow koalas, ’cause I’m afraid they might pick me up and throw *me!*”

“Uuh, would that mean that the snow koalas trust you, then?” Dumpy asked.

“Ooh!” Bumpy grunted in frustration. “Let’s change the subject! Swinky, can you tell us where Tama lives?”

“Yeah, sure. Go down this path where I just came from, till you get to the central clearing. Then cross it, taking the path that leads south, and after about a hundred yards you’ll see a little path to your right. Take that, and follow it till you come to Tama’s place. You can’t miss it, since there’s a little shack there. That’s where Tama keeps the liquor locked up. He’ll be there now himself, no doubt, since he finally got the parts to repair the lock today. Somebody broke into the shack last week and tried to steal a bunch of bottles of liquor.”

“Wow!” Humpy exclaimed. “Did they get away with it?”

“Nope. Duffy, our police chief, and Mabo, one of his deputies, caught them in the act. Mayor Koala ordered them to be chained to a tree, pending their trial,” Swinky informed them.

“That’s quite a story,” Bumpy mused. “Good they were caught. Otherwise, there might not be any liquor left for us.”

“Don’t worry about that. Tama always has a big supply on hand.”

“Excellent! Then we’ll go over there right now and get our share,” Humpy said, and all three wished Swinky a good day as they walked away. They found Tama’s shack shortly thereafter, next to an especially large and leafy tree. Sure enough, he himself was sitting on a chair just to the left of its door.

“Hello, good sir,” Bumpy greeted Tama as the three approached him. “We are interested in gettin’ a few bottles of your choice eucalyptus liquor.”

“Hmm... I don’t believe I’ve met you fellows before. Do you even know what eucalyptus liquor is?” Tama asked them.

“We certainly do!” Humpy answered. It’s just that until now, we always got our supply from someone else here in Koalatown, till we found out he was taking advantage of us, and charging too much. That’s why we thought that this time, we’d come right to the source.”

“Well, how many bottles do you want, and what do you have to offer in return?” Tama inquired.

“I’m glad you asked,” said Humpy as he placed the large basket in front of Tama’s chair. “A whole basket filled with walnuts, ready to eat, without the shells. Would that buy us three bottles?”

“Oh, I think that would be acceptable,” Tama replied, pulling off the cloth and admiring the walnuts. “That’s quite a few of them. Must have taken a long time to crack open the shells.”

“You bet it did!” Humpy responded. “I needed a couple of days to do it.”

“Wait. Let me go inside and get your liquor.” Tama opened the door of the little shack and stepped inside. Bumpy noticed that the wood around the lock was broken off, so Swinky’s story of the attempted theft must have been true.

Stepping outside carrying three bottles, Tama placed them on the ground. “There you are. These are from a batch I made almost a year ago. It tastes better when it ages a bit, you know.”

“That’s very kind of you, sir. We sure do appreciate it!” Humpy said, as he, Bumpy and Dumpy each picked up one of the bottles and held it up towards the bright sky, so as to better be able to admire the fine green color of the booze inside.

“We’ll be off now. And thank you very much!” Bumpy called to Tama as the three began to depart.

Tama, who had begun to take the walnuts out of the basket and place them into a large jar, glanced up. “And I thank you! Bye now! Hey, wait a minute,” his friendly voice had quite suddenly changed to one of suspicion. “What’s this I see? Shells!”

“Huh?” Humpy grunted as the three turned around again and walked back to where he was sitting. “There isn’t a shell in that basket!”

Tama, who had already removed the top layer of walnuts from the basket, disagreed vehemently. “Not on the top, there aren’t. But what are these!”

Removing the walnuts at the top had revealed that beneath them, the basket contained nothing but shells – and empty shells at that.

“Impossible!” Humpy cried out. “I packed them into that basket myself. I even checked them this morning before we left Koalaville, and there wasn’t a shell in that basket!”

“Well, there are now,” said Tama angrily, “and you were obviously trying to cheat me. I’m going to go get Police Chief Duffy. We don’t like thieves around here!”

“Just a minute, let’s all calm down,” Bumpy advised. “There must be some rational explanation for this. Look Tama, Humpy wouldn’t try to cheat you, since if he did, you’d never sell us anything again. Somebody else must have taken out the nuts, and put those shells in the bottom.”

“Likely story,” Tama replied. “Do you expect me to believe that?”

“It’d be nice if you would. Now let’s think for a minute. Where were we today?” Bumpy asked his two friends.

“We left Koalaville this morning, and I know there weren’t any shells in that basket then,” Humpy thought aloud. “Then we walked through the forest, and came here. We didn’t go any place else. It’s a complete mystery.”

“Uh, gee Bumpy, we did take that long nap...” Dumpy remembered.

“So what? Good edible nut meat doesn’t turn into shells just because you’re takin’ a nap!” Bumpy snapped at him.

“But gee, uh, what about that scrill?” Dumpy reminded them of the little creature to whom Humpy had given a couple of walnuts. At that, Bumpy and Humpy looked very pensive.

“Why, you don’t think that that scrill...?” Humpy asked with a rather confounded look on his face.

“Oh, no! How could we be so dumb? That scrill saw that the basket was filled with nuts, all shelled and ready to eat. The temptation must have been too great for him,” Bumpy theorized.

“But that doesn’t make any sense. Why would he leave some nuts in the basket, and fill the bottom part with shells?” Humpy couldn’t figure it out.

“Uh, gee, I guess so that we wouldn’t notice that he had stolen ’em,” Dumpy suggested.

“Oh, yeah! That was a clever little devil, it was,” Bumpy frowned angrily. “Who would have thought that a scryll could outsmart us like that?”

Tama, who had been following their conversation closely, spoke up. “I may be wrong, but I get the impression that you three may be innocent after all.”

“Of course we are! Look, Tama, we weren’t tryin’ to cheat you, we were cheated ourselves. Hey, do you think that your police chief – Duffy, I think you said his name is – might go back to the forest with us and arrest that thievin’ scryll?”

“Oh, hardly. He’s never arrested a scryll before, and besides, how can you blame a scryll for taking nuts he finds in the forest? It’s what they’ve done for ages.”

“Well, those nuts were in *our* basket! Oh, I guess it’s no use,” Bumpy groaned in frustration. “I’m really sorry about this, Tama, and I hope there aren’t any hard feelings,” he said as he and his friends put the bottles down on the ground. Humpy went to pick up the basket.

“Wait a minute now. There are *some* nuts in this basket, and they look delicious. How about if I take these, in return for one bottle? Would that be acceptable?” Tama offered.

“Wow, would it! Sure!” Humpy exclaimed. “It’s really nice of you to trust us like this, after what happened...”

“I suppose your story is true. It sounds too ridiculous to be something you made up. Here’s your bottle. And the next time you’re in the forest, you’d better not let any scrylls get the better of you!” Tama laughed.

“Yeah, you’re right there,” Bumpy replied. “Maybe I’ll look for that little critter when we go back through the forest tomorrow. I’d like to teach him a lesson...”

“Not much chance of that,” Tama said. “Scrylls aren’t as dumb as they seem, as you three found out. The one that stole those nuts will make sure you don’t find him, and the nuts are probably already stored away in the hollow of an old tree somewhere.”

“I guess you’re right, and like you said, how can we expect a scryll to resist a bunch of nuts?” Humpy added. “No use cryin’ over spilt milk. We’ll just be more careful next time. Well, thanks again, Tama, and it was a pleasure doing business with you!”

“Sure. I’ll be looking forward to seeing you again soon. Enjoy your stay in Koalatown. By the way, are you going to the dance tonight?”

“Uuh, dance? Tonight? Here in the grove?” Dumpy asked.

“Yep. The beginning of the Spring Celebration. It’ll be quite an affair. Everybody will be there,” Tama explained.

“Why, we had no idea. A little bit of luck after all! There’s nothin’ like a good celebration to lift the spirits, I say,” Bumpy lifted up the bottle of eucalyptus liquor, “...if you know what I mean.”

“Hey, come to think of it, maybe there *is* a way you can earn yourselves two more bottles. After all, you did want three,” Tama said.

“Whad’ya mean? We don’t have jobs.” Humpy didn’t know what Tama was getting at.

“Well, I need some help. I’ve gotta move some tables up to the clearing in the center of the grove, where the party will be held. I’m planning to make a lot of sales tonight at that celebration, but I’ll need to set up the tables, carry up a bunch of bottles, and even more cups. If you three help me get everything into that wagon there, and then unload it and set it all up when we get to the clearing, I’ll give you two bottles of liquor.”

“Gee, Bumpy, that sounds great, huh uh huh,” Dumpy smiled.

“It sure does!” Humpy rejoiced. “Not that we are addicted to work, but I suppose a few hours of decent labor won’t kill us. Then, with all that liquor, we’ll enjoy the party all the more!”

“And besides,” Bumpy added, “you’ve been decent with us, and Bumpy, Humpy and Dumpy Koala never forget those who treat them well. It’s a deal. We’ll be glad to help you!”

“Great!” Tama responded. “Then let’s get started. There are two big tables behind the shack that have got to be moved over to the clearing. Follow me.”

They then set to work, and were soon busy loading everything Tama would need for preparing the refreshment stands into the wagon. Despite the loss of the nuts, Bumpy, Humpy and Dumpy felt that the day was turning out just fine.



## Bashful

Meanwhile, over in Eucalyptus Grove, Maki Koala was taking some final notes on a tree located near the eastern edge. Her father would be there soon. He had been working on the western side that afternoon. Maki wasn't alone. She and her father had brought a helper with them today, an old friend of Maki's, Bashful Koala. He and Maki were about the same age, and had known each other ever since they were koala babies.

Very shy by nature, as his name implied, Bashful didn't have many friends, since he found just about any kind of social activity extremely uncomfortable. Yet Maki's gentle, calm nature made her a pleasure to be around, even for someone like Bashful. He really only had two good friends besides Maki, and they were not koalas at all. They were parakeets, a blue male, and a yellow female, who were with him whenever they weren't flying around.

As a matter of fact, they usually sat perched on his shoulders, the blue one on his right, the yellow one on his left, which was one more reason for some of the unkind koalas in Koalaville to make fun of him. Bashful had gotten used to this teasing, and treated the parakeets with such affection that they had become true friends of his. Bashful had even learned their language, and was no doubt the only koala in Koalaville who spoke parakeet.

Not a very useful skill, some would say, but it certainly enriched the koala's life, for he was able to have long conversations with the little birds, and learn all about the customs, thoughts, and feelings of the parakeet species. Bashful always had a good supply of seeds in one of the pockets of his brown overalls, so that he could feed them whenever they were hungry.

"This has been such a wonderful day, Maki," Bashful said. "I had so much fun helping you map out the trees, and describe them, too. Why, I wonder what tree I'll end up with? Not that I'm picky, mind you. They're all so lovely here!"

"Oh, I'm sure you will have a fine tree, Bashful, and the best thing is, we'll be living close to each other, just like we are now in Koalaville," Maki remarked.

"I only hope my parakeets get used to the change in grove. They told me this morning that they aren't so sure about this move, since they like being in Koalaville so much."

"Oh, I have an idea. Tell them that when they move over here with us, I'll make them a birdhouse. You can hang it from your branch, and they will have their own little home," Maki

offered. She had been thinking about giving Bashful a birdhouse for his upcoming birthday, and now she thought it would be a good occasion to mention it.

“Why, that would be wonderful!” Bashful was delighted. “Let me tell them about it.”

He then began to make some high-pitched chirping noises, and if Maki had not seen that it was he who was making them, she would have thought it was one of the parakeets.

The parakeets then chirped something in reply.

“What did they say?” Maki asked.

“Oh, they are really happy now! They said they always wanted a house, since it would be so much cozier than just a nest, especially in winter,” Bashful translated.

“Fine! As soon as we move over here, I’ll get to work on it. I should have it done in a few days at most.”

“Thank you so much, Maki, and thank you from my parakeets, too. Oh, here comes your father.”

“Are you two ready to head back to Koalaville?” Nory asked them.

“Yes, father, we are. We took notes on quite a few trees today. We covered all the ones in this sector,” Maki replied.

“Excellent! Then let’s head home. We can make ourselves a delicious meal. Bashful, would you like to eat with us this evening?”

“Oh, well, yes, I guess so,” he replied, shyly looking down at the ground as he spoke.

“Thank you kindly for the offer, sir.”

“Don’t mention it. You’ve done your share of work today, and we sure can use all the help we can get, there are so many trees here,” Nory said. They walked northeastward towards the edge of the grove, then out into the field at its upper end, right next to the forest. After getting back to Koalaville, they all went to Maki’s family’s tree, where all three of them participated in preparing a delectable dinner, consisting of fresh leaves with a bit of salt, almonds, and wild blueberries.

After supper they had eucalyptus tea while Maki told her father about all the trees she had catalogued that day. Bashful didn’t say much, since he felt a bit inhibited around Maki’s father, though Nory was very kind to him. The younger koala’s natural shyness simply made it difficult to talk a lot in a group, even a small one. He did smile often when he was with them, despite his timidity. They, for their part, did their best to make him feel at home.

## Preparing for the Party

Over in Koalatown, Bumpy, Humpy and Dumpy had finally finished setting everything up for Tama. They had moved two large tables to the clearing, along with several chairs, and a number of crates of eucalyptus liquor. Tama then appeared, and was pleased with what he saw.

“I see you’ve got things all ready. Looks like you’ve done a good job.”

“Thanks,” Bumpy replied as he turned to greet him. “Ouch, my back! I must have pulled something when I was carrying those crates. Ooooh, it really hurts!”

“Oh, no!” Tama looked worried. “Maybe I should call a doctor.”

“Oh, that can wait till we go back to Koalaville tomorrow,” Bumpy answered. “I wouldn’t trust anybody but our Doctor Koala anyway. He’s the best around.”

“Yes, I know him myself. He comes over here to Koalatown every couple of weeks to help treat the more serious cases we have.”

“Oooh, the pain! I guess I should take a rest before the party. Maybe a swig of liquor would help,” said Bumpy.

“Oh, yes, the liquor,” Tama remembered, and began to open a crate. “Here are the two bottles you have earned. Oh, and Bumpy, here’s an extra one for you. As much as you’ve strained your back, you certainly deserve it!”

“Why, thank you kindly, Tama. I’m sure this will help dull the pain. I’ll drink a bit, and then take a short nap before the celebration. I should be well by then.”

“There are a few empty trees just north of here,” Tama suggested, pointing out the way, “You should be able to sleep just fine there.”

“Well, thanks again. I guess we’ll be off then. See you tonight, Tama!” Bumpy replied.

As they walked away, Dumpy was concerned for his friend. “Uuh, gee Bumpy, that’s a shame about your back. Maybe you won’t be able to go to the party.”

“Sure I will. No problem,” Bumpy seemed unconcerned.

“But if the pain gets worse?” Humpy asked.

“What pain? My back is fine!” Bumpy laughed.

“Huh?” both Humpy and Dumpy grunted.

“Don’t you see? I wanted to make him sympathetic, just to see if he’d cough up a little extra liquor, and it worked. Now, between the bottle we bought, and the three he gave us, we’ve got *four* bottles!”

“Hey, that was pretty clever!” Humpy complimented him. “I don’t know why I didn’t think of that.”

“Huh uh huh, gee Bumpy, that was a really good trick. Imagine, if your back really *did* hurt, he might have given you *two* extra bottles instead of just one!” Dumpy remarked, as his two friends looked at him, a bit perplexed.

“Before we take that nap, let’s go a bit farther north, and see if we can find those girls,” Humpy suggested. They walked for a while, and when they got to the northernmost section of central Koalatown, they did in fact see someone they knew.

“Look, there’s Meppy!” Humpy pointed.

Meppy was sitting next to a tree, apparently sewing something. She was easy to spot, even at a distance, for she was one of the first females in Koalatown to adopt the newest fad: she dyed her fur four different colors. The upper left part of her body had purple fur, the right part was pink, her ankles, which showed just below the cuffs of her beige overalls, were yellow, and some of the fur on the top of her head was green. Though some of the older koalas in Koalatown criticized this new fashion, making biting and somewhat politically incorrect remarks about the trouble to which females would go to satisfy their incurable natural vanity, the younger males saw no reason to protest, for they found the multi-color look rather attractive.

“Look at that fur of hers!” Humpy raved. “She’s a living rainbow! One hot babe, no doubt about it. Let’s go talk to her, and see if she can round up some of her beautiful friends for tonight.”

“Heh hmm,” Bumpy cleared his throat as they approached her, trying to catch her attention. Meppy looked up, and was delighted to see them.

“Oh! Why, I wasn’t expecting to see you three here! It’s been at least a month since you were here last, hasn’t it?” she asked.

“Yes, we’ve been engaged in important business back in Koalaville, and haven’t had much time for travel,” Humpy lied. The truth was, they had been to Koalatown at least twice in the last month, but had been cavorting with other females, something Humpy preferred not to tell Meppy.

“Oh, I guess you are pretty important koalas over in your grove, aren’t you?”

“Well, I don’t like to brag,” Bumpy feigned modesty, “but just the other day, our Judge Granddaddy said that he had never seen our likes for as long as he can remember – and he’s one of the oldest koalas in the grove, you know.”

“My, that is impressive!” Meppy replied. “And it’s a coincidence that we’ve met today. Why, just last evening I was saying to my friend Milly, ‘Milly’, I said, ‘I wonder when Blumpy, Gumpy and Dumpy will show up again?’ and she said...”

“Heh hmm... that’s Bumpy and Humpy,” Bumpy corrected her.

“Oh, right Dumpy, I mean...”

“No, I’m Bumpy, not Dumpy, and these two are Humpy and Dumpy.”

“Oh, but I thought you just said they were Bumpy and Humpy?” Meppy looked confused.

“No, I mean we’re not Blumpy and Gumpy. I’m Bumpy, this is Humpy, and he’s Dumpy,” he explained, pointing to each of them as he spoke.

“Oh, didn’t Blumpy and Gumpy want to come along with you?” Meppy asked.

“I don’t believe I know any koalas by that name,” Bumpy answered, offended. “I guess you just got our names messed up a bit.”

“Oh, I do that all the time!” Meppy laughed. “But then, what’s in a name? Especially where three handsome koalas such as yourselves are concerned,” she smiled coyly.

“Yeah, who cares about names anyway?” Bumpy, whose pride had been hurt by her not remembering his name, suddenly seemed quite content.

“Uh, gee, Meppy, what are you sewin’ there?” Dumpy asked her.

“Oh, this is a new pair of overalls that I’m going to wear to the party tonight. It’s a little big for me around the waist, so I’m taking it in.”

“Oh, of course, I suppose it’s hard to find just the right fit for a figure as delightfully slender as your own,” Bumpy complimented her.

“Hee hee,” she tittered, “you’re such a gentlekoala! You really know how to make a girl feel good!”

“Meppy, speaking of that party tonight, we heard that it’s the big Spring Celebration,” Humpy said, “and we were wondering whether you and two of your friends might like to accompany us to the dance.”

“Oh, I’d love to, but I can’t,” she said with a slightly sad smile. “My friends Milly, Silly and I have already made a date with three other koalas.”

“Oh?” Humpy tried to hide his disappointment.

“Yes, we’re going with Chuppy, Guppy and Moldy. They asked us last week.”

“Chuppy, Guppy and Moldy!” Bumpy blurted out. “Why would three fine girls such as yourselves wanna be seen with a trio of mangy creatures like them? They are beneath your dignity, if you don’t mind me saying so.”

“Oh, that’s so sweet of you! But we really wanted to go to the dance, and they were the only ones to ask us, and we thought...”

“What!” Humpy exclaimed. “Nobody else asked you? I never knew there were so many blind koalas here in Koalatown. Must be some kind of strange epidemic.”

“Oh, you’re so charming!” Meppy blushed, though her fur hid her rosy cheeks.

“Well, we’d be the last to try to make you break your dates. That wouldn’t be decent, I suppose. But we will say that if you *did* come with us instead of them, we could guarantee that you’d enjoy yourselves a lot more,” Bumpy promised.

“Well,” Meppy pondered, “I guess I could talk to Silly and Milly, and see what they think. I wouldn’t be surprised if they’d rather go out with you. The truth is, I would, too!”

“Why, we appreciate your honesty, Meppy,” Humpy said, “and we’ll certainly do our best to prove worthy of your confidence.”

“Oh, you could turn a girl’s head with that dandy talk!” Meppy giggled. “You really are koalas of the world, aren’t you?”

“Well, we do get around, I suppose you could say,” Bumpy answered. “Now, how about if you go talk to your friends, then get back to us. We’ll be takin’ a little nap in that tree over there, but don’t hesitate to wake us up to give us the news.”

“Okay, I’ll do just that. I should be back in an hour or so,” Meppy said, collecting her sewing supplies and putting them into her pocket. Then, picking up the pair of overalls she was altering and standing up: “I’ll see you fellows later. Bye!”

“Bye, Meppy. See you in an hour!” Humpy called, as the three of them waved.

“Wow, we’ve got it made!” Bumpy rejoiced. “Her friends are no doubt going to prefer *us* to those three slob!”

“Huh uh huh, gee Bumpy, ya think so?” Dumpy asked.

“I *know* so. After all, she said we were handsome, didn’t she? And she also said that we are ‘koalas of the world’. No doubt about it, she really likes us, and I’m sure her friends do, too!”

“Are you sure that the Milly and Silly she mentioned are the same girls we were with last month?” Humpy tried to remember.

“I’m not sure, but no matter. We’ll impress them, too, even if we’ve never met ’em before.”

“Huh uh, I remember Silly,” Dumpy recalled. “She called me ‘cute’ when we were here last month, huh uh huh.”

“Then I guess they are the same ones,” Humpy figured. “Well, let’s go get that nap before she gets back. My friends, I do believe we’re gonna have one fine evening!”

“Yes, indeed,” Bumpy agreed. “Tonight will be somethin’ we’ll remember for a long time to come.” The three then walked over to the vacant tree and climbed up. Each one selecting a sturdy limb, they made themselves comfortable, and had soon fallen fast asleep.

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Hi everybody! My name's Bumpy. You might recognize me from seein' me on somebody's computer screen. Disgustin' story that is, I tell ya! Some human photographer took my picture without even askin', then went away without givin' Yours Truly a red cent, and then had the gall to give it away as a free screen saver...the nerve! Anyway, I wanted to ask you for a little favor, if you don't mind. If you've liked what you've read so far in our story, maybe you could go to the place you got it - Amazon, Smashwords, B&N, or wherever - and give our book a nice review. We koalas would sure appreciate it. Thanks a lot! And now, back to our tale...

## “Leaves and Circuses”, or The Downsides of Democracy

“Rolly, I can’t believe another year has gone by. Imagine, spring is here once again!” Mayor Koala commented to his friend and co-leader of Koalatown, Judge Rolly.

Mayor Koala was the elected leader of the grove, and had been in power for some years now. In the twilight of middle age, with a few streaks of white in his otherwise dark gray fur, he nonetheless seemed to have great energy, especially where staying in power and gaining any sort of advantage was concerned.



When seeing him seated at his desk, one might have thought that the Mayor was a rather tall koala, for his torso was large and a bit stout, due to his love of good food. Yet when he stood up, he was only of average height, his legs being rather short in proportion to the rest of his body. A natural extravert, the Mayor had a marked jovial disposition, though he was uncomfortably prone to fits of worry. This combination of traits often led to mood swings, his enthusiasm suddenly becoming extinguished by a bout of pessimism, only to exuberantly soar back up again when Rolly helped him to see things from a different angle.

Judge Rolly was plainly older, the white fur on his body being almost as abundant as the gray. He had a small pair of spectacles he used for reading, which gave him a somewhat bookish appearance. Smaller than the Mayor, and rather thin, the Judge had more than a touch of the philosopher in him, since he was both analytical and pensive by nature. This did not,



however, squelch his basic sense of practicality, and he, like the Mayor, was very much able to discern, with his clear, penetrating mind, what was most beneficial to them in just about any situation.

The two were sitting on chairs that were on the floor that had been built resting on two sturdy branches in one of the larger trees in south-central Koalatown, a sort of foundation for a tree house that had progressed no farther than its base. A roof-like, waterproof awning, with little side flaps, could be opened above them when the weather was bad. It was big enough to cover the part of the platform where they had their furniture. Someday, they would of course have walls and a real roof built upon their work space, that they now simply referred to as their “platform”, and that served them not only as an office, but also as a rather comfortable area on which to enjoy an impromptu nap whenever they felt the need.

Each was now at his desk, Mayor Koala’s just next to the tree-trunk, Judge Rolly’s, which was merely a simple table, a bit off to the left-center of the platform. Rolly, being a judge, was Koalatown’s equivalent of Judge Granddaddy, though he wasn’t as old.

“Yeah, I know what you mean. Seems like the older you get, the faster time flies,” Rolly answered, putting down his feather pen, clasping his hands behind his head and leaning back in his chair, causing its front legs to rise off the floor a bit, as he looked up at the leaves that were growing on the branches above him.

“And for us, you know what spring means. The great celebration – or should I say the great chaos – and it should be under way in a few hours,” Mayor Koala remarked with a sigh.

“Well, you’re the one who always insists that the party be held,” Rolly blamed his friend. “We could have just not organized it this year.”

“Oh, Rolly, you may be a good judge, but you’d make a lousy politician. These koalas would have a fit if they missed out on their spring celebration. They’ve come to expect it, to see it as their right. We’d be swamped with complaints if we canceled it.”

“Right. And you would be in danger of losing the next election,” Rolly replied.

Mayor Koala chortled, “Rolly, I never could fool you! You’re right, of course, no doubt about it. I owe my great popularity to the ‘great’ events I organize here. Give these koalas leaves and circuses, so to speak, and they won’t forget you when election time rolls around. It’s always worked for me in the past, and I have no intention of losing an election in the future. This year, though, I did think it was time we kept things a bit more under control.”

“A *bit* more? After that fiasco last year at the Spring Celebration, I’d say we should get things a *lot* more under control.”

“Yes, yes, that huge brawl that broke out back then, I know,” Mayor Koala reminisced. “That was complete pandemonium. Twenty-six koalas injured, if I recall. A wonder none of them were killed. Let’s see...” he paused as he looked for a paper on his desk, “...here is the list from last year. Two broken arms, a broken foot, two concussions; several had at least one tooth knocked out, bruises and cuts of all sorts, three were bitten, one in the nose...”

“Ouch!” Rolly winced. “That must have really hurt!”

“Well, the koala who was bitten was so drunk that he might not even have felt it till the next day,” the Mayor snickered. “Oh, then there were numerous cases of upset stomach, vomiting...”

“Okay, I’ve heard enough. It’s really disgusting. Do you honestly think we should have given the permit to Tama when he invented that eucalyptus liquor four years ago? I mean, we could have denied it to him, and he wouldn’t have been able to start selling the stuff. Would’ve kept things a lot more civilized around here,” Rolly speculated.

“Are you kidding? Before he got the permit, he had already given out free samples of that booze. There was no law against that, and once the koalas tried it, they were clamoring for it. If I had refused to give him the permit, they would’ve voted me out of office, and he would have sold it on the black market, anyway.”

“Oh, and I thought your granting him the permit had something to do with Tama’s promise to deliver you a monthly supply of nuts and berries, and liquor as well, for as long as you’re in office,” Rolly knew the Mayor well.

“As if you didn’t accept *your* share of the goods, too!” Mayor Koala guffawed in response.

“Yeah, well, I guess it was hard to refuse,” Rolly smiled, “but then, how were *we* to know that things could get out of hand?”

“Oh Rolly, let’s stop browbeating ourselves. Things do get unbearably wild when there’s a big party, but that’s only twice a year, at the spring and summer celebrations.”

“Not to mention New Year’s,” Rolly added.

“Oh yeah, that too.”

“And any other occasion we can find to stage a good party,” Rolly continued.

“Okay, okay, let’s say five or six times a year. But ever since we’ve appointed three policekoalas, who in turn can appoint deputies, the situation only rarely goes beyond what we can handle,” Mayor Koala pointed out.

“Well, let’s just hope tonight isn’t one of those occasions,” Rolly responded.

“Rolly, you worry more than my old great aunt Maudy did, may the Koala Moon comfort her soul. I’ve invited Duffy over – he should be here any minute, as a matter of fact – and he’s going to tell us how he and the other policekoalas are going to manage things this evening.”

“That is one point in our favor, I must say,” Rolly mused. “Duffy is one fine koala, perfect as a police chief. Big and strong as he is, he knows how to intimidate those lowlifes over in the southwest.”

“...and he isn’t above knocking a few heads together, whenever appropriate, to uphold the public order,” Mayor Koala smiled smugly.

“Oh, yeah, about that kind of stuff,” Rolly picked up a paper from his table, “I’ve got a list of complaints here from some koalas who have accused him of brutality. I suppose we should look into this.”

“Of course. Who are the koalas who filed the complaints?” Mayor Koala inquired.

“Let’s see,” Rolly studied the list. “Chuppy, Guppy, Moldy, and one of their friends,” Rolly answered, as the smile on his face broke into a laugh.

“That mangy Chuppy and his gang!” the Mayor jeered. “If anybody deserves to be roughed up a bit, it’s them. Case closed! Remind me to commend Duffy on the good job he’s doing.”

“Yeah, and I think I’ll tell him to give that Guppy a punch or two for me. The last time we pulled him in for disorderly conduct, he called me an old fool!” Rolly recalled.

“Well, he might have a point there,” Mayor Koala joked, “but we can’t have his kind going around and insulting the authorities, can we?”

“Not as long as *we* are the authorities!” Rolly laughed. “I let Guppy off back then, just to get rid of him, but the next time, he’s in for trouble.”

“And you see, that’s where Duffy comes in. After all, how else should such riffraff be punished? We can’t fine them, since they don’t have anything,” said the Mayor.

“Oh so true. And remember that time we made three of them do community service, building that path up in the north of the grove?” Judge Rolly asked.

“I do indeed. In a single week, they managed to get themselves into no less than five fights with the inhabitants there. Koalas were begging us to make them go back to the southwest.”

“Yes, ours is a daunting task,” Rolly remarked, “and rascals like them don’t make it any easier. Oh, I believe I see Duffy coming now.”

Soon Duffy was knocking on the trunk of their tree. “Mayor Koala?”

“Yes, Duffy, climb right up,” the Mayor greeted him. “How are the preparations coming along?”

“Just fine, sir,” Duffy replied respectfully. Duffy was a rather large koala, and of powerful build, but his most distinctive features were his reddish fur and his freckled face. The freckles were, of course, not visible, being under his fur; nonetheless, everyone in the grove knew they were there, though no one had ever actually seen them. Rather peculiar, to be sure. “I’ve had a new idea this year, and I think it will help us to keep things relatively civilized at the celebration.”

“Do tell!” Rolly spoke up. “What is it you’ve got planned?”

“Well, sir, the problem we had last year was that even though we three policekoalas had deputized five more koalas, it didn’t do much good. Those who wanted to fight just did it in places where there weren’t any of us around, and in a crowd that large, it was impossible to see just what was happenin’ everywhere.”

“Yes, of course,” Mayor Koala understood, “those deputies were easy to spot with those stupid stars they were wearing on their overalls.”

“Yeah, so this year we goin’ to do it a bit differently,” Duffy explained. “I’ve told the deputies they can’t wear those stars. They have to dress like everybody else, so that the scoundrels in the crowd won’t know who they are. That way, when trouble starts, it’s more likely that a deputy will be there to see it, call the rest of us, and we can quash the violence before it breaks out and spreads.”

“Why, that’s an excellent plan! I see you’ve been thinking, Duffy. That should work just fine,” Mayor Koala complimented him.

“I’m glad you approve, sir,” Duffy said, then looked a bit hesitant. “Oh, there *is* one thing...”

“What’s that?” Mayor Koala and Rolly asked in unison.

“Well, those deputy koalas were insistin’ on wearin’ their stars. Vanity, you know. And in order to get them to promise *not* to wear them, I had to offer them somethin’ in return,” Duffy explained.

“Uh-oh, I think this is the part of the conversation I’m not going to like very much,” Mayor Koala looked sceptical. “What did you promise them, Duffy?”

“Uuuh, well, I told them that we’d pay each one of them one hundred and fifty walnuts.”

“One hundred and fifty!” Mayor Koala cried out. “How many deputies do you have?”

“Five, sir,” Duffy replied.

“Doooh! That makes... Let me see...” the Mayor started counting on his fingers and thumbs, “seven hundred and fifty walnuts! That will eat up a good five percent of my – I mean, of the Koalatown government’s – supply!”

“Sorry, Mayor, but that’s the only way I could get them to agree to the plan,” Duffy excused himself.

“Aw, come on now, Mayor,” Judge Rolly consoled him. “It’ll be worth it. If this year’s celebration takes place without any problems, it’ll be all the better for your reputation. And besides, if it goes well this year, maybe more koalas from Koalaville will come over for the next event we have, which would mean more income for us, of course – I mean, for the government.”

“Yeah, Rolly, maybe you’re right. But I expect your plan to work, Duffy. Keep things under control, see to it that no big fights break out, and that everybody has a good time.”

“Well, I can do my best to keep things under control, but that bit about seein’ to it that everybody has a good time isn’t really up to me.”

“Oh, you know what I mean. The liquor will cheer them up. You just have to make sure they don’t start attacking each other,” Mayor Koala instructed him.

“Will do, Mayor. And if some mangy koala gets out of hand,” Duffy began, reaching across his body with his right paw, pulling a sturdy stick out of a little loop he had had sewn into the left side of his dark blue overalls, and then slapping the open palm of his left hand with the long end, “I’ll give him a whack over the noggin with this!”

“Now you’re talking!” Mayor Koala approved. “Put an end to the trouble as soon as it starts. That’s the way to do it.”

“Okay, Mayor. I guess I should be goin’ now. I want to tell the deputies where they should position themselves during the celebration.”

“Fine, Duffy. Good luck tonight,” Rolly wished him.

“Yes, indeed,” Mayor Koala said. “Do your duty as you see fit, and I’m confident things will go well. We’ll see you at the party.”

“Bye, Judge. See you, Mayor!” Duffy called to them as he climbed down their tree.

“A laudable civil servant, that Duffy. A real no-nonsense type of koala,” Rolly opined.

“No doubt about it. Just what we need here in Koalatown. Those scallywags in the southwest know he won’t let ’em get away with much!” the Mayor smirked.

“Right you are,” Rolly concurred. “Duffy knows how to earn their respect: talk tough, and carry a big stick.”

“A sure formula for success,” Mayor Koala agreed whole-heartedly.

## Girls will be Girls

“Why, hello, Puffy, Beppeen. How are my spring overalls coming along?” Cuddly, a cute young female, greeted the two seamstresses, who were sitting on a bench placed in front of a long table at the base of their tree in Koalaville.

“Oh, we just finished them this morning. Wouldn’t you like to try them on?” Beppeen asked as she went through a pile of overalls at one end of the table, picking out those they had made for Cuddly.

“My, don’t they look great! I love the material – it’s so supple! These winter overalls simply don’t give you the same freedom of movement that the lighter ones do.”

“Yes, it’s true,” Puffy explained, “but then, the cloth for the winter ones has to be thick if they are to keep you warm.”

“Step behind the curtain on the other side of the tree. You can try them on there,” Beppeen led Cuddly behind the tree, where the seamstresses had hung a curtain from a branch, forming a semicircle about one yard from the trunk. They knew that no decent koala would want to change clothes in front of anyone who happened to pass by.

After a few minutes, Cuddly emerged from the dressing area and seemed to be delighted. “Oh, they fit perfectly! And these buttons are so elegant!”

“I’m glad you like them. We bought them from an especially talented artistic wood carver over in Koalatown.”

“Why, who would think that anything as beautiful as these buttons could come from over there?” Cuddly expressed her surprise.

“Yes, I know what you mean,” Beppeen agreed, “but I guess it just goes to show that you can find great ability even in the least likely of places.”

“I imagine so,” Cuddly said. “Speaking of Koalatown: are you two and Muffy going to go over there this evening for the big spring celebration?”

“Oh no, of course not!” Puffy replied. “Not after what happened last year. That huge fight that broke out just ruined everything! We were afraid we were going to be trampled to death in the crowd, once everybody started running away from those violent thugs that were trying to kill each other.”

“I remember well,” Beppeen added, “and I’m sure Muffy won’t forget, either. We three had gone over a couple of hours before the party to deliver some overalls to a few customers

we have there. We stayed for the party, and at first, everything seemed just fine. Then that brawl broke out, and we barely managed to escape from it, but when we got to the eastern edge of Koalatown, some other delinquent came up to us, grabbed Muffy, and tried to kiss her! He was drunk, and most uncouth, I must say.”

“Yeah, and he was pretty ugly, too,” Puffy added. “Muffy had to slap his face, and I had to kick him in the shin before he would let her go. We got back here to Koalaville as fast as we could.”

“Oh, that must have been terrible!” Cuddly responded. “I didn’t go last year, since I had a mild case of cold tail. I was thinking of going over tonight, but after hearing all this, maybe I’d better not.”

“You’d be better off staying here,” Puffy advised. “You know what? Maybe we three should visit our new King, and ask that he organize a celebration here, maybe at the beginning of the summer. After all, why should Koalatown have all the fun?”

“Oh, that’s a wonderful idea,” Beppeen exclaimed. “If there is a celebration here, I’m sure it would be much more civilized, considering the fact that eucalyptus liquor is illegal in our grove.”

“Count me in!” Cuddly was enthusiastic. “I’m sure everybody would have a great time.”

“Hello, ladies,” Eddy Koala, a young male who happened to be passing by the tree, greeted them politely. “My, that is a lovely pair of overalls – such a fine shade of yellow! Say, I wonder if you might be interested in accompanying me to the celebration over in Koalatown this evening, Cuddly? We could dance all night, and I’m sure I’d be the envy of every guy there if you were my dancing partner.”

“Hee hee, oh, Eddy, don’t exaggerate now! Why, I’d love to go with you. When will you be leaving?” Cuddly was obviously delighted.

“In about an hour and a half. May I pick you up at your tree?”

“That will be just fine. I’ll be there and ready in an hour and a half. Bye-bye!” Cuddly giggled.

After Eddy walked away, Beppeen asked her, “But I thought you said you weren’t going to Koalatown tonight?”

“Oh, well, how could I refuse a good-looking koala like Eddy? The truth is, I’ve been hoping he would ask me out some day, and now I’ve finally got a date with him!”



“He is cute, isn’t he?” Puffy remarked. “And from what I heard, he is very responsible, too.”

“Oh yes, and he’s also smart. I wouldn’t be surprised if he ended up on the Koala Council some day, or maybe he’ll start more businesses. He and his friend Minty run the kiln over in the northeast, you know. They make the finest ceramic products around. In any case, he’s definitely marriage material.” Cuddly seemed to know just what she wanted.

“Oh yeah, we have a set of teacups we got from them last year. Who knows?” said Beppeen. “Perhaps the date you have with him tonight will be the start of something really big?”

“Oh, Beppeen, don’t get my hopes up too much!” Cuddly laughed. “But that would be wonderful, wouldn’t it? I’m sure he would make a perfect husband!”

The three girls then spent about twenty minutes chatting and gossiping, until Cuddly hurried off to get ready for her date.

## A minor Emergency

Some hours before, Hatchy was up in the forest looking for more beehives from which to collect honey. He was startled when he heard a series of loud shrieks, as if someone were in complete panic. “Oooh!! Heeellp! Help me! Aaaaahh!”

He ran past some trees towards the source of the cries, and saw a young koala wildly waving a stick around, trying to shoo away a very angry swarm of bees, who seemed to be intent on killing the poor fellow. Hatchy, who was wearing his protective suit, dashed over, grabbed hold of the koala, and lead him away as quickly as he could towards a nearby pond, then pushed him right into it. Seeing that they could no longer easily sting him, the bees soon flew away.

“Hey, why did you push me in here? This water is really cold!” the koala seemed upset.

“To save your life, that’s why. Those bees could have killed you!” Hatchy explained.

“Now climb out of there before you catch cold,” he said as he helped him out.

“Oooh! I hurt all over! They even stung my nose, oooooh!”

“Here, smear some of this on it,” Hatchy took a little jar of ointment out of his pocket and opened the lid, offering it to the koala, who took a dab and carefully rubbed it into his sore nose.

“What the heck were you doing near a beehive anyway, with just a stick and no protection?” Hatchy asked.

“Since when does a stick need protection?” the stranger answered with a question of his own.

“Huh? No, I mean *you* had no protection,” Hatchy could see that this koala wasn’t very bright.

“Well, they don’t give you eucalyptus liquor for nothin’,” the koala explained. “I thought I could get some honey up here in the forest, and then sell it for a few bottles of liquor before the celebration tonight.”

“Oh, you’re from Koalatown, huh?” Hatchy now realized. “But what are you doing here in the forest above Koalaville, then? Koalatown has a forest, too.”

“Yeah, I know, but there are so many koalas lookin’ for nuts, berries, honey, or whatever in our forest today that I thought my chances of findin’ somethin’ valuable would be better if I

came over here.” At that, the koala seemed to sway back and forth, and it looked to Hatchy as though he might lose consciousness.

“Hey,” Hatchy said as he put an arm around him, “I’d better help you back to our grove. Doctor Koala will have a look at those stings. Come on, let’s go.”

The koala was too weak to protest, and Hatchy helped him walk down into Koalaville. When they got to the border between the forest and the grove, a koala named Pringly saw them, and trotted over to help. Between the two of them, Pringly and Hatchy half-carried the smitten koala down to the little shack at the base of Doctor Koala’s tree.

“Hey Doc, here’s a patient for you,” Pringly said as he stuck his head through the door. The doctor didn’t seem to have any patients at the moment. “Seems he’s been stung by a bunch of bees.”

“Okay, put him down on this table here.” They carried him in and carefully laid him on the wooden examination table, then watched as the physician began to examine him.

“I could work a lot better if I didn’t have you two looking over my shoulders. Get out of here! I’ll tell you when I’m done,” Doctor Koala snapped at them.

“Boy, he is really crabby sometimes, isn’t he?” Hatchy whispered to Pringly after they had stepped outside.

“Yeah, I know what you mean. Must be the stress of spending all day with sick creatures,” Pringly answered. The two then began to chat to pass the time while they were waiting; they definitely wanted to stick around to see how the patient was doing.

After about twenty minutes, Doctor Koala stepped out of the shack. “Come on, you two. You can help me move him from the table to the cot. He needs to get some sleep now.”

They entered again, picked up the koala and placed him on the little cot that was up against the wall opposite the table.

“Well, Doc, how is he?” Hatchy asked.

“He’ll be fine by tomorrow morning. I gave him some herbs to put him into a deep sleep. That’ll help him recover. At first I thought he might be allergic to bee stings.”

“Well, was he?” Pringly wanted to know.

“No, of course not. If he were, he’d be in a better world right now,” the doctor replied.

“Huh?” the two grunted simultaneously.

“I mean, he’d have already bitten the dust,” the Doctor explained.

“What?” Hatchy and Pringly were still perplexed.

“I mean, he’d be *dead!*” Doctor Koala said, a bit peeved.

“Oh, no! But he *won’t* die, will he?” Hatchy worried.

“No, as I said, he apparently isn’t allergic. He was stung a lot, though. At least fifteen or twenty times, I’d say. That sting on the nose will be hurting him the most the next few days, but that does have its bright side,” Doctor Koala added.

“Bright side? A sting on the nose would hurt like the devil! Where’s the bright side there?” Pringly asked, imagining how painful that would be.

“Well,” the doctor went on, “because of the excruciating pain in his nose, he won’t notice all those other stings on his body as much.”

“Oh, yeah, I guess that makes sense,” Pringly now understood.

“Okay, Doctor Koala, we’ll stop back tomorrow to see how he’s doing.”

“Oh, before you go: what’s this fellow’s name, anyway?” the medicine koala asked.

“Oh, uuuuh... I think he said Mazooey, or something like that. I’m not sure, it all happened so fast. He is from Koalatown, though,” Hatchy said.

“I thought as much. Never seen him over here,” Doctor Koala responded.

“Okay then Doc, we’ll see you tomorrow,” Pringly said as the two walked off.

“Are you sure we want to see Doc again tomorrow?” Hatchy asked.

“Yeah, sure. Don’t you want to see how that koala’s doing?” Pringly didn’t understand Hatchy’s attitude.

“Oh, of course, but I suspect that when Mazooey wakes up tomorrow and realizes he missed the big celebration, he’s going to be in a really bad mood, so I suspect he and Doctor Koala are going to have one big argument, and our good Doctor will be *really* crabby!”

“Hmmm, I didn’t think of that. Maybe we shouldn’t stop by till tomorrow evening, then,” Pringly suggested.

“Yeah, good idea,” Hatchy agreed. “Thanks for your help, Pringly. I’m heading home now.”

“Right, so am I. See you tomorrow!”

## The Great Spring Celebration

All of Koalatown was buzzing, even though there was not a bee to be seen. It was buzzing with activity, with laughter, animated conversations, musicians tuning their instruments, the sound of wood against wood as stands and a central platform were being set up at the last minute: the Great Spring Celebration was just about to begin, and it was the event of the year for most of the koalas who lived there, and even for many who didn't.

Mayor Koala didn't look pleased as he talked to a few workers. "Did you have to wait till the last minute to prepare this platform? I need it to give my opening speech. With this crowd, nobody will see me if I have to stand on the ground!"

"Don't worry, Mayor. It'll be ready in ten minutes. I had some other things to take care of earlier, but as I said, it'll be ready real soon now," Filthy, a carpenter koala, answered.

Filthy was, despite his questionable name, of unquestionable character. Though able to do all sorts of carpentry work, he had specialized in wagon building. He had a fenced-in area up in the north-central part of Koalatown, right next to the forest, where he kept his supply of wood, and the wagons that were in all stages of construction. Since he often had to crawl under a wagon to make repairs, adjustments, or just to see if everything was in order, his fur often got covered with dirt, though he didn't mind.

Even as a koala baby, he seemed to like to play around on the ground, picking up dirt and grime in the process. Thus, his parents named him "Filthy," a name that was now as appropriate as ever. Filthy was known for his somewhat serious nature, his steadfastness of character – a quality not often to be found here in Koalatown – and his work ethic. Not that he was overly ambitious: he often repaired things for koalas at very low prices, if they didn't have much to offer him, or even for free, where old koalas were concerned. After all, the elderly citizens were not able to roam around the forest looking for berries or nuts with which to pay him. Yet payment wasn't the most important thing for Filthy. He liked being useful, and doing a good job. Nonetheless, he had no qualms about charging Mayor Koala a stately price for the work he did for him, for he knew that the Mayor was quite able to pay well, and that not all of the politician's gains had been acquired honestly.

As Filthy had promised, the platform was finished in ten minutes – nine minutes, forty-five seconds, to be exact – and the Mayor was pleased.

“Excellent, just in time. These koalas are no doubt anxious to hear the outstanding speech I am about to give. Isn’t that right, Rolly?”

Judge Rolly smiled. “I think they are more anxious for the speech to finish, so that they can start drinking the liquor.”

“Well, you didn’t think I would allow the liquor stands to start selling before I talk, did you? Then they’d all be drunk, and would start shouting while I’m speaking – not at all an acceptable situation.”

“Hey Mayor, we’re waitin’ for your speech!” an impatient koala called out from the crowd, which had now grown to over a thousand.

“You see, Rolly?” the Mayor said smugly as he climbed up onto the platform, which was about two feet off the ground. “They love me!”

Judge Rolly climbed up as well, and sat in a chair next to the speaker.

“Heh hum...” the Mayor cleared his throat, as Duffy, Mabo and Doefoo, the three policekoalas, called out to the crowd to be silent.

When all were relatively quiet, the Mayor began:

“Let me welcome you all, young and old, on this joyous occasion. Once again, as every year, we are about to commence the Great Spring Celebration, which is perhaps the greatest tradition in our beloved grove. It gives us a chance to socialize, to dance, to make new acquaintances, in a word, to have fun!”

All the koalas cheered wildly; when they had calmed down, he continued:

“Koalatown has progressed significantly this year, as it did last year, and as it has done every year since I have been mayor. Our educational plan – ‘Koalas teaching Koalas’ – has been increasingly successful, and the number of koalas who have learned to read, by receiving help from those who already can, has grown by some eight percent in this year alone. Another project, ‘Grub for Grandparents’ – one of my favorites, and one I thought up myself, by the way – has not only provided our elderly grovemates with nutritious food from the forest, but has instilled a spirit of charity in the younger citizens who partake in it by giving a percentage of the food they gather to our senior citizens. And I would now like to announce that our health care system will soon improve by leaps and bounds. You see, Koalatown has decided – that is, I have decided, since after all, the idea was mine – that we will pay Doctor Koala of Koalaville, no doubt the best physician in the south, and perhaps in all of Koalaland – to give classes in general medicine to a select group of some of Koalatown’s brighter students, so that

they may serve our community in the future, and thereby assure the better health and well-being of all of us.”

More cheers, for a sick koala is always glad to receive expert medical care. However, the crowd was becoming a bit impatient, since they were here for a party, not a speech.

“Oh, I can see that you are just itching to start dancing, so I won’t hold you up much longer.” An even greater cheer arose.

“But I would like to mention that in just three months, we will have our summer celebration; then let’s not forget the one in the fall, and the New Year’s Party as well. I promise you that as long as you keep electing me as your Mayor, Koalatown will have more parties than any grove around!”

Another ovation; then one koala called out, “Okay, you’ll get our votes! Now let us start to have fun!”

“Of course, my good koala,” the Mayor went on, “but first, let our venerable Judge Rolly say some final words.” The crowd moaned, since they sensed another speech was on the way. Rolly, however, knowing his co-citizens exceedingly well, had no intention of torturing them any further. Standing up and raising his hands, he simply said:

“I, Rolly, in my official capacity as Judge of Koalatown, do hereby declare that the Great Spring Celebration will now begin. Have fun, everybody!”

Ecstatic acclamation now, and a mad scrambling towards the stands where eucalyptus liquor, as well as other drinks and snacks, were sold. The musician koalas began to play their instruments: stringed instruments played with bows (somewhat reminiscent of our violins and cellos), horns, flutes, and undoubtedly the most popular among the common koalas – drums. Musical rhythm, that most basic element of the art, since it reflects the rhythms found in nature – the seasons, night and day, the heartbeat – was the element most dear to the Koalatown koalas. Though there were some rather accomplished musicians in the grove, the more refined subtleties that they expressed when playing were more often than not lost on the masses, who simply wanted to move, to dance, and for this, rhythm was really all that they needed. Thus, on such occasions, the musicians never failed to include drums in their pieces, though they also made it a point to play melodies that were easy to pick up, since a good tune is something even an uneducated koala can appreciate.

Koalas were already dancing en masse, and though the density of the crowd made it almost impossible to do so without bumping into others, no one seemed to mind, for all were merry, and in the best of moods.

Bumpy, Humpy, and Dumpy were certainly no exceptions, for they had met up with three local beauties – Meppy, Milly and Silly – and were now embracing their dates as they danced.

“I can hardly believe it!” Bumpy said as he stared into Milly’s eyes. “I thought your fur was your most attractive feature, but now, when I see your eyes – only now do I get a feeling for what absolute beauty is!”

“Oh, Bumpy, you can’t be serious!” Milly blushed as she smiled demurely.

“I could get lost in those eyes – get lost and never want to be found again.”

“Oh, you’re sooo romantic!” she purred as she hugged him.

“Gee, Silly, you’re a really friendly girl, huh uh huh,” Dumpy, though not as poetic as his friend, nevertheless wanted to pay a compliment to his date.

“Hee hee hee, Dumpy, you’re so cute!” Silly, delighted, pinched his cheek.

Humpy, for his part, was not at a loss for eloquence. “Meppy, when I see you, with that soft, sensual, multi-colored fur, and hold you in my unworthy arms, I feel as if I am hugging a rainbow – a rainbow that will carry me off to the land of my dreams.”

“Oh, Humpy, you do have a way with words!” Meppy was pleased that her colorful fur had won her an ardent admirer.

“I am quite in earnest, my dear. I’ve never met a koala like you. Oh, I admit I’ve been around...” Humpy certainly didn’t want her to think he had no experience in such matters, “but when I first met you, I knew you were somebody special. A koala who dares to be different, who uses her obviously refined artistic taste to select just the right colors to use to dye her fur, and fur that is so velutinous, that...” he continued, running his hand over her shoulder, “...no, this cannot be fur. It must be silk, or velvet! Oh, what a delight to the touch!”

“Oooh, Humpy, I can tell you’re from Koalaville! You’re such a smooth talker!”

Meppy bathed in the compliments he was showering upon her.

Despite the general merriment, not all the koalas in the grove were enjoying themselves. Standing on the sidelines next to a tree, and looking very grim, were Chuppy, Guppy and Moldy, who were watching Bumpy, Humpy and Dumpy dancing and flirting with the three koala girls.



“Why, those scurvy critters!” Guppy scowled. “Who do they think they are, stealin’ our girls like that? Meppy and her friends were gonna come to the party with us, till those three butted in.”

“Yeah, I feel like goin’ over there and punchin’ that punk Bumpy right in his ugly snoot! As a matter of fact, I think I’ll do just that!” Chuppy announced as he took a step in that direction, his fists clenched.

“Wait, you idiot!” his friend Moldy pulled him back. “Don’t you see that dumb Duffy over there? If we get into a fight, we’ll end up chained to a tree, after he beats us senseless, that is.”

“Uuugh!” Chuppy grunted. “There ain’t any justice in this world at all!”

“Yeah, well, we gotta wait for the right opportunity,” Guppy said.

“Hey, maybe we can make our own opportunity,” Chuppy replied with a malicious grin. “I’ve got an idea, heh heh heh...”

“Uh oh,” Guppy groaned, “the last time you had a bright idea, we ended up in big trouble.”

“Hey, this idea’s a lot better than the one I had about planting that beehive in Duffy’s tree,” Chuppy defended himself.

“Well, it better be. I got stung five times that day, and we didn’t even manage to get the beehive out of the tree in the forest where we found it.”

“Okay you two, shut up and listen. Here’s what we’re gonna do...” Chuppy went on to explain his plan, and had soon convinced both of his delinquent buddies of its genius.

“All right, let’s get started, then,” Guppy said once Chuppy had finished. “First, we need an unsuspecting koala... Hey! You there! Come over here!” he yelled to a young koala who was standing on the sidelines of the social activity, probably too timid to dance.

“Uh, do you mean me?” the koala looked hesitant, no doubt because he knew of the rotten reputation that those three had.

“Yeah, we mean you!” Moldy answered, walking over and grabbing him by the arm to lead him over to the other two rascals.

“Oh, don’t hurt me! I didn’t do anything!” the koala pleaded.

“Hurt you? Why, we wouldn’t think of it!” Chuppy grinned. “As a matter of fact, we’d like to be your friends.”

“You would? Really?” the koala asked, suspecting a trick of some kind.

“Sure we would,” Guppy replied. “If you’re our friend, we don’t have to beat you up. You would like to be our friend, wouldn’t you?”

“Oh, yes sir, I most certainly would,” the koala responded. “My name is Dewey.”

“Yeah, okay,” Chuppy muttered. “Look, Tooey...”

“Uh, the name’s Dewey, sir.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever. Okay, Dewey, I’m Chuppy, and these are my pals Guppy and Moldy. Since we’re all friends now, maybe you’d like to do us a little favor.”

“A favor?” Dewey couldn’t imagine what they’d want from him, since he didn’t even have any nuts or berries.

“Yeah, just one little favor. We’d like you to deliver a message to somebody here at the dance.”

“Oh, well, I guess I could do that for you. But why can’t you do it yourselves?” Dewey asked innocently.

Chuppy grabbed Dewey by the straps of his overalls, and pulled him close to his snarling face. “Look chump, don’t ask any questions, if ya know what’s good for ya!”

“Oh, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to...” Dewey trembled.

Chuppy, calming down, let him go and straightened out the straps of Dewey’s overalls for him. “Sorry I blew up, but I don’t like it when a friend like you doubts my good intentions.”

“Oh, no sir, I’d never do that!” Dewey tried to smile, but wished he were someplace else right then.

“Look, it’s simple. We’ll give you a note, and tell you who to give it to, and that’s it. That’s not too much to ask of a pal, is it?” Moldy tried to reassure him.

“Well, no, I suppose...” Dewey thought he was lucky if that was all they wanted from him.

“Okay, let’s sit down here, and get that note written. Here’s a scrap of paper,” Chuppy began, pulling a wrinkled piece of yellowish paper out of his pocket. “Who has a pen?”

“Oh, let’s see,” Dewey replied, “I do, right here. Well, actually, it’s a pencil, will that do?”

“Yeah, that’s swell,” Chuppy responded as he took it. “Let’s see... Mmmmm... Oh, I’m afraid I forgot my glasses. Can’t write too neatly without ’em. Here Guppy, you write.”

“Oh, uuh, I forgot mine, too. Moldy?”

“Uuuuh, I have a cramp in my hand. It would really hurt if I had to write that note,” Moldy lied. It was plain to Dewey that not one of them could write very well, if at all, yet he thought it safer not to say so.

“Dewey, do you know how to write?” Guppy asked

“Why, yes indeed, I write quite well, and I don’t need glasses,” he was glad to be able to please the mangy trio.

“Fine, then. Here you go,” Chuppy said with a smile as he handed Dewey pencil and paper. “Here’s what you should write: ‘You’re real cute. Meet me up in the northeast in thirty minutes, where the path enters the forest, and I’ll give you a big kiss’.”

Dewey carefully wrote the message, word for word, and then asked, “Is that all?”

“Yeah, that’s it. Guppy answered for Chuppy. “Now, you see that koala over there dancing with the cute koala?”

“You mean the one dancing with the girl who has that multi-colored fur?”

“No, not that one, the one dancing with the other girl,” Moldy said.

“But there are so many couples dancing. I don’t know which one you mean.”

“Augh!” Chuppy grunted. “Are you tryin’ to get me mad?!”

“Oh, no sir! I just want to be sure I give it to the right koala.”

“Okay, we’ll do it like this,” Chuppy said, calming down. “Go over there, where all those koalas are dancin’ near the stands. Then, when this dance is over and they take a rest, call out ‘Bumpy Koala! I’ve got a message for Bumpy!’, and when he comes over to you, give him the message, then leave. He’ll be with a pretty girl, so you should try to make sure that she doesn’t see what’s in the note. We wouldn’t want her to get offended or anything. Is that too much to ask?”

“Oh no, not at all. But this note says ‘you’re real cute’, and that you want to give him a kiss, but he’s a male koala. I’m a little confused...” Dewey didn’t know quite what to think.

“Hey pal, what are you tryin’ to insinuate?!” Chuppy flared up menacingly, clenching his fists.

“Oh, nothing, nothing at all, sir! I’ll give him the note, I surely will!” Dewey shook with fear. “But you know, maybe I’m not the right koala for this. Everybody might look at me. I am a little shy, you know...” Dewey lowered his head, a bit ashamed that he was so timid.

“Hey, Dewey, look at it this way,” Guppy smiled as he put his arm around him. “If you call out for Bumpy, some koalas will stare at you for a few seconds, but if you leave this party with lumps and bruises all over your face, they’ll be starin’ at you for at least a week. Now, which do you choose?”

“Oh, why, a few seconds sounds a lot better to me! I’ll go over there and find Bumpy as soon as this dance ends,” Dewey said quickly, needing no time whatsoever to make his choice.

“Fine. Oh, here,” Chuppy said, feeling generous. “Take a swig of this eucalyptus liquor. It’ll make it easier for you. Oh, and if he asks who gave you the message, say it was a girl, that you don’t know her name, but that she was a real beauty. Got that?”

“Yes, a girl, no name, a real beauty, that’s what I’ll say,” Dewey then took a swig and started to cough. He obviously wasn’t used to the stuff.

The other three laughed. “Really lifts your spirits, huh?” Moldy asked.

“Oh, uh, why, yes, it does, thank you very much,” Dewey answered, glad that they seemed to be in a good mood now.

“Okay, enough talk. You’ve got a message to deliver. This dance should be endin’ in a minute. Bye, and thanks for your help!” Chuppy said as he pushed him a bit to get him to move.

“All right, I’ll do just as you say. Have a nice evening!” Dewey wished them, quite relieved to be able to put some distance between himself and the three miscreants.

He made his way through the crowd, and when he got to the eucalyptus liquor stand, he stood and waited for the dance to end. As soon as it was finished, the koalas began to mill around. Many, including Bumpy, Humpy, Dumpy and their dates, were walking over towards the stand.

“Bumpy Koala! I’ve got an important message for Bumpy Koala!” Dewey called out, feeling quite uncomfortable in doing so, since many in the crowd looked over at him. Fortunately, Bumpy was close by, and came over at once.

“You’ve got a message for *me*?” he asked, surprised.

“Yes sir, I have. It’s a private message,” he added in a softer voice, so that only Bumpy could hear.

“Okay, let’s have it,” Bumpy took it and began to read. “Hmm, I seem to have forgotten my glasses. Could you read it to me?” Bumpy requested.

“Well, yes, I suppose I could,” Dewey replied. Then, not wanting anybody to overhear, he leaned towards Bumpy and whispered the message into his ear: “You’re real cute. Meet me up in the northeast in thirty minutes, where the path enters the forest, and I’ll give you a big kiss.”

“Why, you freak! I oughta punch you right in the snoot! Now read me that message before I...” Bumpy snorted, raising his fist.

“Oh, no sir, you misunderstood. That *was* the message!” Dewey quickly explained.

“Huh? It was? Are you sure?” Bumpy was bewildered, since he couldn’t imagine having a secret admirer here. “Is that really what it says? Who gave you this, anyway?”

“Oh, it was a girl koala,” Dewey answered slowly and deliberately, trying not to forget his instructions. “She had no name, and was a real beauty.”

“Huh? She had no name? But everybody has a name!” Bumpy was perplexed.

“Oh, I mean I don’t know her name; yes, that’s what I mean. She was a girl, was really beautiful, and I don’t know her name. That’s it!” Dewey was satisfied that he had finally remembered everything.

“Oh, well, in that case...” Bumpy said with a smug smile, “I think you deserve a little reward. Here, have a swig of this,” he offered him his bottle of eucalyptus liquor.

“Oh, well...” Dewey was afraid not to accept, for after all, who knows how this koala might respond if he rejected his kind offer? “Thank you very much, sir!” he said as he took a drink, then burped loudly.

“Hah hah!” Bumpy laughed. “That hit the spot, didn’t it? Well, my fine koala, I thank you for your efforts, and I owe you a favor. If you ever need anything, just come on over to Koalaville, and ask for Bumpy Koala.”

“Oh, okay sir, I’ll remember that. May I go now?” Dewey asked shyly.

“Why, of course you can, and thanks again!”

Milly, who had been chatting with Meppy after the dance, came over to Bumpy.

“Did you receive an important message?” she asked.

“Oh, uh, oh, yes, I did. A message from... from a business partner, you see. I’m afraid I’ll have to meet him in a half hour, but don’t worry, I should be back in an hour or so.”

“Oh, Bumpy, what a shame!” Milly was disappointed. “Can’t it wait? It’s so much fun with you!”

“Oh, I know my dear, but it is important. A big business deal I’ve been negotiatin’, but don’t worry, once I finish the meeting, I’ll come right back here, and we can dance till dawn!”

“Well, okay, I guess that’ll be all right,” Milly said, showing how understanding she was. “I just hope it doesn’t take long.”

“I’ll make it as short as I can,” Bumpy promised. “Oh, excuse me. I have to tell Humpy and Dumpy. I’ll be back in a minute.”

After showing his two friends the note, they didn’t know what to think.

“Who could that be?” Humpy wondered. “And why are you going, anyway? You have Milly here!”

“Oh, I know, but she’ll be here when I get back. The koala that sent me this note is a real beauty, I’ve heard! Wouldn’t you be curious to find out who it is, if you got a message like this?”

“Well, yeah, I would,” Humpy admitted.

“Uh, gee Bumpy,” Dumpy began, “I don’t think it’s polite to leave Milly to go meet somebody else, is it? Huh uh huh.”

“Oh, don’t ask me questions like that! A koala’s gotta do what a koala’s gotta do, that’s all there is to it!”

“Uh, gee Bumpy, what’s a koala gotta do?”

“What he’s gotta do,” Bumpy repeated.

“Oh, yeah... huh uh huh...” Dumpy didn’t grasp the logic, and thought that he wasn’t quite smart enough to understand a mind as developed as Bumpy’s. “Gee, I guess that makes sense, huh uh huh.”

“Look, fellas, you two keep the three girls entertained till I get back. I’ll just go up there to the tête-à-tête, get in a few kisses, and then plan to meet her some other day. After that, I’ll come right back here, and Milly will never suspect a thing!”

“Okay, Bumpy, but don’t take too long, or Milly might start asking too many questions.”

“Don’t worry, I shouldn’t be more than an hour at the very most,” Bumpy assured them. Then he walked over to Milly, gave her a tender kiss on the cheek, promised to finish his “business meeting” as soon as he could, and made his way through the crowd, heading up to the northeastern section of Koalatown, which was now practically vacant, since most koalas were in the central part, enjoying the party.

## The Perils of impetuous Passion

“Hey Mabo,” police chief Duffy called as he walked over to one of his officers.

“Yeah, chief? What is it?” Mabo, standing on the sidelines of the festivities and observing the crowd, asked.

“A few minutes ago, I saw one of those Koalaville koalas start to walk up towards the northeast.”

“So what? He’s probably going to the forest path, so he can go home,” Mabo saw no reason to be suspicious.

“That’s what I thought at first, but the celebration’s only just begun. Why would he go home so soon? And besides, that koala looks to me to be one of the rowdy sort. I got to thinkin’, and I figure he may be goin’ up north to burglarize a few trees. After all, now that practically everybody is here in the center, it would be a perfect chance for criminals to steal everything they can find in the trees up there.”

“Good point, boss. What do you suggest?” Mabo asked.

“Well, maybe he’s harmless,” Duffy replied, “but just to be sure, why don’t you go up there, see if you can spot him, and check out what he’s doin’? He’ll be easy to find, since he’s probably the only one there now.”

“Should I follow him if he enters the forest?” Mabo wanted to know.

“Maybe a bit, to make sure he’s headin’ back to Koalaville. Then you can return and report to me.”

“Will do, Chief!” Mabo elbowed his way through the dense crowd until he had gotten to the northernmost part of the central clearing, then headed northeast through the grove.

Bumpy, meanwhile, had reached the forest path a good five minutes before. He looked around and saw no-one, so he figured that he had arrived early, and decided to wait for the mysterious beauty.

After a minute, he heard a high-pitched giggle coming from behind a nearby tree:

“Hee hee, here I am, hee hee!”

“Why, that must be her!” he thought to himself. Then, speaking aloud, “Is that you? Are you the beauty that wants to meet Bumpy? Well, I’m Bumpy!”

“Oh, you’re sooo cute!” the voice responded; it was a high voice, but nonetheless sounded a bit rough to Bumpy. He figured that the poor thing must have a cold. He walked over towards the tree.

“Don’t be shy! I’m sure we’ll get along swell!” he said when he got to the tree. Then he added, just before bending down a bit and peeking around the trunk, “Don’t worry, I won’t hurt you!”

“No, I’ll hurt *you!*” a now-low voice responded, as a figure stepped around from the other side of the tree, faced him, then punched him in the face before Bumpy could lift his paws in defense. Bumpy fell onto his back, stunned by the blow.

When Bumpy looked up from the ground, there were three figures towering above him, looking down upon him with evil grins on their faces: Chuppy, who had hit him, Guppy, and Moldy. Bumpy knew he was in big trouble, but wasn’t about to let the three brutes intimidate him.

“Oh, so you mangy idiots think you can scare me, huh?” he asked defiantly. “Well, I’ll have you know that I am Bumpy Koala, and I don’t know the meaning of the word ‘fear’!”

“Well then,” Chuppy replied, “maybe we oughta teach ya!” With that, the three blackguards pounced on him and started beating him with a vengeance. Bumpy thrashed about, trying to punch whomever he could. The four were wrestling around on the ground, almost appearing to be one big hairy ball of unbridled rage and savagery: the fur was truly flying. Bumpy managed to sink his teeth into Moldy’s shoulder, and held on; the latter emitted a shrill yell while his friends continued to pommel their victim.

Only about a minute had gone by (though to poor Bumpy, it seemed like half an eternity), when suddenly, someone pulled Chuppy up and pushed him aside, then did the same with Guppy and Moldy, who yelled all the louder, since in so doing, the newcomer had caused a small piece of flesh to be ripped from his shoulder, as Bumpy had not loosened his bite. Reaching down to pick up Bumpy as well, Mabo – for it was, of course, the policekoala who had followed Bumpy who was breaking up the fight – was knocked backwards by a punch in the nose. Bumpy, who was still lashing out, fighting for his life, had not noticed that it was a policekoala whom he was hitting. Mabo was stunned for a few seconds, which gave Chuppy, Guppy and Moldy ample time to run off among the trees to escape arrest. Bumpy, however, wasn’t so fortunate.



“So, hitting a police officer, eh?” Mabo said angrily as he raised his stick, threatening to give Bumpy a whack on the head. “Calm down right now, or I’ll knock you senseless!”

Bumpy, seeing that the worst was over, looked up at him apologetically. “Oh, sorry about that. I thought you were one of those thugs. It’s good you got here when you did, or I might have bought the farm!”

Mabo thought he was delirious. “What would a scoundrel like you want with a farm?”

“No, I mean I might have soon been pushin’ up daisies,” Bumpy explained.

“You out of your mind, or what? There aren’t any daisies around here!” Mabo replied, irritated.

“No, I mean I might be *dead*, you fool!” Bumpy put it plainly.

“Oh, attackin’, then insultin’ a police officer. You’ll pay for this, you rascal!” Mabo, reaching down to grab him, rolled Bumpy over, placed his knee on his back so he couldn’t move, then took out a cord with which he tied his hands behind his back.

“You’re under arrest. You have the right to shut your darned mouth. Anything you say can and will be used as an excuse to punch you in the snoot. You have the right to an attorney, though I don’t know where the devil you’re gonna find one here in Koalatown willing to defend a scurvy beast like you. And if you can’t afford an attorney, tough luck!” Mabo pulled him to his feet and led him off. Bruised, sore, and hurting all over, Bumpy gradually realized that for him, the Great Spring Celebration was over.

Watching the scene from the leafy limb of a tree about thirty yards away, Chuppy and Guppy were delighted. Moldy might have been as well, but he was too busy moaning in pain, pressing a handkerchief against the wound in his shoulder in order to stop the bleeding.

“I guess there’s justice in this world after all!” Chuppy rejoiced. “We got to give that moron the beatin’ of his worthless life, and now he’ll be chained to the Tree of Justice and put on trial. It couldn’t get any better than this!” he laughed.

“Shhh!” Guppy warned. “Not so loud, or that Mabo might hear you!” They were silent for a moment until the policekoala had taken his prisoner off further to the south. “Yeah, you’re right there. That was the most fun I’ve had in a long time!”

“Well, not me!” Moldy whined. “My shoulder really hurts. That animal took a big chunk out of it! I should go to a doctor. Who knows, he might have given me rabies or somethin’!”

“Oh, stop complainin’, will ya?” Guppy told him. “Look, you can’t go to a doctor, ’cause he’ll know you were in a fight, and might report you to Duffy or one of those other lamebrains who work for him.”

“But suppose I die or somethin’?” Moldy asked with a groan.

“Don’t worry, there’s a solution for everything. We’ll go back to the southwest, then I’ll go to my tree and ask my momma to give me that little stone that stops the bleedin’ when you hold it up against a wound.”

“Oh, yeah, Chuppy, I remember that thing. Some doctor gave it to you last year when a scryll bit you in the hand as you reached into his tree and tried to steal his nuts,” Guppy recollected.

“Yeah, I should’ve wrung that little devil’s neck!” Chuppy remembered with a scowl.

“As I recall, you looked so scared that I thought the scryll was gonna wring *your* neck!” Guppy laughed.

“Aw, shut up,” Chuppy responded angrily. Then, to both of his accomplices: “Okay, let’s get back to the southwest. We’ve done our good deed for the day!”

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“Oh, Humpy!” Milly walked over to Bumpy’s pal, who was having a drink with Meppy, and said to him in a loud voice so that he could hear her over the noise of the crowd, “It’s been two hours now, and Bumpy still isn’t back. I’m getting worried!”

“Well, I wouldn’t worry if I were you,” Humpy tried to cover for his friend. “Those business meetings can really get stretched out sometimes, especially when it comes to negotiating a final deal. I’m sure Bumpy will be back before long. Here, let me buy you another drink.” He and Meppy led Milly to the nearest refreshment stand and bought her a eucalyptus drink – drink, not liquor, since Milly preferred to keep her wits about her – paying the vendor five walnuts.

Dumpy and Silly, who were leaning against a tree between dances, looked over to their friends. “Uh, gee Silly, I guess Milly is worried or somethin’, since Bumpy isn’t back yet, huh uh huh.”

“Oh, he’ll be back. Didn’t you see how well he was getting along with Milly? Hee hee hee!”

“Huh uh huh, yeah, I guess you’re right. You and me get along pretty well, too, don’t we? Huh uh huh,” Dumpy asked shyly.

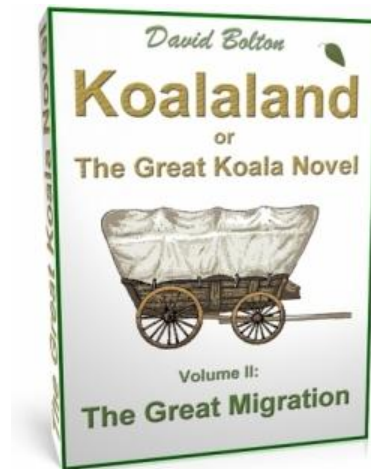
“Now that you mention it – hee hee hee! – I think we do, too!” Silly replied and gave Dumpy a quick but tender kiss on his nose.

“Gee, Silly, huh uh huh, you’re real nice,” Dumpy blushed a bit and stroked Silly’s shoulder gently. “Oh, they’re startin’ to play another song. Do you wanna go over and dance again?”

“Oh, I’d just love to, Dumpy, hee hee hee!”

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[Volume II](#)

And now, let's get back to our story...

## A most curious Interlude in Koalaville

At about this same time, over in Koalaville, Choty and Mo, who had a thriving anteater-rental business, were leading some of their creatures up through the lower part of the forest in search of anthills. Though it was already getting dark, this was no problem for the two koalas, who have excellent night vision, as do all of their species. And a hungry anteater can always smell out a good meal, even in the absence of light.

Happening upon a somewhat circular configuration of giant boulders, about seventy feet in diameter, they were curious as to what might be in the middle of those rocks, each of which was about fifteen feet high. Tying the four anteaters they had with them to a nearby tree, they deftly climbed one of the boulders, and upon reaching its top, peered down into the area in the center of the circular formation. They were confounded by what they saw there: filling up the area was a large, circular, somewhat flattened object with a smooth, silvery-gray surface.

“My goodness, what do you suppose that is?” Mo asked, wide-eyed.

“I have no idea. How do you suppose it got here? Look, the edges of the rocks protrude out above the thing a foot or more on all sides. Why, logically speaking, it would be impossible to squeeze it down into that space,” Choty commented, perplexed.

“Well, maybe somebody put it there first, and then put the boulders around it,” Mo speculated.

“Oh, no. Those boulders must weigh tons. Nobody could have moved them. Very strange indeed!” Choty exclaimed. “We must report this to Judge Granddaddy and our Prestigious Koala King as soon as we get back to the grove!”

Climbing down from the boulder, they rounded up their anteaters and led them back down the forest path towards Koalaville. “We should get these anteaters home right away,” Mo suggested, “then we’ll head down to the south to tell the King and Granddaddy.”

They walked a short distance through the forest till they got to Koalaville, then went to their trees and adjoining anteater corral, which were located just north of the center of the grove. Once they had put the anteaters into the little corral, however, they climbed Mo’s tree and began to eat some leaves, conversing now about which anteaters were to be rented out the next day. Choty and Mo had completely forgotten about what they had just seen in the forest, and about their decision to report it to the authorities. Thus, they simply ate their supper, and then went to sleep for the night, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

## The Tree of Justice

Meanwhile, back in Koalatown, Mabo had brought Bumpy all the way down to the south-central section of Koalatown, below the clearing where the party was being held, having taken a path somewhat to the east in order to avoid the crowds. He led him straight towards the “Tree of Justice,” where delinquents, miscreants, and the like were kept chained to the trunk. The chains were about seven feet long, to allow some freedom of movement, though this was of little comfort to those thus confined.

“Blimpy!” Bumpy shouted when he saw his brother, one of the two koalas already fettered there. “What are you doing here? Why, I’ll bet this no-good friend of yours got you into trouble again, didn’t he?”

Chigow, seated next to Blimpy, never did get along with Bumpy. “Hah! Looks like you’re one to talk! Hey Mabo, what did ya arrest him for, stupidity or ugliness?”

“Why, you little...” Bumpy growled. “If my paws weren’t tied, I’d teach you a lesson you’d never forget!”

“Shut up, you two,” Mabo commanded, “or I’ll teach you both a lesson myself!” He fitted a shackle at the end of a free chain around Bumpy’s left ankle, and then untied his hands. “There. You should have your hearing with our Judge Rolly in a few days, if you’re lucky.”

“A few days!” Bumpy was exasperated. “I’ve gotta get back to my friends! You can’t keep me here chained up for days!”

“Oh no? Just wait and see,” Mabo grinned. “There will no doubt be a number of arrests made today, what with all those drunken koalas at the celebration raising a ruckus. The Judge is going to have his hands full of cases this week. Till then, you’ll stay right here. I’ll bring you all some fresh leaves in a couple of hours, so just settle down, and enjoy your stay in Koalatown! Ha ha ha!” Mabo walked away, laughing with malicious glee.

“That koala oughta get a good punch in the snoot,” Chigow muttered.

“For once, we agree on somethin’,” Bumpy said. “As a matter of fact, I gave him just that before he arrested me.” He then went on to tell them the whole story.

“Wow, Bumpy, that’s really bad luck,” Blimpy sympathized with his older brother, “and what’s really a shame is that those three koalas who attacked you must have scared off the beauty that was waitin’ for you!”

“You dimwit!” Bumpy snapped at his sibling. “Don’t ya get it? There never *was* a girl waitin’ for me. It was a trick they used to get me to go up to the edge of the forest, where they could pounce on me!”

“Oh yeah, I see...” Blimpy finally understood what had happened.

“Then that Mabo came, and ended up arresting me. I was framed, I tell ya!” Bumpy yelled indignantly.

“No use whinin’ about it now,” Chigow spoke up. “Question is, how are we gonna get outta here?”

“Hey, wait a minute,” Bumpy stopped him. “You never told me why you two are chained up here.”

“Yeah, well, uh, that’s a long story,” Chigow didn’t seem too anxious to tell him.

“Lemme guess. You two were the fools who tried to break into Tama’s shack and steal that eucalyptus liquor, right?”

“Hey Bumpy, that’s pretty good. Howd’ya figure it out?” Blimpy replied before Chigow could stop him.

“What a couple of birdbrains you are!” Bumpy scolded them. “Did you really think you’d get away with that? Tama guards that liquor as if it were gold. He knows how many crooks there are who crave that stuff.”

“Yeah, well, we can sit here for days insultin’ each other, or we can think up a plan to escape and get back to Koalaville. Which’ll it be?” Chigow tried to change the subject.

“Okay, we’ll think of a way to escape first. Then when we get home, I’ll insult you for a few days there. Might even give you the punch you deserve!” Bumpy threatened.

“Oh, come on, guys, let’s not fight now. This shackle is startin’ to rub the fur right off my ankle. We’re gonna end up lookin’ like we have scurvy or somethin’. Can anybody think of a way to get these chains off?” Blimpy asked, feeling the shackle on his ankle to see if there was any possibility of opening it.

“Hmmm,” Bumpy mumbled, doing the same, “looks pretty strong, it does. But maybe, just maybe,” he reached into the bib pocket of his medium-blue overalls and pulled out a thin, though strong, metal rod, about four inches long. “Here it is. I use it to pick the seeds out of apples. I wonder if I could...” He stuck one end of the rod into the lock on his shackle.

“Hmmm... This won’t be easy...”

“Well, there’s no rush,” said Chigow. “If you get it open, open mine, too, then wake me up. I think I need a little nap.”

“Yeah, you go to sleep,” Bumpy replied, “and stop botherin’ me.” He continued to fiddle around with the metal rod in the lock, intent on getting it open. Blimpy watched his brother in silence, not wanting to break his concentration, or to anger him, for he knew that Bumpy could be unpleasantly short-tempered at times. Nevertheless, he felt sure that his big brother would get them out of the trouble they were in. After all, he usually did!

## The Carpenters plan

That same evening, Maki Koala and her father were still working over in Koalaville.

“Here, father, have a look at the map. I believe it’s almost finished,” Maki called her father over to the candlelit table on which she had spread out the large map she had been working on for days.

“Why, that does look excellent!” Nory was delighted with what he saw. “You drew the lines so fine that one can make out each individual tree in the grove.”

“Oh, yes, I wanted everything to be clear, for this is a very important map, after all. But father, do you think the shade of green I used for the treetops is the right one? It seems a little too light to me,” Maki doubted.

“Don’t mind that, Maki. The trees aren’t always the same color. In the spring and fall, the green of their leaves isn’t as dark as in summer. This shade will do just fine,” Nory reassured her. “Once you’re finished, do you know what we’ll do?”

“What, father?” Maki asked, curious.

“We’ll carefully roll up the map, then walk over to Eucalyptus Grove again and try to find specific trees, based on your map. If we can find them without any problem, it will be a sure sign that the map is truly precise,” Nory explained.

“Yes, that’s a wonderful idea!” Maki replied. “We can go tomorrow.”

“No, I believe we should wait a few days, to have time to review the details of the map here. We should only test it when we are absolutely sure that it is finished in every respect,” her father said.

“Yes, you are right, father. I guess I’m just a little impatient at times.”

“What young koala isn’t?” Nory smiled. “But always remember, ‘haste makes waste’!

“Oh, changing the subject...” Nory went on, “we have to start thinking about how we are going to make the move to the new grove. Granddaddy told me that the migration will begin in two weeks. Of course, the koalas will be able to move their things over there gradually; the move won’t have to be made in a single day.”

“I certainly hope not,” Maki responded. “We have so many things: all our carpentry tools, furniture, parts of tree houses that aren’t finished yet...”

“Not to mention our supply of wood. That alone will take days to transport over there. Oh, and about the tree houses,” Nory went on, “the boards we haven’t assembled yet are one



thing, but we shouldn't forget the parts which are already mounted in the trees. Those unfinished tree houses won't do anybody much good when nobody is living here anymore."

"Yes, that's true. What do you suggest, father?"

"Well, I've been thinking. It would be far too much work to pull up the floors of the tree houses that are already in construction. But we should try to dismantle other parts that haven't progressed very far, for example, the walls, or the supporting beams for the roofs. We can salvage those parts and take them to Eucalyptus Grove, so that we can use them there when we build new tree houses."

"That's a very sensible idea, father, though it will be more work," Maki said.

"Yes, but we can save that stage for last. Once we have set up our household in Eucalyptus Grove, we can come over here every few days and dismantle the parts little by little, then transport them over here."

"Speaking of transporting, father: have you spoken with Handy about renting a wagon? It would be impossible for us to carry all the wood we have all the way over there."

"No, of course, we could never do that. As a matter of fact, I spoke with Handy this morning, and he said he could rent us his biggest wagon."

"Oh, father, I know the one you mean! It really is quite large. But I thought that wagon was only used by the Grove Council?" Maki asked.

"Normally, that is the case," Nory explained, "but Handy asked Judge Granddaddy if we could rent it to transport our things, and do you know what he said?"

"What, father?"

"Judge Granddaddy said that we can use it without paying any rent at all. He said that since carpentry, specifically the making of tree houses and furniture, will be very important for our community over in Eucalyptus Grove, the Council would like to make it as easy as possible for us to set up shop there. These days, only about ten percent of our koalas live in tree houses, but the Judge said that within a couple of years, that number could double, as long as we're able to keep up with the demand."

"Why, that is wonderful news, father! We'll have work for years to come. Though we will need some extra workers if we're going to be making that many houses."

"That'll be no problem. There are a lot of fine koalas who don't shy away from a good day's work," Nory opined. "But first things first. Tomorrow, we'll plan our schedule for making the move. It sure is a stroke of luck we can use the wagon for free."

“Indeed it is,” Maki said. “This way, we won’t have to use up our supply of nuts, berries and honey to rent the wagon. It would’ve been expensive, considering the fact that it will take us days to move everything.”

“Yes, indeed,” Nory remarked. “Now, I believe we’ve earned our supper today. How about if we climb up and make ourselves something to eat?”

“Oh yes, I am getting hungry,” Maki replied. She and Nory enjoyed a fine dinner, consisting of salted leaves with a bit of olive oil, and some berries for dessert. They were both quite content, for it seemed that everything was going more smoothly than expected, although they knew that the next few weeks would no doubt be extremely busy for them.

## The Great Escape

“Hey, I think I got it,” Bumpy whispered to his brother Blimpy. “Yeah, look! I’ve got the lock open!”

“You mean that little rod unlocked it?” Blimpy could hardly believe they were so lucky.

“Well, the little rod, plus my genius,” Bumpy replied. “Here, now that I know how to do it, let me try to open that shackle on your ankle, too.” Bumpy set to work; in only a few minutes, the shackle opened with a click, and Blimpy removed it from his ankle.

“Now, set Chigow free, too,” Blimpy said.

“Hey, I don’t see why I should. He deserves to be here. I’m sure it wasn’t *you* who came up with the dumb idea of stealing that liquor, was it?” Bumpy asked his brother.

“Well, no, but Chigow’s my friend. We can’t leave him here!” Blimpy pleaded.

“Ooh, okay. Hey Chigow, wake up,” Bumpy shook the sleeping koala’s shoulder.

“Huh, uh...” Chigow sluggishly opened his eyes. “What is it? Hey, you two are free!”

“That’s right, and if you shut up for a few minutes, you will be, too,” Bumpy worked deftly with the rod, and this time, it only took him a minute to open the lock.

“There! Now let’s get outta here,” Bumpy suggested, “before that moron Mabo shows his homely face again.”

The three looked around, and seeing that the coast was clear, began jogging off eastwards, stopping to hide every few trees to make sure nobody was following them. Before long, they had reached a tree on the very edge of Koalatown.

“Now we’ve just gotta cross this field, walk through Eucalyptus Grove, then cross the next field, and we’ll be home!” Chigow rejoiced.

“Yeah, but maybe we should walk up to the forest first. I don’t feel comfortable crossing open fields,” Blimpy seemed hesitant.

“Nonsense! There isn’t a hawk in sight,” Chigow replied, looking up at the sky, “and it’s already almost dark, so none would see us, anyway.”

“No, Blimpy is right,” Bumpy said. “It’s not the hawks. Somebody might see us if we’re out in the open like that, and then Mabo and his cronies will chase after us. We’ll sneak up north, tree by tree, then enter the forest, and from there, get over to Koalaville as fast as we can.”

“Do whatever you want,” Chigow scoffed. “I’m going straight across this field. It’s the fastest way.” He then began to trot out into the field.

“Come on, Blimpy, we’re goin’ this way,” Bumpy grabbed his brother’s arm before he could follow his chum.

Bumpy and Blimpy, cautiously moving from tree to tree in their flight northwards, had hardly gone fifty yards or so when they heard two emus squawking. Hiding behind a tree and looking back, they saw Mabo and a deputy, mounted on the emus, riding to the edge of the grove. Immediately spotting Chigow, who had not even gotten half way across the field, they speeded up.

Chigow, hearing them coming, looked back, then began to dash ahead as fast as he could, but to no avail. The speedy emus had soon reached him, well before he got to the western edge of Eucalyptus Grove. Mabo’s emu got in front of Chigow, blocking his way. Chigow stopped, and before he could think of what to do, the deputy had jumped off his emu, tackling Chigow and wrestling him to the ground. Tying Chigow’s paws behind his back, the two also fastened a long rope to his body. They then mounted the emus again, and slowly started back westwards towards Koalatown, leading Chigow, who had to walk, by the rope.

“That fool!” Bumpy exclaimed. “He always wants to do it *his* way. Now he sees where that gets him!”

“Aren’t we gonna help him?” Blimpy was sick with worry about the fate of his friend.

“Nothin’ we can do for him now,” Bumpy replied. “Come on, we’d better get up to the forest before they get wise and chase after us, too.”

They then continued their flight, and after reaching the edge of the forest, they entered it by squeezing through some bushes, being afraid that the main path connecting Koalatown to the woods might be guarded. Once in the forest, they had no trouble traveling eastwards. Though walking slowly and even stopping occasionally to make sure they were safe from koala pursuers as well as from wild animals, they arrived in Koalaville in about an hour and fifteen minutes without a hitch.

Chigow, on the other hand, soon found himself chained to the same tree, but this time, a guard was posted nearby to assure that he could not escape again.

## A little white Lie

A while later, back at the party, the koalas had danced away the greater part of the evening, and night had fallen on Koalaland. Contrary to the pessimistic expectations of the policekoalas, no big fights had erupted. The minor disputes that had broken out here and there were quickly and efficiently quelled by Duffy, Mabo, Doefoo, or their strategically-placed deputies. Nonetheless, the several medical specialists on the scene had to treat a number of victims of alcohol intoxication, as well as two cases of fainting due to unknown causes. But these insignificant events were hardly noticed by the multitude that was enjoying itself royally. Milly, however, was a notable exception.

Humpy was engaged in intimate conversation with Meppy, his multi-colored date, when Milly came up and tapped him on the shoulder.

“Oh, Humpy,” she said, and he turned around to face her. “I am so worried about Bumpy. It’s been almost four hours now. Something must be wrong. His meeting couldn’t be lasting this long.”

“Mmm, I see what you mean,” Humpy replied. Of course, he didn’t share her nervous concern. He simply thought that his friend had decided to spend the evening, and maybe longer, with the mysterious beauty who had written him the note. “But you never know, maybe something else important came up.”

“No, I just feel that something is wrong. What shall we do?” Milly asked.

“Well, the truth is, I don’t know.” Humpy didn’t want to have to leave Meppy, nor did he want to bother Bumpy and his new-found friend, yet Milly insisted:

“Oh, please, Humpy! Why don’t you and Dumpy go look for him? I’d really appreciate it,” she pleaded with him.

“Uuh, well,” he hesitated, turning to look at Meppy, who also seemed to think it was a good idea.

“Yes, Humpy, maybe you should be worried, too. Look, you and Dumpy can go find him and see what’s going on. We’ll wait for you here. We still have most of the night ahead of us!”

Humpy saw little sense in leaving the party now, but knew he had little choice if he wanted to keep the girls happy.

“Okay, no problem. I’ll go get Dumpy now, and we’ll find Bumpy, but don’t let any other koalas conquer your hearts while we’re gone!” he added with a charming smile.

“Oh, of course not!” Meppy giggled. “We won’t even dance with anybody until you get back.”

Humpy pushed through the crowd, walking over to where he had last seen Dumpy. He found him, and was quite astonished to see him with his back up against a tree, holding Silly tightly and giving her an unusually long kiss. This wasn’t at all like Dumpy, who was very shy by nature.

“Heh hmm,” Humpy cleared his throat to get their attention.

“Hee hee hee, it’s Humpy! Hee hee hee!” Silly giggled as she turned her head towards Humpy. “Are you and Meppy having a good time, too? Hee hee hee!”

“Well, uh, we were, but now Dumpy and I have something to attend to.”

“Uh, gee Humpy, huh uh huh,” Dumpy stammered, in a voice even slower than was his usual, “I don’t wanna leave Silly now, huh uh huh…”

Humpy could see that his friend had had much more than his share of eucalyptus liquor. This explained his unusually extraverted behavior with his date.

“I know, I know,” Humpy replied, “but we gotta go find Bumpy. He’s been gone for four hours.”

“Four hours? Huh uh huh. It only seems like about thirty minutes to me,” Dumpy responded.

“Well, I guess time flies when you’re havin’ fun. Now come on,” Humpy said, gently pulling Dumpy by the arm, and away from Silly. “We gotta go. Silly, I’ll bring him back to you as soon as we find Bumpy. Hey, why don’t you go over and chat with Milly and Meppy till we get back?”

“Oh, that’s a great idea, hee hee hee,” Silly opined. “We girls have got a lot of gossiping to do, hee hee hee!”

Humpy led Dumpy away from the crowd, almost having to hold him up so that he wouldn’t fall over while they walked.

“Gee Humpy, huh uh huh, I didn’t wanna leave Silly like that. Bumpy knows what he’s doin’, he always does.”

“Yeah, well, this time he might have gone too far. He told Milly he’d only be gone for a short while, and now it’s been four hours. He must be havin’ a really good time with that girl who wrote him the message.”

“Well, gee, we don’t wanna bother him, do we? Huh uh huh.”

“No, of course not, but we gotta make up some excuse for him. Here, let’s sit down behind this tree,” Humpy suggested, after they had gotten far enough away from the crowd. “Let’s see, what can we tell Milly?”

“Uh, I dunno, huh uh huh,” Dumpy mumbled as he leaned his head back against the tree, closed his eyes, and looked as if he were about to doze off.

“Hey, wake up!” Humpy shook him. “This is no time to fall asleep. We need a good story!” Humpy urged.

“Uuh, okay. Once upon a time, there was a lil’ scrill, who was takin’ a walk through the forest...” Dumpy muttered, only half conscious.

“No, no, I don’t mean that kind of story. I mean one about Bumpy,” Humpy said.

“Uuuh, gee, okay. Once upon a time, there was a lil’ scrill named Bumpy takin’ a walk through the forest... huh uh huh,” Dumpy continued.

“Oh, you’re no good! Let’s see, lemme think,” Humpy pondered, now not caring if his friend fell asleep or not. “Hmmm,” he muttered to himself, “how about... hmmm... Bumpy went to his business meeting up in the north, and... Eureka! I got it! Come on, Dumpy, wake up. I’m takin’ you back to Silly.”

Hearing her name jolted Dumpy awake: “Silly! Where? Oh Silly, here I am, huh uh huh...”

“Come on, get up,” Humpy said as he lifted his drunken pal to his feet and pushed him forward. “We’re goin’ back to the party.”

They arrived back at the celebration about fifteen minutes afterwards, made their way through the rollicking crowd, and approached the stands where Milly, Silly and Meppy were waiting.

“Oh, that didn’t take so long,” Milly was glad to see them, until she noticed that her date was nowhere in sight. “But where is Bumpy?”

“Yes, Bumpy, well, we found out what happened,” Humpy began to explain. “You see, we met the koala that Bumpy had his business meeting with, and he told us what happened.”

“Please, tell me! He didn’t get hurt, did he?” Milly was most concerned.

“No, I mean, yes, well, a little,” Humpy stuttered.

“Oh, no! I just knew it! I felt it in my bones! The poor dear! Where is he? What happened to him?” Milly was getting frantic.

“Now, don’t worry, it isn’t as bad as it sounds. Here’s what happened,” Humpy began to tell the tall tale he had made up. “Bumpy went to the business meeting on schedule...”

“What was the name of the koala that he met? Hee hee hee!” Silly was curious.

“Uh, I didn’t catch his name,” Humpy replied, since he had forgotten to think up a name.

“Anyway, he went to the meeting, that was up north, near the path to the forest, and right next to the anteater corral.”

“Oh yes, I know just where that is,” Milly said.

“Well, Bumpy was leaning up against the fence of the corral as the two talked business, and wouldn’t you know it? One of those anteaters stuck his snoot through two of the boards of the fence, and bit Bumpy right on the leg!”

“Oh, that must have hurt! I hope it isn’t serious,” Milly worried.

“No, I’m sure it isn’t. The koala said that it was a small wound, but he advised Bumpy to get back to Koalaville at once to see Doctor Koala. Bumpy didn’t want to leave. He kept saying that he had to get back here to the party. He was so anxious to see you again, Milly,” Humpy lied.

“Oh, that poor, sweet dear!” Milly responded, her eyes showing her compassion, as well as her delight that Bumpy thought so highly of her.

“But the other koala insisted he go right to Doctor Koala, saying that that anteater could’ve had rabies, or some other strange anteater disease of the type that anteaters are prone to getting, and that – who knows? – they might be able to pass on to unsuspecting koalas that they bite in the leg,” Humpy was now lying so convincingly that he himself almost believed his story.

“That’s true, I guess. And of course, it was best for him to go back to your grove to see the doctor. After all, the doctors here have their hands full tonight,” Milly thought everything made sense now.

“Well, before leaving, Bumpy told that koala to let you know that he is very sorry for not being able to come back, but that he’d return here to Koalatown within the next few days to apologize to you personally, and ... and to give you a kiss to make up for it.”

“Oh, isn’t that sweet! But why didn’t the koala come to tell me?” Milly wanted to know.



“Oh, well, uuuh...” Humpy wasn’t expecting that question. “Uuuh, well, you see, once Bumpy left, the koala realized that he didn’t even know you, so he didn’t know how to find you. I guess he was so worried about Bumpy’s leg that he didn’t think of asking Bumpy where you lived, or anything.”

“Yes, I suppose in a situation like that, you can’t think of everything,” Milly responded.

“Right. So anyway, I’m sure he’ll be fine, and you’ll be hearing from him as soon as Doctor Koala says he can come over here again,” Humpy was quite pleased that she had swallowed his story, lock, stock and barrel.

## “Why me?”

Bumpy and Blimpy, having arrived safely in Koalaville, went to Bumpy’s tree, climbed up, and sat moping on a wide branch.

“I don’t believe it,” Bumpy muttered. “It was going to be such a great party over there. Milly was wild about me – everything was so perfect. Then those three maniacs attack me and ruin everything!”

“Well, if you had stayed at the party, and hadn’t gone off to meet that mysterious koala girl that didn’t even exist, none of that would have happened,” Blimpy reminded him with a slight tone of sarcasm in his voice, more than his brother cared to hear.

“Hey, are you lookin’ for a punch in the snoot?” Bumpy perked up.

“Now don’t get upset, Bumpy. I know you got a raw deal. I’m just sayin’...”

“Well, shut up and don’t say it. I know I was a fool. Curiosity got the better of me, that’s all.”

“Curiosity killed the cat, you know,” Blimpy philosophized.

“And it’s gonna get *you* knocked off my branch in a second, if you don’t watch it!”

Bumpy apparently wasn’t open to criticism at the moment. Then, calming down a bit: “Oh, Blimpy, I know you’re right,” he groaned. “I should’ve known better. The worst thing is, now that I’m an outlaw over there, I can’t even go back and visit Milly again. Oh, why me, why me?”

“I wish I could tell ya, but I don’t know,” Blimpy replied.

“Well, I guess there’s only one thing to do now,” Bumpy said, suddenly remembering his standard strategy for dealing with sad and/or frustrating situations. “I’m gonna go to sleep and stay that way for at least ten or twelve hours.”

“Good idea! Maybe you’ll think up some clever idea while you’re sleepin’, about how to see Milly again,” Blimpy tried to cheer him up, “and besides, there’s nothin’ else we can do now anyway.”

“You said it. Dreamland, here I come!” Bumpy responded, as he lay face down on the branch, his arms and legs dangling on either side of it. “Ooooh...now I realize how much I hurt all over! Can’t quite get comfortable. Why, those mangy beasts! But don’t worry, I’ll think of a way to make ’em pay for this!” Bumpy, despite the pain he felt from the multiple bruises, scrapes, scratches, bites and cuts he had suffered in the fight, was now so tired that he

nonetheless began to doze off. “They won’t get away with this... uuuaaagh, aaauuugghhh,” he had begun to snore.

“Right, Bumpy,” Blimpy replied softly, as he, too stretched out a little further out on the branch, and was soon overtaken by sleep.

## Maki's Prayer

It was the middle of the night, yet Maki Koala had woken up, and couldn't get back to sleep. She went to the window of her tree house, and looked over to the west towards Eucalyptus Grove, soon to be her new home, illuminated by the light of the full moon.

"I guess they're still celebrating over in Koalatown," she thought to herself.

Maki never would have considered going to that party, for she knew of the undesirable elements that lived in that grove, and her father certainly didn't want his beloved daughter to get into any kind of compromising, or even perilous, situation.

Nevertheless, she was now thinking about the happy couples over there, dancing the night away, and even sneaking in a little kiss here and there. She had never been in love before, yet sometimes dreamed about meeting her soul mate, someone who would capture her heart, and love her forever.

She couldn't imagine who that would be, but about a year before her mother died in the wet tail epidemic, she had once told Maki that she would meet him one day; that somewhere out there, he was no doubt waiting to meet her, too, and that fate would surely bring him to her, probably when she least expected it.

Maybe that was the problem: somewhere in the back of her mind, she was *always* expecting it! Looking up to the Moon, she thought she saw a face on it, and a couple of furry ears on top.

"The Koala Moon understands me," she said under her breath, "and I know she hears me, too. Koala Moon, please make sure that the love of my life is alive and well, and help us find each other some day, preferably while I'm still young," she added. "Oh, and thank you kindly for listening to me!"

Her little prayer had comforted her, and made her feel warm inside. Walking back to her bed in a corner of her tree house – for her father, of course, had built one for the family long ago – she crawled under the blanket, resting her head on her little pillow, and was soon fast asleep.

## The Day After

Koalatown was considerably more peaceful the next morning, no doubt because practically every one of its citizens was sound asleep after having spent the entire night in joyous – and in a majority of cases, drunken – revelry. Mayor Koala and Judge Rolly were in the very small minority who were awake. They had left the celebration shortly after midnight, since they preferred sleep to wild parties.

“Where’s that Duffy? He was supposed to report to us this morning to tell us last night’s crime statistics,” said the Mayor impatiently.

“Oh, calm down. He needs his sleep, too. After all, I’m sure he and the other policekoalas were up until the party was over.”

“Well, for all we know, half of Koalatown might be chained to trees somewhere due to their disorderly conduct, or some other charges. I want to have an idea of how much time we’ll need to spend to give the shabby beasts their trials,” the Mayor remarked.

“Hey, I should be complaining, not you,” Rolly retorted. “After all, as Judge, I have the obligation to give them their day in court.”

“True, but once you sentence them, their relatives will be coming to *me* to complain, and to convince me to fire you, though legally, I couldn’t do so even if I wanted to” Mayor Koala replied. “Oh, look, I believe that’s Duffy on the way over here now.”

Soon, Duffy was knocking on the Mayoral Tree, and was invited to climb up. “Have a seat, Duffy,” Rolly offered him a chair, “and tell us about all the delinquents you arrested last night at the celebration.”

“Judge, Mayor, there’s good news and bad news. Can I tell you the good news first?”

“Go ahead,” the Mayor replied, “but I’ll bet the bad news will outweigh the good. At least, that’s the way it always seems.”

“Well, the truth is, we hardly had to make any arrests at all. It seems that our idea of placin’ the plain-overalls deputies in strategic positions worked like a charm. Whenever trouble was about to erupt, a deputy would just go over and break it up right away. True, a few koalas ended up with lumps on their heads, since we occasionally had to use our sticks to calm them down,” Duffy explained.

“You didn’t seriously hurt any of them, I hope?” the Judge asked.

“Naw, just knocked some sense into ’em. They were, for the most part, so drunk that they didn’t feel much anyway.”

“And you say you didn’t have to make many arrests?” the Mayor inquired, amazed.

“Only one, a certain Bumpy Koala. Caught him in a real big fight up in the north.”

“Bumpy? I don’t believe I know that rascal,” Rolly pondered.

“He’s not from here. Said he’s from Koalaville. Mabo found him fightin’ with three of our koalas up on the edge of the forest.”

“What? He attacked three of our own? Must be some kind of nut!” Mayor Koala supposed.

“Well, according to him, *they* attacked *him*, which does seem more likely. He said it was Chuppy, Guppy and Moldy.”

“Aha!” the Judge exclaimed. “The usual suspects! Why didn’t you arrest them?”

“Mabo says that Bumpy punched him, and that gave the other three the chance to escape,” Duffy went on.

“Strange. Why would he hit Mabo to let his three attackers escape? Doesn’t make any sense.”

“No, Mayor, it doesn’t. So maybe Bumpy’s story is true. He said he didn’t realize Mabo was there; he just kept thrashin’ about, tryin’ to protect himself from those three, and Mabo just happened to get hit,” Duffy responded.

“Yeah, well, those blasted criminal types will say anything to get off. He’s probably as guilty as they are,” the Judge surmised. “So I suppose he’s chained to the Tree of Justice, awaiting trial along with those two other scoundrels?”

“Uh, well, now we’re gettin’ to the bad news,” Duffy hesitated.

“Give it to us straight, Duffy,” the Mayor ordered. “What happened?”

“Well, Mabo chained Bumpy to the tree, but when he went back an hour later to take them all some food, they had all escaped, and...”

“Escaped? But those chains are strong! There’s no way they could break them!” the Judge was astonished.

“They didn’t break the chains, Judge. It seems they managed to open the ankle shackles somehow.”

“Without a key? Impossible!” Rolly fumed.

“Hmmm,” Mayor Koala mumbled, “let’s look at this logically. The other two – the ones who tried to break into Tama’s shack and steal the liquor – had been chained up a couple of

days, and hadn't escaped. Then that Bumpy joins them, and in an hour they're all gone. Sounds to me like he's some sort of technologically savvy rascal, the type that you just can't keep chained up for long. Surely most dangerous."

"Oh, I forgot to mention that we captured Chigow again, just as he was crossing the field over to Eucalyptus Grove," Duffy added this piece of good news, "but the other two – Bumpy and Blimpy – weren't around anywhere."

"Huuuhh," the Mayor sighed. "It's always depressing to hear that a couple of villains managed to escape justice. On the other hand, having only one trial, for that Chigow, will be a cinch, and since he's not from Koalatown, I won't be bothered by a bunch of yapping relatives trying to convince me to pardon him. All in all, this news was pretty good, I'd say."

"True," Judge Rolly agreed, "but maybe we should put a price on the heads of the other two. Or at the very least, all our policekoalas should be on the lookout, in case they come back here and try to stir up trouble. Suppose they try to free Chigow, for example?"

"I've thought of that already, Judge. That's why I put a guard on duty near the Tree of Justice, to make sure Chigow doesn't escape again," said Duffy.

"Well done," the Judge commended him, "and I think I'm speaking for Mayor Koala as well as myself when I say that we are quite pleased with the way you handled the celebration. Only one arrest all night! Why, that is certainly some kind of record!"

"Sure is!" the Mayor added. "Last year, you had to chain up fourteen drunkards for violent conduct, as I recall."

"Sixteen. But ever since last summer, when the Judge here gave us permission to let our sticks do the talkin', we haven't had to arrest as many. We just teach them their lesson right then and there," Duffy grinned.

"And it's perhaps the legal measure that works best in this grove," Mayor Koala smiled smugly. "In any case, I'm pleased with your work, Duffy. And tell each of your deputies they can pick up their one hundred walnuts whenever they want."

"Uh, Mayor sir, I believe you promised to pay them one hundred and *fifty* walnuts each," Duffy reminded him.

"Oh, yeah, right, my memory isn't what it used to be!" Mayor Koala laughed, thinking that it had at least been worth a try. "Now, run along and make our grove a safer place to live in, Duffy."

“Right, Mayor. Bye now, and bye, Judge!” Duffy climbed down the tree and went about his daily business.

“I think we can be pleased with the celebration,” Rolly mused. “Everybody had a great time, crime was down... It was practically perfect! Oh, who is that knocking on our tree now?”

They both looked down over the edge of the floor, and saw Isshy, one of Koalatown’s two doctors.

“Huh? We’re not sick. What does he want?” the Mayor mumbled to Rolly, then: “Come right up, my fine koala!”

After climbing up the tree to the platform, Isshy respectfully greeted the two. “Hello sirs, I am terribly sorry to bother you, but it is rather important,” he began.

“What is it? Who’s sick now?” the Mayor inquired.

“Well, sir, quite a few are. I have been treating at least seventeen cases of alcohol poisoning, not to mention bruises, scrapes, a broken arm, a broken nose...”

“What?” Judge Rolly exclaimed. “But Duffy just reported to us that there were practically no fights at all!”

“No, not that I saw,” Isshy continued, “but a whole bunch of injuries due to falls, not to mention stomach upsets, vomiting...”

“Oh, spare me the details,” Mayor Koala whined. “So what do you want from us?”

“Well, sir, I have a couple of difficult cases that I’m not sure how to treat, and which are rather severe. Two are related to alcohol poisoning, but of a serious nature, and one suspicion of a concussion. It almost looks as though one koala was beaten over the head with a stick...”

“Hmmm, I see,” Mayor Koala mumbled, figuring that Duffy might have done his job a trifle too well in that case.

“The truth is,” Isshy continued, “we need Koalaville’s Doctor Koala. He is the best physician around, and more qualified than my colleague Semmy and I are. After all, Doctor Koala was our teacher.”

“Oh, I see what you’re getting at,” Mayor Koala moaned. “You want us to pay for Doctor Koala to come over here and help.”

“Yes sir, that is what I was thinking. Two hundred walnuts, maybe.”

“Two hundred? That’s highway robbery!” Mayor Koala was indignant.

“Experience has its price, Mayor, and Doctor Koala has more experience than anybody.”



“Hey, if he really cares about helping, why can’t he come over here for free?” Rolly wanted to know.

“Well, Judge, after last year, when he did just that and saw how many medical problems were due to eucalyptus liquor, he said that if we don’t ban the stuff, he would charge us this year if we asked him to come over, and…”

“Oh, extortion, huh?” the Mayor grunted. “What the good doctor might not know is that if we banned that liquor, we’d have more serious medical problems here in Koalatown.”

“How’s that, Mayor?” Isshy asked. “Why more serious?”

“Because the Mayor and I would be the victims of the wrath of every alcoholic here in the grove, and that’s quite a few of ’em,” Rolly explained.

“Oh, okay, tell Doctor Koala he can have two hundred walnuts, but see to it that he cures those miserable koalas. It would give our Great Spring Celebration a rather bad reputation if some of the party-goers ended up dropping dead. And I’m up for re-election next year, you know!” the Mayor reminded Isshy.

“Right, Mayor. I’ll send a messenger and a wagon over to Koalaville to pick up Doctor Koala. Thank you both for your understanding in this matter. I know you do care about the health of our citizens. Good bye now,” Isshy said as he departed.

“Was he being sarcastic, or what?” Mayor Koala asked Rolly.

“I don’t rightly know. I guess that’s his idea of being diplomatic or something.”

“Well, it worked. Managed to get two hundred of my – I mean, of the Grove’s – walnuts. Doctors! I’m tellin’ ya, Rolly, no sooner do you have a conversation with a doctor, than your wealth starts to melt away like snow in the sun.”

“Truer words were never spoken,” Rolly agreed, and the two of them sat down at Rolly’s table to enjoy a game of cards before having lunch.

## Help Wanted

That same day, the southeastern point of Koalaville was filled with activity. Seated at the council table were Judge Granddaddy and Handy. They were engaged in interviewing one koala after another, who approached them one by one from a line that had formed, extending twenty yards or so into the grove. They had heard that the government was looking for about twenty koalas to supervise the assigning of trees in Eucalyptus Grove to the koalas who were moving there. This was, of course, a necessary precaution, to assure that the transition from one grove to the other went as smoothly as possible.

“Next!” Handy called out. “Step right this way!”

“Hello, Handy, Judge. My name is Foowary. I hear you need some help.”

“Yes, indeed,” Granddaddy responded. “Are you good at counting? That is, do you know your numbers?”

“Yes, of course, sir. I can count to a thousand, and even beyond that, if I concentrate.”

“And I suppose you can read and write, too?” Handy inquired.

“Yes, pretty well, actually, though to be honest, my spelling isn’t always perfect.”

“And does this map make any sense to you?” Handy pointed to the map of Eucalyptus Grove that Maki Koala had delivered to him to use that day (though she had insisted he return it to her at the end of the day, as she wanted to continue to improve it over the next week or so).

“Hmmm,” Foowary responded, studying it carefully, “I could be wrong, but from the size and shape of that grove, I’d say it’s Eucalyptus Grove – just like it says here at the top of it. Hey, that was easy enough!” Foowary chuckled.

“Just wanted to be sure you could read,” Granddaddy explained. “Okay, you’re hired. You’ll be paid with a two months’ supply of honey, nuts and berries, but only after the migration has been made and all the koalas have been assigned their new trees. You’ll be working eight hours a day, for between five and eight days. Do you accept these conditions?”

“Sounds good to me!” Foowary smiled.

“Then press your hand down on this ink pad,” Handy told him, “then on this contract, and on the copy.”

Foowary did as he was told, and had thus signed his work contract and a copy with his hand print, considered legally to be more binding than a mere signature, since a print was next

to impossible to forge. Next to the print, Granddaddy carefully wrote in “Foowary Koala” in clear block-type letters on both copies, then handed one to Foowary.

“You are to report for work a week from today, at 7:30 am.”

“7:30 am!” Foowary was surprised. “That’s ungodly early, Judge!”

“Hey, do you want the job or not?” Handy asked impatiently.

“Well, yeah, of course, but do I have to start so early every day?”

“The first day, it’ll be 7:30, since we have to give you instructions. Every day after that, you will begin at 8:30,” Granddaddy explained.

“Well, that’s a little better, I guess,” Foowary replied.

“Okay, you’re finished for now. See you next week!” Handy dismissed Foowary. “Next!”

“Good day, dear sirs,” Kudamono greeted them as he approached the table.

“Uh, hello,” Granddaddy responded. “Your name?”

“My name is Kudamono, and I respectfully request the honor of being permitted to perform my civic duty by assisting you in the admirable work of facilitating our migration to our new domicile.”

“Huh?” Handy was surprised to hear such talk.

“You sure have a rather peculiar way of saying it, but you seem to get the idea,” Granddaddy said. “I guess it would be superfluous to ask whether you can read and write?”

“In all humility, I must truthfully state that I am perfectly literate, and will doubtlessly be able to serve you well as far as it pertains to my skill in the arts thou hast mentioned.”

“Uh, yeah, right, I thought so,” Handy responded, not knowing whether this koala was serious, or whether he was playing some kind of strange prank. “Your pay will be a two months’ supply of honey, nuts...”

“Oh, no, thou needest say no more,” Kudamono interrupted him. “I would not think of receiving compensation for the labor I am gladly willing to provide, since I feel that being of aid in the noble cause of improving our condition by migrating to a superior grove is more than ample recompense for me.”

“Uh, does that mean you don’t want us to pay you anything for your work?” Handy asked, a bit confused.

“Precisely. May I suggest that any payment reserved for me be distributed among the elderly, to those who are not able to seek out delicious nourishment on their own?” Kudamono suggested.

“Okay, we’ll give your food to the old koalas, fine. Very kind of you to make such an offer. Now sign here and here with your hand print,” Granddaddy instructed.

Kudamono did so, then bade them farewell. “Adieu, my friends. I thank thee, Judge Granddaddy, and also thee, Handy, for the efforts you both are making to assure the good of our citizens, and I wish you a good day.”

After he had gone, Handy remarked to Granddaddy, “Wow, that is one strange koala. Where did he learn to talk like that?”

“Well, he and several other koalas here in Koalaville had parents who weren’t originally from here. They immigrated to Koalaville after a natural disaster in their grove, that was situated somewhere up on the eastern edge of the Great Koala Plain, had wiped out most of them. From what I’ve heard, all the koalas there talked like that, and the parents of the koalas from Kudamono’s generation taught them to speak in their peculiar manner, so that they would not forget their origins,” Granddaddy explained to him.

“Oh, okay. Sure sounds weird, though. I thought he was making fun of us at first. Seemed like a decent koala, though,” Handy replied.

“Oh, yes. Those of his clan are known for their great integrity. If all of our koalas were as honorable as Kudamono and his kind, my job as Judge would be a lot easier, that’s for sure.”

“Excuse me, sirs,” the next koala, who had stepped up to the table, interrupted them.

“Oh, yes, right. Now, what is your name?” Handy asked.

And thus went the morning, until Granddaddy and Handy had personally selected twenty koalas who seemed willing and able to do the job required of them. It was now one pm.

“I think I’ll have a little nap before lunch. What about you, Handy?”

“Sounds like a good idea. That meeting we’re going to have at five o’clock with the King and the other councilmembers might go on till dark, so we’d better get some sleep now if we don’t want to doze off in the middle of it. See you later, Granddaddy!”

“Bye, Handy. See you after lunch,” he responded, and each walked off to his tree to get some shut-eye.

## Legal Matters

Later that day...

The Eucalyptus Grove Council was about to begin a meeting to make final plans for the Great Migration that was soon to take place. All had come to the meeting: Handy, Judge Granddaddy, Doctor Koala, Chashibu, Chosay, Tecky, Gruffy, Kashy, Claire, and of course, the Prestigious Koala King; the latter, quite befittingly, was the first to speak.

“I thank all the members of our Council for being here this evening. Let us begin by asking Granddaddy how the preparations for the move have been coming along.”

“Quite well, Sire. Handy and I have signed up twenty koalas as planned, to help assign the trees in Eucalyptus Grove. I do believe, however, that a Royal Decree might be in order, as far as this subject is concerned.”

“A Royal Decree? Of what nature?” the King inquired.

“Sire, despite the fact that we are doing everything we can to assure fairness in the assignment of trees, we nonetheless fear that some koalas might not be completely satisfied with their lot. Therefore, I would like to propose that you sign a decree, stating that it is your royal will that the koalas accept the decisions we make; that is, that they accept the trees assigned to them, and that they know that it is your desire that they do so; furthermore, that all koalas do whatever they can to make the transition as smooth as possible for everyone.”

“Hmmm, I suppose that such a decree would not be in conflict with any existing laws?” the monarch asked, now looking at Gruffy and Kashy, the two lawyers.

“Not at all Sire, as far as I can see,” Kashy opined.

“I beg to differ, Sire,” Gruffy spoke up, “for such a decree could be construed as an attempt by our King to bend the will of the koalas, and thus as an assault on freedom of opinion, not to mention of choice.”

“Two lawyers, two opinions,” old Chosay scoffed. “Why can’t you fellows ever make things easy?”

“We’re just trying to represent both points of view, that’s all,” Gruffy defended himself and his other-minded colleague.

“Okay, there’s only one way to settle this,” Granddaddy suggested. “We’ll take a vote on it. All koalas who feel that a royal decree of the nature previously explained is both appropriate

and legal, please raise your hands. Oh, and Sire, I'm afraid you can't vote, since you will be the one signing the decree."

"Yeah, and if you could vote, there would be a danger of having a stalemate, in case five are for it, and five against," Chashibu added.

"I have no problem with that. You nine may decide the issue," the King responded calmly. Six hands went up, those of Handy, Kashy, Chashibu, Chosay, Doctor Koala, and Granddaddy.

"Now, all those against," Granddaddy said; only Gruffy raised his hand.

"I see two of you chose not to vote," Granddaddy noticed.

"That is our right, isn't it?" Claire asked for herself and Tecky.

"Yes, it is," Granddaddy responded, "but I would be interested in your reasons."

"Well, after hearing both Kashy and Gruffy speak, I feel they *both* are right, in a way, so I'd rather not vote one way or the other," Claire explained.

"I feel somewhat the same way, though my main reason is that I don't see the necessity of a Royal Decree," Tecky added. "I have faith that the koalas would, in general, act decently in this matter, and accept the trees given to them. It would only be a minority who wouldn't be content, and they should have the right to say so, in my opinion."

"I understand," Granddaddy responded. "Nevertheless, the motion is accepted, by a vote of six in favor, one against, and two abstentions. Write that down, Wheezy."

Wheezy, who had recently been hired by the council as its official secretary, though only on a temporary basis – that is, until the migration began – obediently noted the results in the Council's official Book of Records.

"This being the case," the Judge continued, "I would like to present the decree to our King for signing. I prepared it myself this afternoon. Your Majesty..."

The Prestigious Koala King took the document and began to read:

"I, the Prestigious Koala King, of Koalaville, and soon to be King of Eucalyptus Grove as well, and therefore Sovereign of the two groves that comprise the eastern region of Southern Koalaland, including the adjoining fields, and of all the forest area north of the two aforementioned areas, and being the legitimate Monarch of said territories due to the faith placed in me by the citizens over whom I reign, and from them having received my royal authority, do hereby decree, that all the koalas who will soon make the move from Koalaville to Eucalyptus Grove (this being the totality of the koalas who are now residents of Koalaville,

since our lawmakers have decided that the migration is to be made by all of us, without exception), should accept without complaint, whining, anger, dissatisfaction, frustration, or any other negative emotion, the trees which are assigned to them by the agents whom we have designated, whose decisions have been approved by myself, as well as by our Council; furthermore, that if any koala should nonetheless feel any of the aforesaid unpleasant emotions, that he or she not express them publicly, but that he/she confine the expression of such feelings to the circle of his/her intimate acquaintances, in order not to sow the seeds of discontent among others, so that the transition from Koalaville to Eucalyptus Grove, which we designate as the ‘Great Migration’, may be accomplished with the utmost of ease.

May our Great Migration be the beginning of a new, better, more productive, and happier life for all of our citizens.

Signed this second day of the first week of spring, in the first year of the reign of your...

Prestigious Koala King ”

“My, I must say, Granddaddy, you sure can write long sentences!” the King laughed. “But I think it sounds pretty good, if I do say so myself. If everyone agrees that the wording is appropriate, I will proceed to sign.”

“Hmmm, not that I wish to protest,” Gruffy gave his opinion, “but that would seem to be a muzzling of free speech, a right guaranteed in our Book of Laws.”

“I cannot disagree with that, Gruffy,” Granddaddy responded, “yet it is for the good of the grand undertaking that is soon to take place. I would say that this is a case where the rights of the individual must be subordinated to the good of the entire population. And since a majority has already accepted the decree...”

“Oh, I know, I just wanted to get in my two berries’ worth. It’s my duty to say what I think about such important matters, though of course, I promise that I will support the measure wholeheartedly once the King has signed.”

“Fine. Your Majesty, here is the ink bottle and pen,” Granddaddy pushed a little jar across the table towards the monarch, then handed him a feather pen. The King took the pen, dipped it into the ink, and signed.

“It is now official,” Granddaddy announced. “Any questions?”

“As a matter of fact, I do have a question,” Handy began. “Suppose some koala doesn’t respect the decree, and goes around complaining because he isn’t satisfied with his new tree. Should I arrest him, or what?”

The other councilmembers looked at each other, speechless at first.

“Hmm, that is a good question,” Claire said. “Are we really going to arrest and punish koalas just because they complained? Somehow that doesn’t seem right.”

“Hey, the law is the law,” Kashy, the Grove’s prosecutor, stated. “It is the will of the King that nobody complain, so if somebody does, he – or she – will have to be punished in some way. A fine, perhaps, or a week of community service.”

“Hah! That Mayor Koala over in Koalatown would have a field day if we did that!” Gruffy exclaimed. “He’d say that even though there are a lot of problems in his grove, at least they have free speech. We’d look really oppressive by comparison.”

“May I make a suggestion?” the King asked modestly.

“Oh, of course, your Majesty,” Grandaddy replied, slightly bowing his head in reverence.

“Should any koala not be satisfied, he or she may come directly to me. I declare my willingness to talk to anyone who is not happy with his tree.”

“Hmm, Sire, that could be problematic. They might see it as a sign of weakness,” Kashy observed.

“Wait a minute. I think it’s a great idea,” Chashibu disagreed. “The very fact that a koala would be received by the King himself would greatly impress him.

“...and so would probably shut him up,” old Chosay added.

“Yes, psychologically, that could have just the right effect,” Doctor Koala added. “I like the idea. Besides, you never know, mistakes could be made, and maybe a koala really *does* get a raw deal with his new tree. In such a case, the King could always see to it that another tree was assigned to him. After all, there are more than enough trees over there in Eucalyptus Grove, and many won’t be inhabited anyway.”

“Good point, Doctor,” the King agreed. “And of course, if I see that a koala is justified in complaining, I will see to it that he or she is given another tree.”

“Well, then, I guess everything is settled. Gruffy, do you have any other concerns you would like to share with us?” the Judge asked.



“Oh, uh, I suppose that if the King is willing to deal with things on an individual basis, things should turn out to be fair in the end. I still have my problems with accepting the limitations on free speech, but all in all, I guess I can accept the situation.”

“Yeah, and after all,” Tecky, the successful businesskoala, spoke up, “we shouldn’t assume there will be a lot of problems. All of the koalas I’ve spoken with are delighted to be moving to a better grove. I really don’t think we’ll have a lot of complaints, except maybe for a few older ones who are set in their ways.”

“Speaking of whom, I know one of those myself,” said Handy. “I believe most of you know Scuzzy.”

“Oh yeah, Scuzzy, I haven’t seen that old geezer in a while,” Chosay laughed. “I can imagine *he* might complain!”

“Yes, he says that he’s lived in Koalaville all his life, and has no desire whatsoever to move anywhere,” Handy explained. “What should we do with such cases? We can’t simply leave a few koalas over here in Koalaville when we move. It would be too dangerous for them.”

“No doubt about it,” Doctor Koala concurred. “How about if I talk to Scuzzy? Maybe I can talk some sense into him.”

“The way I know you, Doctor, you’ll use some of that ‘psychology’ of yours to trick him into changing his mind,” Claire smiled. “In the end, you’ll have him believing that the Great Migration was his idea from the very beginning!”

The other councilmembers all laughed at her remark, and Doctor Koala could not disagree with her.

“Well, you just let me do things my way. I’ll talk to old Scuzzy tomorrow, and to anybody else who may have their doubts, and I’ll bet you all a hundred walnuts that in the end, they’ll all be rarin’ to go!”

“I won’t take that bet, Doc,” Granddaddy laughed. “As contrary as you can be at times, I’ve often seen that when you want something, you can be a real slick talker!”

“It’s called *persuasiveness*, Judge,” Doctor Koala retorted with a smug smile, as the others chuckled.

“I believe the next issue is already clear, but just to be sure,” the King said, “the Great Migration will officially begin one week from today, on the second day of the second week of

spring, correct?” As this matter had been decided among them during an earlier meeting (though not officially), all agreed.

“Yes, all the koalas have heard about it, though it might be good to declare that nobody should make the move before that date,” Chashibu recommended, “and perhaps a date should be set by which everyone should have already moved. After all, some koalas are so slow that they might take months to get around to moving.”

“Excellent point,” Doctor Koala agreed. “Any suggestions as to how long we should give them to move?”

“Well, it would seem to me,” Tecky joined in, “that the move should not be made by all koalas at once. Too hard to control – there might be chaos. Since we now have such a fine map of our new grove, which neatly divides all parts into sectors geographically, may I suggest that we instruct the koalas to move sector by sector?”

“How do you mean?” Handy asked.

“Well, for example, the first day of the migration would be the beginning of the move for those koalas living in the northwest. Naturally, we wouldn’t want those in the east to move first, since they’d have to traverse the western part of Koalaville, and if the koalas in the west are still there, there could be conflicts. So it would be logical to first have those in the west move, then those in the east,” Tecky explained.

“My, that is a clever idea,” Claire praised him. “So you mean that we could, for instance, have those in the northwest start moving on one day, then those in the southwest the next, followed by those in the northeast and southeast?”

“Exactly, Claire,” Tecky replied. “It would be the best way to avoid problems.”

“Or even better: why don’t we give each group *three* days to make the move, instead of only one?” Claire added. “It might not be realistic to expect all the koalas in a sector to be able to move on a single day.”

“Yes, Claire, that is a good idea,” the King agreed. “Besides, we wouldn’t have to limit them to a three-day timetable, either. We can tell them that they should move within a three-day period, if they are able to do so. But I would recommend that the final date should be later than three days, just in case some need more time.”

“Right, Sire,” Doctor Koala concurred. “Nory, the carpenter koala, for example. He has all that furniture, parts of tree houses, and his wood supply to move. He’ll probably need as much as a week.”

“True, and there are others who for one reason or another need more time,” Gruffy agreed. “I would say that the starting date should be viewed as fixed; in other words, that no-one should be allowed to move before the date assigned to their sector, but that the final date should be flexible, and be seen merely as a general guideline. Since most koalas are anxious to make the move, they will no doubt do so as soon as they can, yet if others need more time, there’s no need for us to pressure them.”

“Yes, I think we can all agree on that. True, there may be exceptions: those koalas that are reticent about the whole idea, and that even our good Doctor can’t convince,” Granddaddy said, smiling at his physician friend. “But we can always deal with these on an individual basis.”

“Oh yes, I do like these plans,” the King stated enthusiastically. “I think we are well prepared for the migration.”

“If I may speak not only for myself, but also for the other females in the grove,” Claire began, “I would like to say that we are really excited about the move. We females tend to value luxury more than you males, and the thought of moving over to Eucalyptus Grove simply thrills all of us!”

“Excellent! Here’s one case where the females won’t cause any problems for us!” old Chashibu joked, at which all the males broke out in laughter, though the Prestigious Koala King, wanting to seem impartial, tried to keep a straight face.

“Well,” Claire responded cleverly, “I could go into all the cases where you males cause *us* problems, but if I did, we’d be here till tomorrow morning.”

“Touché!” Gruffy remarked with a smile, and a twinkle in his eye.

## An amicable Business Deal

Filthy's wagon yard, up on the northern edge of Koalatown adjoining the forest, was busier than usual. They had four wagons there, two of average size, one a bit larger, and one that was so big that at least two king-sized anteaters were needed to pull it. Of course, Filthy and his helpers had made more wagons over the years, but they had all been sold. These days, however, he wasn't even trying to find buyers, since he knew that in the space of only a couple of weeks, he was going to be able to make a pretty profit by renting out his four wagons to koalas in Koalaville who would need them for their migration. To be sure, his Koalaville competitor, Handy, also had wagons to rent, yet only three. Filthy wished he had ten more, for there was no doubt that even that many could be rented out during the weeks of the migration.

"Hey, Mofoo, have you fixed the wheel on that wagon yet?" Filthy wanted to know.

"It's just about finished, boss. I had to completely replace one of the spokes. That crack in it couldn't have been repaired anyway," Mofoo replied.

"Well, as long as we have the wagons ready in six days, 'cause that's when we'll have to get them over to Koalaville. Speaking of Koalaville, is Grubby back from there yet? He was supposed to go over again today and round up some more customers. We already have twenty-two on our list, but if we're lucky, we should be able to get maybe ten or fifteen more in the next few days."

"Yeah, we're gonna be rollin' in nuts and berries once that migration is over. And I hear they have a good honey supply over there, too. Make sure some of them pay us in honey. Hmmm, I just love to dip my eucalyptus leaves in honey when I eat 'em!" Mofoo raved.

"First things first. And first, we must get all the wagons ready and collect a bunch of customers, then we do the work, then we get paid, and only then do we enjoy," Filthy, conscientious by nature, reminded his helper.

"Oh, I know, but I can dream, can't I?" Mofoo replied as he finished replacing the spoke. "There. The wheel's as good as new now. Any more repairs to be made on the other three wagons, boss?"

"Not that I could see. Believe it or not, we might already be all set, which would mean that we can have some rest these next few days, something we're gonna need before those two weeks of work that are ahead of us."

“I sure could use it. I’ve only been gettin’ ten hours sleep a day this past week.”

“I haven’t even gotten that. What you say we call it a day, and have a nice long nap?”

Filthy suggested.

“Hey, boss, that doesn’t sound like you at all, but I think I’ll take you up on the offer before you change your mind,” Mofoo responded, cleaning off his hands with a wet cloth.

“I’ll be back in the morning to take one final check of all the wagons. Then maybe I can go over to Koalaville to help Grubby find new clients.”

“Great idea. Time for a nap... oh, no!” Filthy suddenly remembered something. “You go take your nap. I just realized I have an appointment with Scruffy, to pick out the anteaters we’re gonna need for the wagons. Well, see you tomorrow, then.”

“Bye boss! See ya!” Mofoo called as he walked off towards his tree.

Filthy left the wagon yard, closing the gate in the fence that surrounded it behind him, and turned left to walk eastwards down the path along the grove’s northern sector towards Scruffy’s anteater corral, that was just next to the path entering the forest in the northeast. Arriving a few minutes later, he found Scruffy cleaning the fur of one of the larger anteaters with a brush made out of the bristles of a wild boar. Not that a boar had been killed for that purpose; the koalas killed no creature, except in self-defense. The boars, all of whom lived in boar forest, collected bristles that had fallen out of their hides, and then traded them to the koalas in return for tasty mushrooms that the koalas picked in the forest above Koalatown.

“How you doin’, Scruffy? My, that looks like a sturdy creature!” Filthy began the conversation.

“Hi Filthy. Sure is. This fellow is perhaps the strongest one I’ve got,” he replied, and then pointed to another anteater on the opposite side of the corral, which measured about thirty by forty feet. “That one over there is almost as strong. You can use these two to pull that big wagon of yours. Even if it’s fully loaded, these two critters won’t have any trouble pulling it.”

“Great. Then I’ll definitely take those two. I’ll also need two others for the other big wagon, and four more – two each – for the two small wagons,” Filthy calculated.

“Right. I’ve got ’em all ready. But maybe you’ll want another one to use to ride around on. After all, you and your workers will be taking quite a few trips over to Koalaville in these next few weeks,” Scruffy suggested.

“Yeah, you may have a point, but I was thinking maybe we could stay over in Koalaville for a few weeks, since we’ll be working there every day, driving the wagons to Eucalyptus

Grove and back. In that case, we wouldn't need to return here till the migration is over," Filthy explained.

"Whatever you want, but if you would like one to ride, I suggest that fellow there," Scruffy pointed to a medium-sized anteater with brown and white fur. "He's really tame, yet frisky, so he can walk for hours without getting tired."

"Hmm, you know, even though I might not need him during the migration, it might not be bad to have an anteater of my own. With all I'll be earning these next few weeks, I might consider purchasing one. Is he for sale?" Filthy inquired.

"Well, he's one of my favorites, to tell you the truth," Scruffy hesitated.

"Tryin' to up the price, huh?" Filthy chuckled.

"No, seriously. I've raised him since he was born."

"Yeah, yeah, I know, and he's only been ridden by a little old koala female who always took excellent care of him," Filthy joked.

"Huh, what are you talking about?" Scruffy was confused.

"Just kidding. But if you would consider selling him, do let me know. After all, you could come over to the wagon yard and visit him any time you want. It's only a couple of hundred yards away," Filthy offered.

"Well, I'll think about it. Oh, should we sign the rental contract now? I have it all ready," Scruffy walked over to a little table just outside the corral, and lifted up a stone which had been placed on the contract to keep it from blowing away. "Here it is. Contract for the rental of eight healthy anteaters, two large, two a bit smaller, and four medium-sized ones. Payment to be made in berries, nuts, and honey, amounts of each listed here below. Of course, I also accept mushrooms."

Filthy took the contract and studied it. "Looks just like what we agreed on. I have some baskets of nuts over at my place now. I could have them brought to you tomorrow, if you wish."

"No need to pay in advance, Filthy. I trust you, of course," Scruffy replied.

"Well, I'd rather give them to you tomorrow, so they're out of the way. Who knows, if I keep 'em stored at my place, somebody might steal 'em when I go over to Koalaville."

"Yeah, I've heard crime is on the rise even here in the north," Scruffy commented. "When I moved up here a few years ago from the southwest, it was to get away from all those criminals. But the other day, Mabo told me he arrested some lowlife who was having a wild

brawl with three others right over there,” Scruffy pointed to the tree at the beginning of the forest path where Bumpy had been attacked.

“Aren’t you afraid somebody might rustle your anteaters some day?” Filthy asked.

“Naw, not really. All my creatures know me well. They wouldn’t go off with some stranger without putting up a fight. But I have to watch where I keep my nuts, berries and other delicacies. Wouldn’t want anybody to get any ideas about stealin’ ’em.”

“Well, we’d better see to it that those rowdy koalas from the southwest don’t wander up here too often, I say. And if they do, we should chase them back south right away.”

“I’m with you there,” Scruffy agreed.

“Okay, I’ll get back to you in six days to pick up the anteaters, though I will need them pretty early, at sunrise, as a matter of fact,” Filthy knew that no koala liked to get up that early, but he wanted to start out as soon as he could to make the trip to Koalaville.

“No problem at all,” Scruffy responded. “I’ll get them ready the night before, and then come down when you knock on my tree, and we can take them over to your place to hitch them to the wagons. When we’re finished, I can always come back to my tree and get some more sleep.”

“I wish I could do that!” Filthy laughed. “But once they start that migration over there, my workers and I are going to be putting in some long hours for a few weeks.”

“I don’t envy you at all,” Scruffy said, “but you will be earning quite a bit, so I guess it’s worth it.”

“No doubt about that. I believe I’ll invest most of what I earn. I was thinking I could hire the carpenters over in Koalaville to make some fine details for one of my wagons. Sort of turn it into a luxury model, with ornately carved decorations around the sides of the seats, for example. Oh, and they could also make some water barrels that I could attach to the sides of the wagons, so that they can be used for long-distance travel. I’ve heard rumors that Mayor Koala would like to establish stronger relations with Koala City, up in the north of Koalaland,” Filthy told him.

“Yeah, I’ve heard the same thing. That’s quite a distance from here, though. It’d take almost two days to get there, even by wagon with a couple of strong anteaters, the way I see it,” Scruffy added.

“That should be about right. On the one hand, it seems like a long way to travel, but on the other hand, if we can establish trade relations with Northern Koalaland, things will really start

booming here in the south. Why, I've heard they have products there we've never even heard of. They dress differently from us, too. I hear they wear long robes instead of overalls. Imagine!" Filthy said.

"Sounds crazy to me," Scruffy scoffed. "Suppose part of the robe gets caught in a branch, and you fall off. You could be dangling there for hours before someone figures out a way to get you down!"

"Yeah, right. I'll take overalls any day. Much more practical. But I'll bet some of our females would love to buy some colorful gowns to wear," Filthy figured.

"As long as it's pretty, females will buy it, no doubt," Scruffy laughed. "But if I put on something like that, I think even my anteaters would laugh at me!"

"Well, Scruffy, nice doin' business with you. I'm gonna go get some sleep. I'll get back to you six days from today, the second day of the second week of spring, around sunrise, as I said."

"Just be sure you knock on my tree loud enough, so I wake up," Scruffy told him.

"Will do. Bye now!" And with that, Filthy walked back to his tree next to the wagon yard, climbed up to his favorite branch, and was soon sound asleep.



## The softer Side of Justice

Meanwhile, in south-central Koalatown...“Rolly, are you ready? I want to get over to the Tree of Justice and give that delinquent his trial before noon.” Mayor Koala was getting impatient.

“Yeah, Mayor, let’s climb down and go on over.” Rolly and the Mayor made their way down the Mayoral Tree and headed eastwards towards the tree to which Chigow was chained.

“Of course, he’s going to deny everything. They always do. Not that that will keep us from giving him his just punishment,” Judge Rolly said.

“Rolly, we have to give this case a bit of thought. True, we could throw the book at him, and aim at his head. That would really hurt!” The Mayor laughed at his own joke, and then continued, “Or, we could sentence him to a few years of hard labor, for example. Yet I think that there is something greater at stake here, something that might require a bit more flexibility on our part.”

“Huh?” Rolly was surprised. “Since when are we flexible with criminals?”

“Look, Rolly. This Chigow, though he’s from Koalaville, is a common thief, of the type that we have loads of here in Koalatown. The way I see it, the real danger is that accomplice of his, Bumpy, the one that knows how to open the shackles on the leg irons. Imagine if he teaches that trick to all the scoundrels creeping around Koalaland. Why, we wouldn’t be able to keep any of them chained up for even an hour. We’d be powerless to control crime!”

“Hmm, good point. So do you have any suggestions?” Rolly was curious now.

“As a matter of fact, I do indeed. We have to use Chigow to get to Bumpy, then arrest him, put him under guard, and find out what he used to open the shackles. In a word, we have to stop Bumpy before he shares his technology with other criminals.”

“Interesting idea, no doubt,” Rolly muttered. “How about if I’m the hard-liner, and you’re Mr. Compassion?”

“Great! He’ll be talking in no time – just you wait!” Mayor Koala laughed.

Chigow saw the Judge and the Mayor approaching the Tree of Justice. “Hey, lamebrain,” he said to his guard, “I see a couple of thugs comin’ this way. If you let ’em lynch me, I swear I’ll come back as a ghost and scare the devil outta ya!”

“Shut your trap, before I shut it for you,” the guard menaced. “One more word, and I’ll tell ’em to add a couple of months to your sentence.”

“Oh, I see. You’ve already all decided I’m guilty, even before my trial. Fine system of justice this is!”

“Chigow, I am Mayor Koala, and this is our Judge, Rolly.”

“Greetings, Your Majesties. I declare that I’m innocent on all charges, whatever they may be, so you can let me go home now,” Chigow remarked sarcastically.

“First of all, don’t call us ‘Your Majesties’. We don’t have a monarchy here in Koalatown. We have democracy,” Judge Rolly sternly informed him.

“Democr... what? Hey! Get away from me, it might be contagious!” Chigow mocked.

“Democracy is not a sickness; it’s a superior form of government,” Mayor Koala explained. “But enough of this nonsense, it’s time for your trial. Rolly, what are the specific charges?”

“Burglary in the first degree; breaking and entering into the shack of Tama, and trying to make off with a large number of bottles of eucalyptus liquor. In addition, an almost successful attempt to escape in order to evade justice.”

“And what punishment do you recommend?” the Mayor asked.

“Hmm... I’d say that twenty years of hard labor ought to do it. We can have him break rocks.”

“Twenty years!” Chigow was startled. “All I did was try to steal a little booze, and I didn’t even get away with it! Twenty days would be more like it!”

“Hmm, that’ll be one more year for contempt of court,” Rolly jotted down in a little notebook.

Chigow was mortified, and started to beg. “Oh, please, I don’t deserve such a sentence. Couldn’t you forgive me just this one time? I promise I won’t ever try to steal anything again. Give me one more chance!”

“Hah!” Rolly scoffed. “They’re always sorry once sentence is passed! But you’re not fooling anybody. You will never change. So it is the ruling of this court that you be put to work building roads here in Koalatown, that is, after you’ve spent the first ten years breaking up the rocks needed to pave them. See that big iron ball over there?” the Judge asked him, pointing to a black metal ball, about eight inches in diameter, that was lying off to the left of the tree. It was connected to a two-foot chain that ended in an ankle shackle.

“Yeah,” Chigow replied. “What’s that for?”

“We’ll chain you to that so you can’t get away, and then take you up to the place where you’re going to be working. There are a bunch of rocks up there that you’ll be breaking up with a big hammer. Since you’re still young, you should be able to finish the road in about twenty years, more or less,” the Judge explained.

“Oh, look Judge, Your Excellency, sir... Gimme a break! I’m no good at breakin’ rocks!”

“You will be once you’ve got a few years experience,” the Judge snickered.

“But I’ve got my life ahead of me! I want to go back to my grove, be with my friends! And anyway, what’s the sense of breakin’ rocks? Can’t you make roads without rocks?”

“Yeah, we could, but then you wouldn’t suffer as much. And as far as your future is concerned, you should have thought of that before you turned to crime.” The Judge was firm.

Chigow now had tears in his eyes, for he realized that there would be no more joy in life for him.

“Hmmm... Chigow, maybe there *is* some other way,” Mayor Koala feigned compassion.

“Oh, please, sir, yes, I’ll do whatever you ask. Just let me go!” Chigow pleaded.

“Well, there is something you could do for us, but ... No, I could never ask that of you,” the Mayor hesitated.

“Tell me what it is! Anything!”

“Well, the koala we’d *really* like to punish is that Bumpy, the one that freed himself, Blimpy and you, enabling all of you to escape. We don’t know how he did it, but we’d sure like to find out. But, oh, no, we’d never ask you to rat on a friend. We could never expect you to do that.”

“Hey, he’s no friend of mine. I’ll tell you anything you wanna know!” Chigow now saw a ray of hope.

“Hmmm. First of all, how did he open those shackles?” the Mayor asked.

“He used a little metal rod, about four inches long. He keeps it in his pocket.”

“And where does this Bumpy live?” the Judge asked.

“He lives in Koalaville, in a tree in the north-central part, with his mangy friend Humpy, and that dimwit Dumpy.”

“Hmm. Very interesting. Judge, let’s have a little private chat about this situation,” Mayor Koala suggested.

They walked over to a nearby tree. “Rolly, with that information, we might be able to locate Bumpy.”

“Exactly. I’ll write a letter to Judge Granddaddy, explaining the situation, and requesting that they arrest Bumpy and send him to us, so that we can try him here. Granddaddy would be glad to rid his grove of a delinquent, so I think he’ll go along with it. But what should we do with Chigow?”

“I’d say one week of community service should do it,” the Mayor replied.

“One week of community service!” Rolly was shocked. “That’s a far cry from twenty-one years of hard labor!”

“Look, Rolly. If we give him a really lenient sentence, he’ll be all the more grateful, and we won’t have him as an enemy in the future. And besides, if we have him break rocks, he’ll no doubt escape before long anyway, iron ball or not, and that’ll just make us look dumb.”

“Good point. You really do think like a politician. But Tama will be furious when he hears you let Chigow off so easy. The lock on his shack was completely broken during the burglary, you know,” Rolly reminded him.

“Yeah, I know, but that Tama deserves it. You know those bottles of eucalyptus liquor he sent us last month to pay his taxes with?”

“Yeah, what about ’em?” Judge Rolly asked.

“Well, I opened one the other night and took a gulp, and could tell right away that he had watered it down. Thought he could cheat us! I didn’t want to confront him directly, considering his wealth and influence here in the grove, but letting off Chigow real easy might be a way of subtly giving Tama the message that he can’t fool with us like that.”

“Yeah, I like it,” the Judge responded. “Tama needs to be put in his place. Watered-down liquor! Why, the nerve...”

“It’s agreed, then. Let’s go tell Chigow our decision.”

“Chigow Koala, please stand up to hear your sentence,” the Judge began.

“Oh, please, Your Greatness, please show some mercy!” Chigow begged nervously.

“Aw, calm down. We’re going to let you off easy,” Mayor Koala consoled him.

“You are?” Chigow asked, not quite believing it.

“Your sentence will be one week of community service. Collecting berries and nuts in the forest, and then distributing them among the elderly here in Koalatown.”

“Really? Is that all I’ve gotta do?” Chigow rejoiced, not believing his luck.

“That, and promise not to ever try to steal anything again here in Koalatown,” the Judge replied.

“Oh, I promise, I do, I really do! Oh, but may I make a request?” Chigow asked a bit timidly.

“Hey, don’t push your luck! What is it?” the Mayor wanted to know.

“Well, as you know, the migration is comin’ up, and I’d like to be there to take part. I’ve gotta get my new tree in Eucalyptus Grove and move my stuff over there from Koalaville. Could I start my sentence in two weeks, maybe?”

“Hmmm. You’re asking a lot,” Mayor Koala seemed displeased at first, but then he smiled, “but just to show you that we, Koalatown’s leaders, are understanding as well as compassionate, we will grant you your wish, under one condition.”

“Yeah? What’s the condition?” Chigow asked.

“We’d like you to speak with Judge Granddaddy, and confirm what I’m going to write to him in a letter. Tell him that Bumpy Koala masterminded your escape, and that he is a dangerous influence on the koala community in general,” the Mayor replied.

“Hey, no problem! Especially since it’s true,” Chigow answered. “I never did like that Bumpy. He thinks he’s so smart!”

“Well, then, with a little bit of help from you, maybe we can see to it that Bumpy is the one who gets to break up those rocks,” Judge Rolly said.

“Fine, Judge, Your Honor, sir. I’ll talk to Judge Granddaddy as soon as I get back to Koalaville. Uuuuh... when can I leave?”

“Guard, unlock that shackle, and set the prisoner free,” the Mayor ordered. “And remember, Chigow, we’ve got a deal. You talk to Granddaddy, and in two weeks, we expect to see you back here to do your community service. If you don’t show up, you’ll never be able to come back to Koalatown without being arrested, and you know what that means: you’ll be breaking rocks right next to Bumpy, and I don’t think he would make life very easy for you in that situation.”

“Are you kiddin’? He’d kill me! Oh, sure, I’ll do that community service, gladly I will! And thank you so much for lettin’ me off so easy!”

“Just don’t forget it, young koala. Oh, and if we ever need some other favor from you in the future, I suppose we will be able to count on you?” the Judge asked.

“Oh, yes, of course, sir. I’ll always be glad to help you!”

“Okay, then,” the Judge said after the guard had unlocked the shackle, “get on back to your grove. And stay out of trouble!”

“Sure, Judge, I will. Bye! Bye Mayor Koala!” Chigow said as he trotted off north-eastwards, in order to take the forest path back to Koalaville.

“A ‘favor from you in the future’, Rolly?” Mayor Koala laughed. “Now *you* are starting to sound like a politician!”

“I must have learned it from you,” Rolly responded. “You never know when we could use a little favor, after all.”

“Indeed,” Mayor Koala agreed. “Well, I’d say we dealt with that Chigow rather cleverly. Now how about some lunch and a game of cards?”

“Just what I was thinking,” Rolly responded, and the two strolled back to the Mayoral Tree.

## Feathered Friends

The emus were an ornery bunch. True, they had been more or less domesticated by the koalas almost three hundred years earlier, even before the koalas had begun to speak a developed language. No-one knows who the first koala was who came up with the idea of climbing up on an emu's back and trying to ride him, but there's no doubt that he didn't find it easy, and may well have received a powerful peck, a smarting snap, or a swift kick from the enraged bird once he was thrown off. Yet as the years passed, the emus in Southern Koalaland, who had migrated from a grove off to the south into koala territory, had become used to living with the koalas, and had lost any aversion they had had to being mounted. As a matter of fact, they also occasionally served to pull small carts that were used to travel between Koalaville and Koalatown, and that could hold three koalas, including the driver, although the anteaters were almost always preferred for pulling carts and wagons of all varieties, since their four legs gave them more drawing power.

Not that the emus were mere beasts of burden in the ordinary sense. Every koala knew that their feathered friends were in fact quite intelligent, and if they collaborated with the koalas, they no doubt had good reasons for doing so.

There were many stories of how an emu had shown extraordinary cleverness, and they had excellent memories. On one occasion, an emu simply walked up to a koala and gave him a painful peck on his head, causing loud laments on the part of the victim. Nobody knew why the bird had attacked, until the koala himself admitted that some two years earlier, he had used his slingshot to shoot at that very emu, and had hit him on the left side of the head – the exact spot where the koala had received the peck!

Since the language of the emu was so very different from that of the koala, the two species were unable to communicate very well. Only after the Great Migration would Bashful Koala learn the emu tongue, and begin to serve as translator for his grove.

Yet even before that, there was remarkable proof of the intellectual prowess of certain emus, most especially William. That was not what the other emus called him, of course, but since his name in the emu language was impossible for any koala to pronounce, they simply decided to call him William, that being a bit similar to the squawking sound of his name in emu.

William had always shown a love of music, which was rather peculiar, considering the fact that the emus had, as far as anyone knew, no musical culture of their own. But from the time

he was a baby bird, he had liked to walk over to where the musician koalas were practicing, and spend long hours listening to the tunes they played on their drums, their stringed instruments of different sizes – that were usually played with bows, and greatly resembled our violins and cellos (though they were naturally of a smaller size) – their flutes, and various other wind instruments.

Having noticed that the musicians were staring at pieces of paper when playing – the musical scores – William got into the habit of getting close to them, where he, too, could look at the page. He deduced that they were somehow reading the music from the page, and this completely fascinated him. He especially liked to stand next to Amaty, musician and instrument maker, who played an instrument very similar to the viola da gamba.

William loved the smooth, mellow, melancholy sound it produced. Amaty noticed the interest the bird showed in the score, and soon began to teach him the connections between the printed notes and the musical sounds. This was no mean task, of course, since the two had no common language, but within just a few weeks, William had recognized the connections between the symbols and the sounds. This he demonstrated in a most amazing manner.

One afternoon, William was with Amaty, and suddenly, he began to scratch something into the dirt. It was a set of six parallel lines that ran left to right. (Our system of musical notation uses the pentagram, a system of five lines; the koalas, however, use six.) Then, as Amaty watched with ever-growing curiosity, William bent down and began to use his beak to peck dots onto, and between, those lines. When he was finished, Amaty sat on his chair, placed his instrument between his legs, picked up his bow and began to play what William had written. It was a miracle: the emu had just composed one of the most beautiful melodies that Amaty – or any of his musician friends, for that matter – had ever heard in their lives.

This was only the beginning. William composed much more music, always writing it in the dirt (since he had no hand with which to use a pen), after which a koala would copy it onto paper. Apparently becoming bored with monophony (a single musical line) after a month or so, he soon started to compose polyphonic (multi-voiced) music, far more complex than the simple melody-accompaniment scheme that the koalas had been accustomed to.

William had soon established an incredible reputation for being the most musically talented creature in Southern, and probably all, of Koalaland. He could compose a melody without giving it any forethought. A more extended work, with three or even four independent voices, required only a day or two of his time, and all the musicians opined that if William had



been able to use a pen to notate his music, he would be tossing off fine compositions at an even faster pace, an opinion that later proved true, when someone finally thought of sticking a pen in the bird's beak, placing an ink bottle in front of him, showing him how to dip the pen into the ink, and then to jot down the notes on a piece of lined paper.

Unfortunately for William, however, not all the koalas had the refinement to fully enjoy his compositions. They were not at all popular, for example, in Koalatown, for the koalas there thought that music without drums wasn't really music at all, and William, in general, preferred to employ the more subtle instruments in his works, obviously feeling that the excessive use of drums was somewhat primitive.

The koalas whose musical tastes had reached a higher level of refinement, however, were always astonished when one of William's compositions was played, and were often moved to tears by the two qualities that permeated his works most often: nostalgic melancholy, combined with sublime dignity. And though only connoisseurs could fully appreciate his creations, William couldn't have cared less: for him, expressing himself through his art was all that was important. Whoever could understand him would do so, and whoever couldn't, wasn't worth trying to please, as far as he was concerned.

This attitude was perhaps part and parcel of his emu character, for as we insinuated earlier, the emus were not the friendliest creatures around. Often seeming to be in a perpetually bad mood, they could get rough if crossed or treated badly, as some koalas had discovered when they were rudely squawked at, or even pecked, after offending an emu in some way or another.

It is said that in the early days of emu-koala collaboration, such attacks were quite common, perhaps because the two species were suspicious of each other's motives, but such violence was later rather rare, once each had learned how to deal with the idiosyncrasies of the other, in order to live in relative harmony.

The first great battle with the hyenas is now considered to be a milestone in the relations between koalas and emus. Some 256 years ago, when a large horde of hyenas, over a period of several months, launched a series of devastating attacks on Southern Koalaland, killing many of its inhabitants, it was the legendary leader Gimpy Koala who first organized the "emu cavalry".

Koalas who had learned to ride emus practiced using slingshots, spears, and bows and arrows while mounted on the big birds, and were, in the end, able to fight off the hyenas,

killing almost half of the invaders in the process. After that, it was years before the hyenas dared to show their ugly faces in Koalaland again. The emus had a natural hatred of these beasts anyway, and when they saw the koalas' determination to fight them, the birds were impressed by the great courage of their little friends, and were, for their part, most willing to help by carrying them into battle, during which they also fought, using their beaks to peck out the eyes of hyenas who got too close, or else by delivering powerful kicks to the sensitive areas of the aggressors' bodies.

After that, the emu cavalry, as it had come to be called, was a most potent weapon in the koalas' defense arsenal, though it had virtually disappeared by modern times, no doubt because hyena attacks had become rare events.

Though there was, at times, still tension between emus and koalas, they had learned to accept, and even to respect, one another, and this good will ultimately helped to smooth out any differences they occasionally had. Once verbal communication between the two species became possible through translators, their relationship would improve with leaps and bounds, and within a year after the Great Migration, a new level of understanding and tolerance would be achieved between the furry koalas, and their large, feathered friends. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

## The Eve of the Migration

“Oh, father, we have so much work to do! How are we ever going to get all this furniture over to Eucalyptus Grove?” Maki despaired. “Most of it is only half finished; we’ll have to be especially careful with it. And then there’s our entire supply of wood!”

“Calm down, child,” Nory comforted her. “We’ll get it done, little by little. We will have a big wagon at our disposal, after all, and we can take a few weeks to move everything, if necessary.”

“I know, but that’s a problem, too. If we move some of it and begin to live there, who will protect what we left behind for the next day? Somebody could just walk over here and take whatever they want!” Maki was worried.

“Well, you know there aren’t many thieves in our grove. Most koalas here are decent and honest. But I know that there are some who have a doubtful reputation, to say the least. That’s why I’ve talked to Handy about this, and he told me he or one of his helpers would keep a special watch on our things until we get it all moved. The furniture is the main thing. After all, nobody wants to steal simple pieces of wood,” Nory said.

“Oh, that is nice of Handy. It will be a help. When all of this is over, maybe I’ll bake him a delicious eucalyptus pie to thank him.”

“That would be a nice gesture. And maybe we could give him one of these nice little boxes, too,” Nory added.

“Yes, that is a fine idea,” Maki replied. “Father, do you think I might go take a nap now? I’ve been working for hours, trying to prepare all this stuff for the move, and I’m so tired,” she said, yawning.

“But of course. Go make us some lunch while I finish sorting these pieces of wood here, then we can both eat and have a nap,” Nory, who was also getting weary after five hours of work, suggested. Sitting in the little living room of their tree house, they ate a nourishing lunch consisting of leaves, mushrooms, a few berries, and then a few more leaves, this time dipped in honey, for dessert, after which both went to their bedrooms, where they settled down for a well-deserved two-hour nap.

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“Hey, Scuzzy, are you all ready for the migration over to Eucalyptus Grove?” Doctor Koala asked when he saw the older koala sitting at the base of his tree, putting a few belongings into a small box.

“Huh? Oh, Doc, howdy do! Yeah, I’m ready, but I can’t say I’m anxious to go.”

“Sentimental, huh?” the doctor asked. “I know you’ve lived here since well before I was born. The older you get the less you like change, is that it?”

“Don’t you go sayin’ I’m old! Why, I’m in as good a shape as ever, except for my eyes. I do have a little trouble seein’ up real close, but that doesn’t keep me from gettin’ around. It’s just that I don’t see the sense in all of this. We’ve been livin’ here for more years than any of us can count, and now we’re supposed to just up and move over to another grove? Nonsense, I say!”

Doctor Koala knew that old Scuzzy could be crotchety at times, and that he wasn’t exactly what you’d call progressive. “Well, Scuzzy, look at the bright side. The leaves are tastier over there, you know.”

“Yeah, the leaves are always tastier on the other side of the field, as they say. But so what? Leaves don’t have to be tasty to fill your belly. And whenever we want those leaves, we can just mosey on over there and pick some. Good exercise. No need to *live* over there to eat ’em.”

“Well, I’ve heard that there are going to be more tree houses built, subsidized by the grove...”

“Subsi... what?” Scuzzy was confused.

“Oh, that means the grove will pay for them. Who knows, you might get one yourself.”

“Not if I have any say in it!” Scuzzy didn’t like the idea at all. “I’ve been livin’ and sleepin’ on a tree branch all my born days, just like my parents did, and their parents before ’em, and now you wanna put me in a house? You’ll have to knock me over the head first. I don’t want any part of it! If koalas were meant to live in houses, the Koala Sun would’ve made trees that had ’em built in already,” he said, pointing up to the sun, the koalas’ principal deity.

“I guess that’s one way of looking at it,” Doc enjoyed teasing Scuzzy, but didn’t see any need to get him angry.

“And besides, they ain’t good for your health,” Scuzzy added.

“Why not?” the physician wanted to know.

“All the time I hear about koalas that live in them tree houses fallin’ off, sometimes in the middle of the night. They ain’t used to keepin’ their balance, you see, they kinda lose their climbin’ skills, and their arm and leg strength. Easy livin’, it is, sittin’ around up on them there platforms instead of usin’ their muscle power to climb around, like they should be doin’,” Scuzzy explained.

“Oh, let’s not exaggerate,” Doctor Koala responded. “I’ve only had one case where a koala fell off of his platform, and it was because he had a stroke. He would’ve fallen off a branch, too.”

“Yeah, well, I’ve no need for one of them things. A branch is fine with old Scuzzy. They ain’t gonna try to force me to live in one, are they?” Scuzzy asked, looking a bit worried.

“No, don’t worry about that. You can have a tree with only branches, and live on whichever one you want. Nobody wants to force koalas to change their ways. But you know, the King does want us all to make the move,” the doctor was worried that Scuzzy, who always had been set in his ways, might refuse to join the migration.

“Oh, I know, and I’ll do what the King expects. Nobody’s gonna call old Scuzzy some kinda revolutionary,” Scuzzy replied.

“Good to hear. You know, I think you’ll like it over there. Oh, I almost forgot. The Council wants to hire you for the celebration we’re planning once the migration is over, and everybody is settled. It won’t be till the beginning of summer, but you might want to think of what you’d like to make – that is, if you accept the job,” Doctor Koala knew that Scuzzy was the best cook in Koalaville, strange as that may seem. He had a knack for coming up with just the right combinations of ingredients.

“Accept? Why, I’d be honored, yes, I would. And it’ll be fun, too. I found a new kind of berry the last time I was in the woods. First I thought it might be poisonous, but then I saw a deer eat a few of ‘em, and when I went back a few days later, that very same deer was there again, nibblin’ on a few more, so I took a bunch myself, and they are really somethin’ special. I’m thinkin’ up a new recipe for berry pie. I could make a huge one for the celebration. Hey, if you hire a few helpers for me as well, I’ll make a couple of giant pies, enough to fill the bellies of a couple hundred koalas!” Scuzzy was getting enthusiastic.

“Why, I think that could be arranged, Scuzzy. I’ll talk to the other councilmembers about it when I get a chance. Oh, it’s getting a little late. I’ll have to be going now. I have a few patients to visit. Have a nice day!”

“You too, Doc. See ya later!” old Scuzzy replied, then climbed up his tree, took a few of those berries out of a little basket he had placed on his branch, and tasted them, one after the other, while trying to imagine just what other ingredients might go well with them in what could be the biggest pie he would ever made in his life.

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It was the night before the migration was to begin, and both Nory and Maki, who had spent all day preparing the furniture, boards, tools, and other things that had to be transported, were exhausted.

“Bedtime, father. I think we’ve done as much tonight as we could.”

“Yes, we have dear. You go on up to bed, I want to finish up something here first,” Nory replied, arranging some tools in his toolbox.”

“Okay. Good-night, father!”

“Good night, Maki.”

When she had climbed up into the tree house and disappeared into her bedroom, Nory walked out to the western edge of the grove, then south about sixty yards, till he got to the graveyard. The Koala Moon was almost full, and it illuminated his fur as he knelt down in front of a grave that was marked by a board sticking in the ground vertically, with elaborately decorated leaves carved into the corners, a marker that he himself had made in the days following the burial. On the board were engraved the words:

“Here lies Fooey, my beloved wife and  
best friend, and mother of Maki. We  
thank you for sharing your life with us,  
and will love you forever and ever.”

Nory placed his right hand on the top of the board, bowed his head, and prayed silently. Then he spoke very softly:

“We’re moving tomorrow, my love, but I’m sure you know that already. Oh, how I wish that you were here with us now! You’d really love living over there. Remember how you and I used to walk over to Eucalyptus Grove before we were married, walk hand in hand through the forest? How we used to stop sometimes next to the big oak tree, and kiss? How we used to talk about how wonderful our future was going to be? Well, that future really *was* wonderful. You gave me so many marvelous years – and our beautiful daughter, Maki! I thank you

especially for Maki. She looks more and more like you every day,” he continued, with a smile, though tears were now filling his eyes and moistening his furry cheeks.

“She’s going to be a better furniture maker than I am, you know. A father couldn’t be more proud! Well, now, don’t look for us here anymore. You’ll have to come to Eucalyptus Grove, but I guess that won’t be hard for you to do. And I know you do visit us. Sometimes, especially at night, I can feel you near me, feel you cuddling up to me in bed from behind, like a koala baby on its mother’s back. Well, I’ll be expecting you to visit me over there, too. And who knows? Maybe before long, the Koala Sun and Moon will see fit to take me from this earth, and then we’ll be together again, up there beyond the clouds, in Emerald Grove, where all the good koalas go to spend an eternity of bliss with their loved ones. I’m sure it’s even a lot more beautiful than Eucalyptus Grove, isn’t it?” Nory paused a moment, trying not to sob aloud; then he continued: “Good bye for now, my love. And wish us well in our new home!”

He slowly stood up, looked down at the grave for another minute, then calmly strolled back to his tree to get a good night’s sleep.

**End of Volume I**

**Now turn the page and see what is awaiting you in the future...**

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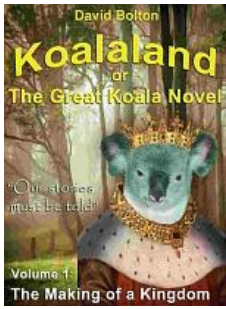
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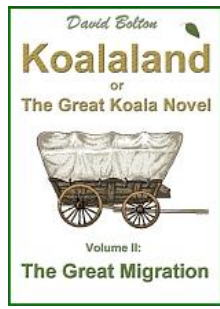
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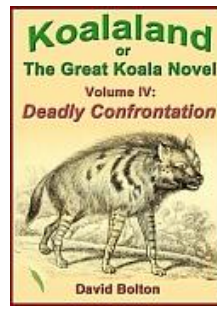
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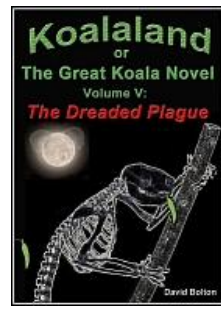
Volume 2



Volume 3



Volume 4



Volume 5

## Author's Bio

David Bolton is a writer, teacher, speaker, musician, actor and astrologer. His interests include history, psychology, politics, philosophy, quantum physics, classical music, hypnosis, and all areas related to self-improvement.

David is the author of many books, all of which can be seen at his site, [www.dboltoncreations.com](http://www.dboltoncreations.com). Here are a few of them...

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