



ANNUAL MAGAZINE 2020-21

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From the Ashes

Written By:

Anuja Randery, 12

Jasudben M. L. School, Mumbai

First Prize Winner

BE A STELLAR STORYTELLER CONTEST 2020

From the Ashes

Written By: Anuja Randery

It was a cold winter day—the kind of day when the world around you loses its colour and turns white because of snow. Most people would be at home, sitting by a fireplace. But not me. I was, making my way to the forest to gather enough wood to keep my family warm for a week. People stared at me through their windows, wondering why a little girl without a jacket was outside on a day like that! After about an hour of struggling and falling several times, I made it to the woods. The forest was eerie with no sign of life. I decided that I wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible. So, I set to work, gathering dried branches as fast as I could. Before long, my extremities turned numb, and I was too tired even to finish lugging my pieces of wood into a pile.

I sat down and leaned against a trunk. Even the tiniest movement, like tucking my hair behind my ears, seemed like a Herculean task. I closed my eyes, too weak to do anything. Just then, I heard a woosh and a crackling sound accompanied by a blast of heat.

When I opened my eyes, there was a massive fire. It wasn't a typical fire with logs at the bottom. It was a ginormous pillar of a blazing inferno, so tall and hot that it could have burnt the gods sitting in heaven. It had thawed my frozen body, and I could now raise my arm to shield myself from it and scramble away. But it did not last for long. Soon, it died down, leaving a smoking pile of ash.

I crept near it tentatively, unsure of when it would erupt into flames again. And the strangest thing happened. The pile of ash moved! Out of it poked a tiny bird. I exclaimed, "Oh, You poor little thing! How did you manage to get into that fire!" and I scooped up the tiny bird with my hands, and it fit snugly in my palms. I could not discern its actual colour because it was covered beak

From the Ashes

Written By: Anuja Randery

to claw in ash. I decided to take it home and take care of it since I reckoned it would not last a day without help in its weak state.

Rejuvenated by the heat of the inferno, I hastily created a makeshift sledge with some logs and vines. It was no longer hard to look for dry wood logs as the pillar of fire had dried many trees. Pretty soon, I was dragging the sledge home. The bird was safely tucked in my pocket. On my way, I stopped over at my friend Annie's house. I knocked at the door. It was her father who opened it. "Hello Christina, you look cold. Come on in", he said. "Annie is upstairs. You can go to see her". I went upstairs to see Annie. "Hey, Chris!", she said smiling in greeting as I entered her room. I narrated the whole incident to her. Her eyes widened in amazement. "Show me the bird!" she ordered.

I gingerly took the little bird out of my pocket. I had expected it to be in a sorry state, but to my surprise, it was in the pink of health. I set it beside Annie, who examined it like a professional. "So," I asked her, "what do you reckon it is?" "I have a guess," she muttered, "but I will have to clean it to make sure." "I'll be back in a minute with some water." With that, she hurried out of the room. Annie returned after about five minutes with a kettle of boiling water.

"You are going to put it in that?" I asked her, "The poor thing will burn and die!"

"Not if my suspicions are correct."

She picked the bird up and plopped it into the kettle. "No!" I shrieked. I reached out to put my hand in the kettle and get it out of the water, but Annie snatched the kettle before I could. "Don't!" she said. "Look!" I peered into the kettle. The bird was swimming around, having fun as if the water was as warm and relaxing as a heated swimming pool.

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For any further clarification:

CONTACT:

Classcapades

at

info@classcapades.com

+91-8369843603

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