

# Small Wonders

## Best and Worst

*Another arrival in the Kind Garden gets a mixed welcome.*

**Lesson Link: Humility.** God has shown us through Jesus Christ that even the most powerful of all creatures must be humble and serve others.

The *Thing* was standing in the middle of the park in the Kind Garden. It was taller than most of the Toys, except Pencil-Neck the Brachiosaurus. It had a head and a body and arms and legs like Pinnetti the Puppet, but it wasn't a wooden puppet. It was made of something harder than wood.

It had two big round eyes and a little bump for a nose and a mouth that looked like the grill on the front of a car. But it stood perfectly still.

Word got around to all of the Toys that it was in the park, so they circled around and said "hmm" and "interesting" a lot. The Thing didn't do or say anything.

Finally, Granna arrived. She was as curious as the rest.

"Why won't it talk to us?" asked Overbite the Beaver.

"Has anyone said 'hello' to it?" Granna asked.

The Toys looked at one another. No one had tried that. So Percy stepped forward and said, "Hello."

Suddenly the eyes lit up in a bright sunshiny yellow color. The Thing moved its arms a little and wiggled its fingers and said, "Hello!" in a deep friendly voice. "My name is Manifold."

Manifold looked at each one of the Toys and, though his mouth didn't actually move, he seemed to smile.

"What are you?" asked Pinnetti.

"I'm called a 'Robot,'" he said.



"What do you do?" Percy asked.

"I can do almost anything and everything," Manifold the Robot replied.

Stern the Owl shuffled forward. "Can you fly?"

"Yes," Manifold said. Then there was a low rumble at his feet and his back, and he looked up at the sky and suddenly shot up into the air. He flew higher and higher until they couldn't see him anymore.

"Is he gone already?" Tell-Tale the Mouse asked.

Then the rumble came from behind them, and Manifold flew down a path from the woods and landed where he was before.

The Toys were very excited now. They asked him what other kinds of things he could do. Over the next day, they learned that he could build a dam better than Overbite, stretch his legs so he could reach higher than Pencil-Neck, dance better than Pinnetti, read and recite poetry better than Percy, bake cookies as well as Granna, pounce on a ball of yarn like Trifles the Kitten, and even roar as loud as Liszt the Lion. He told jokes and sang songs and quoted the Toymaker's Scrolls from memory.

"Why are you here?" Tell-Tale asked him that evening when they were all having tea at Granna's cottage.

"The Toymaker sent me," Manifold said. "I'm here to help."

"Help with what?" asked Percy. Percy was unhappy that another Toy could read and write better than he could.

"We'll know when the time comes," Manifold said.

The time came sooner than any of them expected.

A great wind came out of the north. Some called it the North Wind. Some called it the South Wind Going the Wrong Way. Whatever it was called, it blew hard and heavy through the Kind Garden.

Stern the Owl's large aviary toppled over, and he was stuck under a cupboard. Planks of wood blew into Percy's attic home and trapped him in a corner. A tree fell onto Overbite's dam, blocking the beaver from getting out the door. They all called for help but didn't believe anyone would come.

Stern was surprised, then, when Manifold the Robot crawled into the cage and picked up the cupboard so the owl could get out.

Manifold then carried Stern to Granna's cottage, where he had secured the windows and roof with extra cover. Then Manifold fought against the wind and the bits of rock and wood that blew at him to help Percy get out of the attic and take him to Granna's. He also went to the stream and lifted the tree so Overbite could escape.

By the end of the day, most of the Toys were assembled in Granna's cottage, where they felt safe and snug.

After the wind had moved on to another part of the world, it was Manifold who walked all over the Kind Garden, picking up the debris and trash that had blown free. He fixed their homes, cleared the paths, and dug new gardens. He worked hard without being asked and never complained.

The Toys were amazed.

"He is the best Toy in the world," Brambles said. "But he's working like we own him."

Percy, who thought work was a waste of time for a possum of his talents, said, "It's like using a golden cup as a shovel."

Granna said, "I think that's why the Toymaker sent him. He came to serve us."

#### Questions:

1. **How would you describe Manifold?** (Answers may vary, but should include things like kind, helpful, humble, smart, and strong.)
2. **Do you remember any other great leaders who came to serve and save people when they were in trouble?** (Moses, David, and especially Jesus.)