

Small Wonders

A Brave Decision

The Toys begin a middle-of-the-night adventure, in spite of their fear.

Lesson Link: Pentecost is the birth of the Church; the Holy Spirit gives us much-needed help. The Church is called to have the courage to rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to step out in faith, especially to help others.

In the middle of the night, a chirping sound awakened Granna the Rabbit. She got out of bed and went to her window. The chirping belonged to a white bird that sat on her picket fence.

"Why would a bird be chirping at this time of night?" she asked. "And why is it chirping at *me*?"

She adjusted the little cap she wore to cover her ears while she slept and stepped out of the front door of her cottage.

The bird chirped more and jumped along the fence away from her.

"You want me to follow you?" she called out to the bird.

The bird chirped louder and hopped farther away.

The moon was big and bright that night, so Granna could follow the bird without hurting herself. Soon, she was at the park in the middle of the Kind Garden.

She was surprised. All of the other Toys were there.

"What's the meaning of this?" Percy the Possum asked, as if he had to come a long way, which he hadn't.

"I don't know," Granna said. "I followed a bird here."

"We all did," Percy said. "But it flew away."

Granna looked up in time to see her white bird take off from a branch. Its wings didn't make the usual flapping sounds.

"Were they Toys?" Tell-Tale the Mouse asked about the birds.



"I don't think so," Granna said.

"What did they want?" asked Pencil-Neck the Brachiosaurus.

"I don't like being out in the dark," said Tell-Tale.

"I do!" said Trifles the Kitten, who thought being up in the middle of the night was a grand adventure.

"This is strange," said Pinnetti the Puppet.

"Things have been very strange since Manifold the Robot left," Overbite the Beaver observed.

"Let's play a game!" said Trifles.

Kevin the Duck asked, "Where is Stern the Owl?"

They looked around. Stern wasn't with them.

"Maybe he's still asleep," said Brambles the Porcupine.

"Of all the Toys, Stern the Owl *wouldn't* be sleeping at night," said Percy. "Even Liszt the Lion is here, and he sleeps all day, too."

Liszt was sprawled out on a picnic table, sound asleep.

"Let's go to Stern's house to see if he's there," suggested Percy.

Stern the Owl's house was a giant cage that Granna called an "aviary." Most of it had been covered with mud and branches to serve as walls for the previous owner, who was Tell-Tale the Mouse at the time.

Now they were shocked by what they found. The cage had been knocked over and the walls broken away and the thin bars of the cage mangled.

Kevin the Duck, being more birdlike than the others, searched inside for Stern. He wasn't there. "But what *is* there is a shambles," Kevin said.

"Did he do it himself?" Pencil-Neck asked.

The Toys quickly agreed that he didn't and couldn't and wouldn't cause a shambles in his own home, and, if he did, he would have left a note.

"Then maybe something else did it and snatched Stern away," said Overbite.

This struck all of the Toys with fear.

While fear was striking them, Overbite saw footprints on the ground. *Very large footprints.* He pointed them out.

"These footprints are bigger than mine," Pencil-Neck said, putting his foot in one. "And square."

"There's a giant *thing* out there," said Trifles, who was thrilled by the idea.

Granna gave it some thought and said, "There's no question. We *must* search for Stern."

"There *is* a question," said Pencil-Neck. "What if I'm too afraid to search for him in the dark?"

The rest of the Toys agreed. Searching in the dark was a scary idea.

Tell-Tale remembered a time when she had to search for Trifles without anyone else's help. "We have to! What if something's *wrong*?"

"It'll keep until morning," Brambles said.

"What if he needs our help *now*?" Tell-Tale asked.

Granna sided with Tell-Tale. "We mustn't wait."

Percy pointed to a small bush. "The bird has come back," he said.

"No, it's up there," said Brambles, who pointed to a pine tree off to the left.

"Don't be silly; it's on the top of that tree," said Kevin, who pointed to an oak tree off to the right.

Granna saw a white bird sitting on Pencil-Neck's head. "What would Manifold do?" Pencil-Neck asked.

"He would search for Stern *right now*," said Overbite, rather bravely.

The birds took flight in the direction the footprints led.

"The birds aren't afraid of the dark," Kevin the Duck said. "We shouldn't be either. Especially if we flock together."

For some reason, the Toys didn't feel as afraid.

"Let's go," said Pinnetti the Puppet firmly.

So the Toys assembled some lamps and off they went to follow the very large footprints into the dark.

Questions:

1. ***What do you think the white birds are?*** (Messengers or guides to lead them to help Stern the Owl.)
2. ***What made the Toys suddenly brave enough to begin their search for Stern the Owl?*** (They think about what Manifold would do.)