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The Old Brewery, 6 Blundell Street, London N7 9BH, United Kingdom.
T (0)20 7700 6700 F (0)20 7700 8066 www.Quarto.com

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Hello, Nature Lovers!

In nature, everything is connected. Around the world, many people believe the web of life is sacred. They feel it in their bodies, their bellies and their bones, through their love for animals, plants and trees. Perhaps you feel this love for nature, too?

And so, many of us feel sadness and anger about the many losses that have happened in nature, including the loss of animals and their habitats. These feelings can be uncomfortable, but they are a normal, healthy way to be when we see or hear about these things. There are many healthy ways to allow and express our emotions – talk to someone, write, dance or make art or music.

Feeling our emotions can help us take action. My sadness about plastic pollution inspires me to use paper bags, willow baskets and woollen clothes. These biodegradable alternatives will break up and decompose back into the earth in a short amount of time, unlike plastic.

Spend time in nature. In every moment, nature offers us gifts that lift our spirits and soothe our souls – birdsong, dappled leaves, bright berries, sunsets. Know that you are part of the family of nature, connected to all life. We belong here, and we are not alone. So, befriend a bug. Sit with a stream. Talk to a tree.

Right now, nature is calling out for our loving attention. And more and more of us are answering the call – sharing our gifts to help nature thrive. People all around the world are giving their time, creativity and care to make a more beautiful, healthy, peaceful world.

This book shares just a handful of these stories. Much more is also happening. Someone who loves food is growing their own veg. Someone who loves clothes is holding sewing classes and swapping clothes with friends instead of buying new ones. Someone who loves surfing is cleaning a beach. Perhaps you are doing some of these things, too?

A wise environmentalist called Joanna Macy talks about the big changes that are happening now, with more and more people paying attention and taking action in response to nature's needs. She calls this shift The Great Turning. Things are changing. The Great Turning has begun.

I invite you to imagine a beautiful, healthy world full with life. Let your dreams guide your actions, and dare to hope.

Dawn Casey



The Children's Forest

Once there was a girl who loved trees.
Anna loved to sit in the branches of the old apple tree,
talking to the birds, and singing. It was a special place,
where you could dream among the blossom and the bees.

In every season, the tree was generous with its gifts –
spring beauty, summer shade, autumn apples
and firewood to warm the winter cold.

When Anna grew up, she became a Forest School teacher.
She kept on learning about the trees, and all their gifts.
Willow gave shoots to weave a basket.
Elder gave wood to make a whistle.
Beech gave leaves to make a bed.
Birch gave bark to light a fire.

Anna saw that not only the trees, but all
the creatures of the forest had gifts
and different roles in the natural world.
Squirrels helped plant oaks.
Bees pollinated flowers.
Trees gave us fresh air.
It was like one family, all helping each other.
She understood that we humans are part of nature.
We all have different gifts: listening ears,
seeing eyes, nimble fingers.
We have a feeling heart and the ability to imagine
and create. Anna began to wonder...
what is our role in the family of nature?

One day, as Anna and her class gathered acorns in the forest, it came to her that they could plant them. Just like the birds, the animals and the winds, they too could help trees' seeds to grow.

Anna saw the future of the forest. She saw the ancient woodlands, ringing with birdsong in the spring, humming with insects in the summer, bursting with bright mushrooms in the autumn, while badgers curled up with their cubs in winter-dens. She saw a healthy, living land where the children of all creatures thrive.

When Anna shared her dream, she discovered the same dream in other peoples' hearts! Together, they created The Children's Forest project to help children grow, plant and tend trees.



With every tree they plant, the children also plant their own wishes for the world, written on scrolls of birch-bark paper. They sing to the trees to help them grow. Like seeds in the earth, like stars in the dark, the children's wishes shine.

Two hundred years from now, the seeds will have grown into ancient forests. The children will have grandchildren of their own. And those children will look back upon our generation as their ancestors – the ones who remembered again our place in the family of nature and our role in tending to the natural world.

The Tale of the Humpback Whales

The long arm of the jetty stretched out into the sea. Joe and Grandpa sat there, waiting. Grandpa said you need patience to see the whales. As he waited, Joe played with the wooden fish that Grandpa had made for him from a piece of driftwood they'd found on the beach. As he turned the fish in his hands, he remembered what Grandpa had told him.



Once, at bedtime, Grandpa had played Joe a recording of humpback whales singing. Joe had drifted off to sleep on a wave of sound. It was a flow of low moans and high cries, rumbles and squeaks, whistles and trills. In his dreams, Joe swam in liquid light. Beside him swam the whale. So powerful. So peaceful. They glided, side by side, eye to eye. Joe gazed into those gentle eyes and, when he woke, he found his own eyes wet with tears.

How, for hundreds of years, whales were hunted, their meat sold for pet food, their bones boiled for glue and their fat used for soap. 'By the time I was a boy,' Grandpa had said, 'humpbacks were almost gone.'

Joe tilted his wooden fish in the light. He took the sandpaper from his pocket and began to rub the wood smooth. He looked up at Grandpa. 'Tell me again, Grandpa, how people helped the humpbacks.'

This was the part of the story Joe liked best.

'Well,' said Grandpa, 'so many people helped, each in their own way. Protestors parked boats in front of hunters' harpoon spears. Movie-makers made films about it. Scientists did research. Charities pushed for new laws. And in the end, the leaders of countries all around the world got together, and they agreed – no more whale-hunting.'

Joe looked at the driftwood fish. He felt its smooth shape in his hands and closed his eyes. 'I wish you well, whales.' Plop. He dropped his gift into the water. As he watched it slowly sink, trailing bubbles of light, Grandpa touched Joe's arm, and pointed.

Out on the waves, a spout of water.
Whale's breath!
The curve of a dark back.
The slap of a fin.
The sweep of a mighty tail.
The humpback rose from the sea.
A leap, a spin, a SPLASH.
A whale, leaping through the sunset sky.



In 1830, there were thought to be 27,000 humpbacks in the South Atlantic ocean. Just over a 100 years later, only 440 were left. Since hunting and killing whales for meat or to make things was banned in 1986, the number of humpbacks in the South Atlantic has grown to 25,000 – almost as many as before commercial whaling began.