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Opening extract from
The Story of the Blue Planet

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There Was a Blue Planet

Once upon a time there was a blue planet far out in space. At first sight, it looked like a very ordinary blue planet and it's unlikely that an astrologist or astronaut would even have given it a second glance. A sun and a moon circled the planet once every day and wind swayed the grass and flowers, while waterfalls tumbled from high mountains into deep dark canyons. Clouds were blown across the sky and stars twinkled behind them. The planet was covered with lands and around each land was an ocean that could be as calm as a mirror until it was caught by the roaring winds and smashed into a thousand drops on rocky shores.

The blue planet was very special for one reason: Only children lived there. Plants and animals lived there too of course, but all around the planet were children in all shapes and sizes. Big children, small children, chubby children, and skinny children, and some were even weird like the child you see in the mirror. There were many more than a hundred of them, so let's just say that they were countless. The



children were completely free to do what they pleased since no grown-ups lived on the blue planet and there was no one to order them around. The wild children ate when they were hungry, slept when they got tired, and in between they played without anyone interfering. These words are not meant to criticize grown-ups; many of them are quite nice.

The blue planet was beautiful, but it was also a dangerous place. Each day was so full of danger and excitement that no grown-ups could have lived there without getting gray hair and withering away from stress and worry. That's why no grown-up had landed on the planet for as long as the youngest child could remember, and astronomers wouldn't dare point their telescopes towards the blue planet.

Now someone might ask: Where did the children come from? How did they multiply? Did they never grow up? How were they born if there were no grown-ups living on the planet? The answer is simple: Nobody knows.

As I said, scientists were not interested in the planet and no research had been done on it. We only know that it was full of children that never grew up. For some unknown reason the well of youth in their hearts seemed limitless, and in fact, the children could easily have been many hundreds of years old.

The children had endless adventures on the blue



planet. They could follow fireflies in the dark or climb rocky cliffs and jump into warm waters. They could gather shells on the beach and watch the sea turtles crawl ashore to lay their eggs. There were high cliffs full of nesting birds and cold white glaciers that crawled to the sea, crunching and crumbling. The forests were light-green during the day when the tigers and parrots were about, but they turned dark-green in the evening when the wolves began howling, and black-green at night when the bats awoke and spiders with hairy legs wove their webs between branches.

Once a year an incredible event took place on the blue planet. A ray of light would burst through a little hole in the wall of a cave in the Blue Mountains. This was no ordinary cave. It was full of sleeping butterflies. As the light flooded the cave and shone on their wings, something wonderful happened: the butterflies awoke



from their sleep. Very slowly and calmly they moved their wings and then rose in the air, one by one, and flew out of the mouth of the cave. They followed the sun for a whole day, circling the planet over land and sea, mountains and valleys, before fluttering back into the cave and falling asleep again, not to awaken until another year had passed.

The flight of the butterflies was the greatest wonder on the blue planet and a day of true happiness. The children would lie on their backs and watch the butterflies fill the sky until they disappeared with the sun beyond the horizon.

But all these wonders cannot compare with the adventure this story has to tell. Here comes the most dangerous and incredible adventure that any child on the blue planet could ever have imagined.