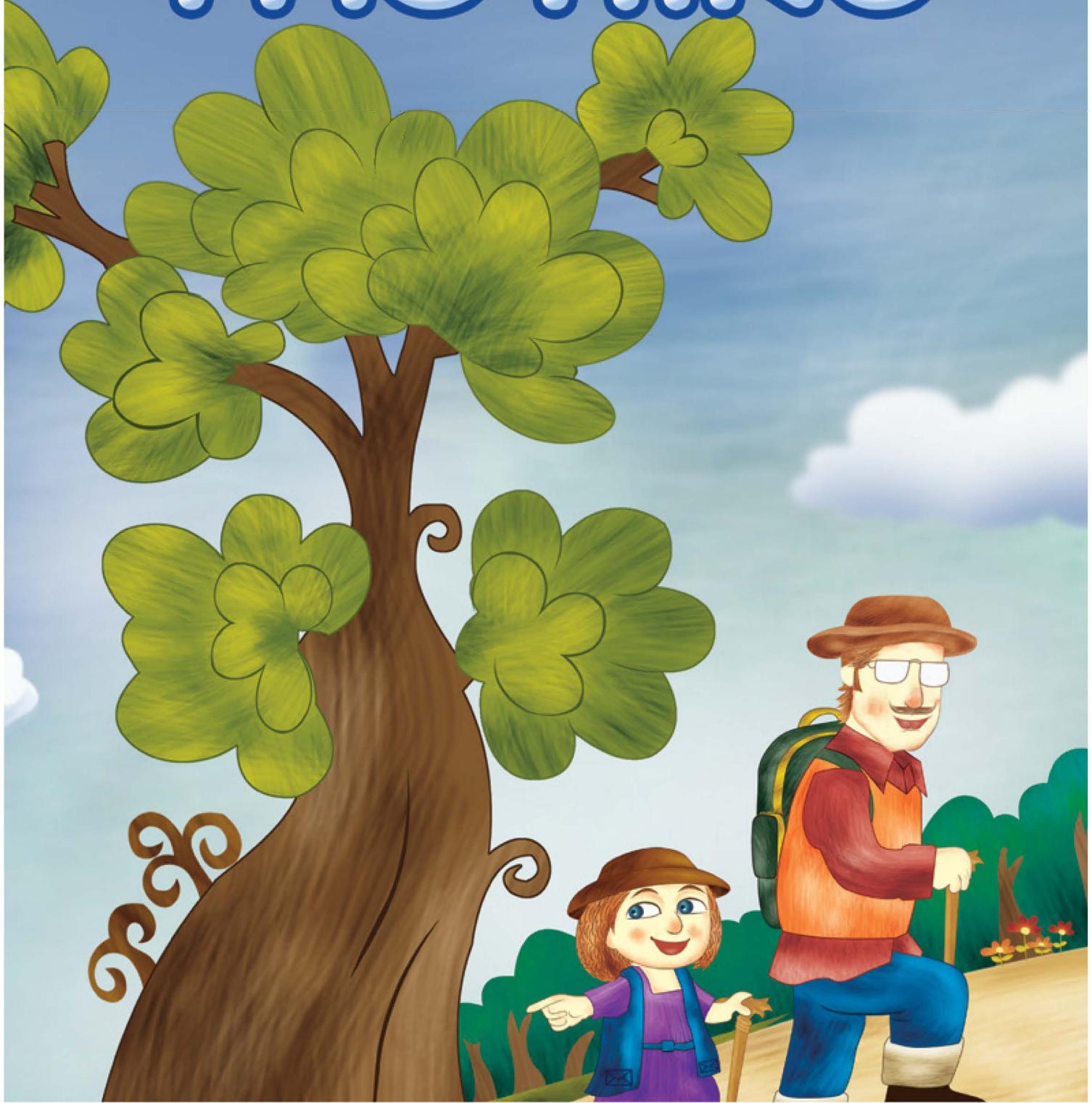


The Hike





Mandy was lucky as she and her mother
lived with her grandparents
and she liked nothing better than to
spend time with her grandfather.
You see, he was always making something
and she enjoyed watching,
learning, and sometimes even helping him
finish whatever he was doing.



"Grandfather, what are you building in your workshop today?" Mandy asked. She giggled as she said, "It looks like you're playing with two long sticks." "Well Mandy," he said. "I am going to make two walking sticks

with your help, one for you,

and one for me. Then I have a surprise."

"Alright!" Mandy shrieked. "Where do I start?" After some time, Mandy (with her grandfather's help) finished the walking sticks. they were two of the most beautiful walking sticks she had ever seen.



With the bark removed, they were sanded smooth and each had a funny looking face carved in them. "These are really nice," Mandy said. "But just what do we do with them?" "Ah, that is the surprise grand daughter," he replied.

"Tomorrow morning we are going on a hike in the woods and these walking sticks will help make the hike easier. So now it's time to clean up and go to sleep so we are well rested for the hike."



The next morning, Mandy did not need an alarm to wake her.

She was up, dressed, and ready to go as the sun rose and the day began.

She went to the kitchen and saw that her grandfather was busy packing sandwiches, water, snacks, and other items into their backpacks. "It looks like we are going to be hiking for a long time," Mandy said.



“It will be an all day hike,” He replied.
“I think we have everything so grab your walking stick and let’s go.” “What about breakfast?” Mandy asked. “Oh, did I forget to mention that we are going to stop and have breakfast at a diner?” he said with a smile. Their journey began.



After a great breakfast and a long drive, they arrived at the base of a mountain and the beginning of the trail. "This is beautiful," Mandy said. "Just where are we hiking?" "To the very top of the mountain where we will have lunch, rest, maybe take a swim, and then hike back down," he replied.

"Swim!" Mandy said excitedly.

"Is there a lake on the top of the mountain?"

"Yes," her Grandfather replied.



"There is a pond surrounded by big flat rocks. It was carved from the mountain during the last Ice Age and is filled with clear, cold water."

"Wow!" was all Mandy could say.

As they hiked up the mountain, Mandy asked many, many questions. What kind of tree is that? How high are we? Are there bears around here? Are there any other people up here? What do we do if we get lost? Are there snakes? And of course: Are we there yet?



Her grandfather answered all her questions
the best he could and explained
that they were in a very natural area.
Not many people, all sorts of wild life, even bears.
He helped her understand and respect
the natural beauty around them,
particularly the animals.
He taught her how to use a compass,
and things to help them
be safer while they hiked.



Like before stepping over a log put your walking stick on the other side to let any animal, like a snake, know you are there. Whistle a song or make some noise to let the bigger animals know you are in their area.

In a soft voice, her grandfather said.

“Mandy, there are a few things to remember when you are hiking or anywhere for that matter.

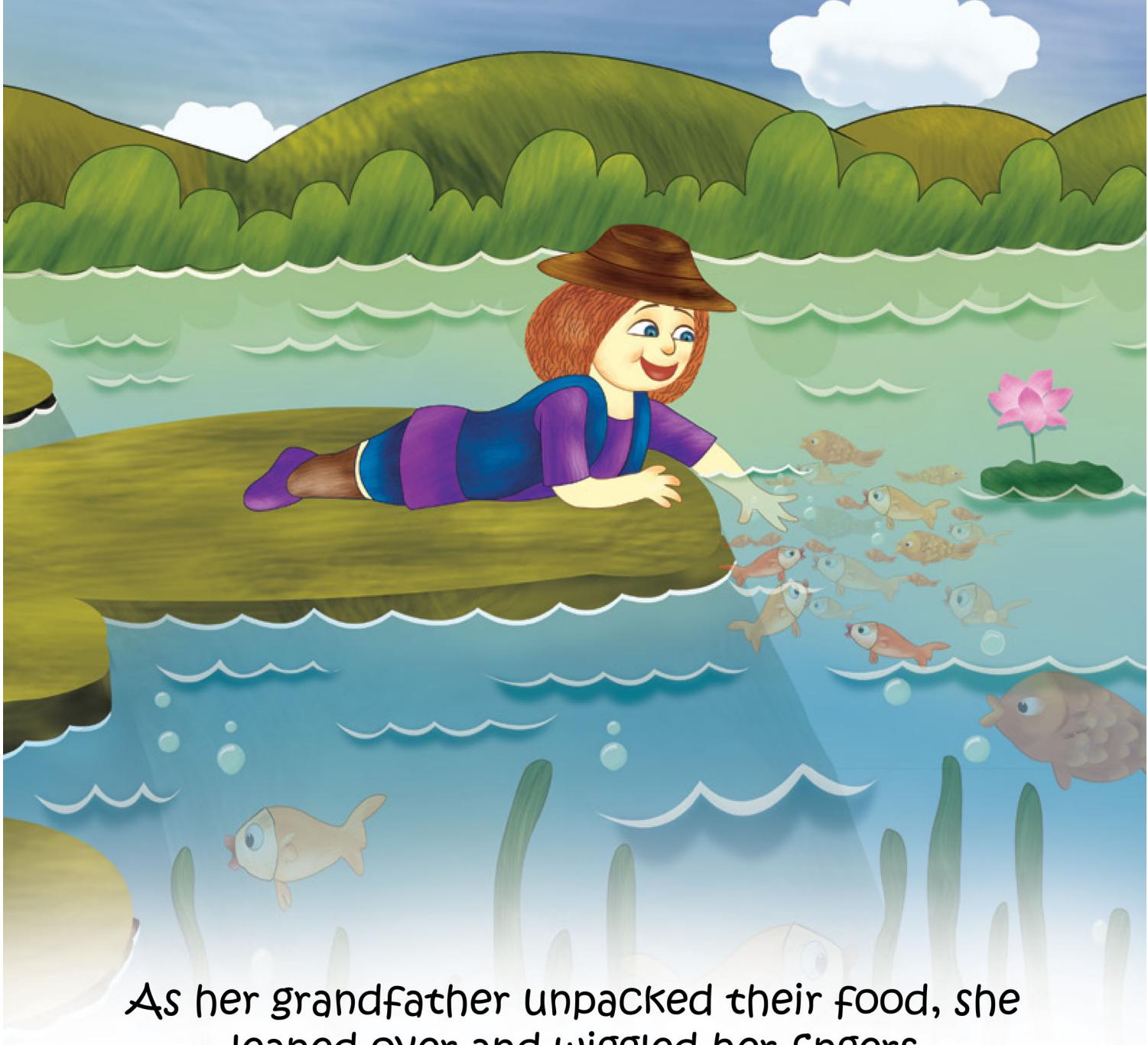
The Earth is our mother take care of her. All life is sacred; treat all life with respect.

Take from the Earth what is needed and nothing more. Enjoy your journey but leave no tracks.”



As they hiked a little farther, the forest opened and Mandy saw the pond surrounded by large flat rocks. They had arrived, and it was almost like being in a different world.

Mandy picked a large rock that extended out into the water for them to rest on. It had been warmed by the sun and was the perfect place for lunch.



As her grandfather unpacked their food, she leaned over and wiggled her fingers in the cold water.

Immediately several small fish came by and nibbled at her fingers.

She shrieked in surprise and then, realizing the fish were just curious, placed her hand back into the water and watched as the fish darted around her fingers.

She laughed and played with the fish until she heard her grandfather say "Time for lunch."



After lunch and a resting period, they took a swim. The water was deep and Mandy couldn't reach the bottom no matter how hard she tried. She giggled each time a curious fish nibbled at her body and watched a deer come down to have a drink.

It was a wonderful day and she was saddened when she heard her grandfather say, "Mandy, it's time to dry off and begin the hike down to the car."

After making sure everything was just like it was when they arrived, they began their hike down the mountain.



After a short time Mandy asked, "grandfather, can we take a different trail down the mountain?" "I don't see why not," he replied.

After a short time, the trail began blending into the surrounding brush and then disappeared. "I'm scared," Mandy said. "I think we are lost." "No, we're not lost," her grandfather, said. "But we aren't on a trail so we will have to continue hiking down the mountain in the direction of the car.

Just enjoy the surroundings and being together on our first hiking adventure."



As they continued down Mandy said.

“Grandfather,

I have a problem at school and I don’t know
who to talk to,” “Talk to me,” he said.

“I’d like to but you are my grandfather
and you may get angry because you are family
and not, well, like a friend.”

Now Mandy’s grandfather had to do some
serious thinking. After all,
she was right that as her
grandfather, he may get angry or his feelings
hurt but she needed a big person as a friend.

“Mandy,” he said in a serious tone.



“If I were to promise that anything we talked about would stay between us, and that I would not get angry or talk to you as your grandfather, but rather as an old friend; would you talk with me?” “Is that a promise?” she asked. “Yes,” he said softly. “And you know I have never broken a promise to you.” She gave him a big hug, and began to talk. Soon they were at the bottom of the mountain and packing the car.



Before leaving, her grandfather thought for a minute and said. "Granddaughter, anytime you need me as your friend, and not your grandfather, pick up your walking stick and ask to go on a hike. It will be our secret code."

"This was the best day ever," Mandy said. "I was with my grandfather, my new best friend, and I have a talking/walking stick."

The End.