

A DELIGHTFUL DIFFERENCE

A story of understanding and tolerance

Edgy lay on his back letting the sun warm his tummy, he loved warm spring days so alive, bright and sunny.

Winter had dragged on for years so it seemed, and the gray, shaggy bog was finally green.

Wiggling his toes, he scooted into a pile, of warm, wooly possum with one wide, winsome smile.

Some wildflowers caught hold of his nose then his eyes, and he was delighted to find, to his complete surprise, that each was distinctive, one of a kind, special and different which just blew Edgy's mind.

This chance to enjoy such a beautiful day was a gift indeed that he hoped might stay, as he needed some peace, some time and space cuz life back home was one wild, wacky race.

At home...

Baby possums were stuffed into every nook, even hanging from rafters, each tail now a hook.

The babies always rode on their parents back and it was Edgy who'd see they stayed in a safe stack.

Then...a long list of chores kept him busy all day, leaving him little time to relax or just play.

There was homework and housework and the garden to tend, then the grass to mow and fences to mend.

He stretched out; turned over and took a short nap, but was rudely awakened by a loud thunderclap.
He flew up in the air, half out of his skin, then passed out in the grass with a possumy grin.
It was called 'playing possum' but it sure wasn't fun, as he always woke up with his nerves undone.

It was dark when poor Edgy finally came too, so he hustled on home to a broken curfew.
Mom and Dad demanded he be home on time and a broken curfew was considered a crime.

"I'm home," he hollered, as he flew through the door, hoping his entrance wouldn't start up a war.
How strange, he thought as he hung up his cap, it was so quiet and still, had there been some mishap?
The house was dark, so he called out their names, hoping they were just playing hide and seek games.
"Mama...Daddy...where is everyone? If you're hiding please stop... this is no longer fun!"

He ran upstairs, checked the bedrooms and attic, but no one was there and he started to panic.
Creeping back downstairs with a candle for light, he tried hard to believe everything was alright.
He sank onto the couch, trying hard not to fret, but when the clock struck nine and they weren't home yet, he ran out to the edge of the dark boggy wood, yelling their names as loud as he could.

He was now lightheaded and weak in the knees as he ran into bushes and ran into trees.

In the distance he noticed a small, dim light...he staggered towards it; hope renewed at it's sight.

It brought him right up to the badgers front door, a cantankerous family who were mean, loud and sore.

The badgers were known for their bad attitude, if you weren't one of them they were shamefully and rude.

He started to knock when an arm reached out, grabbing hold of his startled, possumy snout.

It pulled him inside and then poked at his chest and warned him to **"SCRAM IF YA KNOW WHAT'S BEST!!!"**

"Oh please," cried Edgy...*"I've prayed and prayed, I've lost my family and I'm really afraid!"*

Then the arm brought a lantern down close to his nose and that's when poor Edgy totally froze.

"Looky here kids, at this dim witted wad, it's about to pass out which for possums ain't odd."

"Can we help it?" asked Boo, one of the badgers young brood,
"Maybe it's hungry and just needs some food."

Nah...They're slow and stupid cuz their brains are fried, just pick the thing up and throw it outside!"

"B..but Pa, it's dark out there and it said it was scared," Pa's eyes turned red then his nostrils flared.

"Hey!...we don't mess with folks who aren't one of us, so just get rid of the thing and don't make a fuss.

If they're not Badgers, we don't like em, if they're not Badgers, we're gonna fight em!

GOT IT?!

Now... you kids toss that rag rug, right out of here ,and don't let it back in; throw it out on it's ear!"

"*Yes sir,*" whispered Boo, feeling sick inside, wishing he could grab the poor possum, run off and hide.

Some of the young'uns thought it all a great lark, as they pulled, pushed and shoved Edgy into the dark.

But Boo felt awful, knowing this wasn't right, why treating another like this was pure spite.

How could Pa think possums, stupid and slow, why... he wouldn't go round them so how would he know.

Boo was disappointed, angry and sad, at his family's behavior, especially his dad.

He leaned down and whispered, patting the poor possums snout, "*Don't worry lil possum, I'll help you out.*

*We gotta find your family and on the double, then I've gotta get home or I'm in **big** trouble!"*

He grabbed Edgy's tail, slung him over his back, turning Edgy into a limp, fuzzy sack.

He'd heard there were possums living out by the marsh, but Pa warned they'd be punished, and it would be harsh, if he ever caught one of his kids out there, so they never went close, they'd not even dare.

But about the time Boo'd made up his mind, he heard furious flapping that came from behind.

He turned just in time; saw an enormous bird beak, as it grabbed hold the pair and took off like a streak.

Boo hollered for help, terrified by the flight, holding fast to poor Edgy who now looked like a kite.

They dropped down in the middle of a very big tree, which held a large birdhouse in its vast canopy.

The bird let go when he got them inside saying "I sure hope you fella's enjoyed that ride!"

But Boo was too shocked to utter a word, overcome by fright at what had occurred.

"Hi, I'm Fred, a Buzzard by trade, hope you're OK and not too afraid.

Most folks won't come round me, they all just steer clear but it's only because of the way I appear.

They say they don't like me, that I'm not too smart, that I've got bad breath but I've a really good heart.

My mom always said "Don't judge books by there covers, we may look like fighters but we're really just lovers."

Anyway...when I flew over... saw you guys on your own, without even as much as a grown chaperone, and down in the bushes where you couldn't see, some hooligans planning a Bog burglary.

Well...I had to help out, get you all out of there, so I swooped down and scooped you both up in the air."

Poor Boo shook so hard that he lost his grip; Edgy fell to the floor turning a flip.

But the fall wasn't hard and to Boo's surprise, Edgy raised himself up and opened his eyes.

"Wh...where am I? What happened? This feels so absurd, how'd I get way up here with a badger and bird?!"

Boo explained to him how they both got up there, while Fred made some snacks they could all sit and share.

As they ate, Edgy told about losing his clan; that he desperately needed some help and a plan. They chewed and chatted, amazed and surprised; there was no one to hate they now realized.

"What we need," Edgy said, "is someone real smart, who'll tell us what to do and where we should start."

"Oh...that would be Hartlie," Fred said with a smile "and as the crow flies he's just over a mile.

So..if we're all agreed then we'd better get going... assume the position and get ready for towing!"

With that Boo gulped down the last of his snack, grabbed hold Edgy's, tail heaving him onto his back.

Before too long they could see the church steeple and outside the church two groups of people.

"I don't like the look of what's happening down there," said Boo as they glided without sound through the air.

"C..can you guys see Hartlie down in all that mess?" asked a nervous Edgy now starting to stress.

They were circling silently just over the trees, when they heard the crowd yelling, drowning out Hartlie's pleas.

"Folks please...

Over here I've got badgers angry and shouting, over there some possums who are hissing and pouting,

All I know is something's dreadfully wrong, so tell me why you're all not getting along."

"Oh Hartlie...

We can't find our son," poor Edgy's mom wailed "it looks like as parents... we've totally failed."

"Well... that's awful funny, cuz I've lost my boy too, and your Edgy's the last one who was with my boy Boo!"

"Badger, what are you saying, just what do you mean!?" snorted Edgy's dad, now turning pale green.

"Huh! I kicked your kid right out of my place ,because of that stupid grin on his face!"

Pa Badger and Pa Possum were now nose to nose, so Hartlie stepped in to prevent any blows.

"ENOUGH!!" Hartlie barked,

"Pride and fear are deadly, pushing folks apart; when you mock Gods' creation your hurting His heart.

Let's set aside differences and get on the right track, if we work together we can get them both back!"

Suddenly... through the darkness, they heard a faint cry, sounding as if it came from the sky.

They looked at each other, then looked overhead, straining to hear what was being said.

Up over the trees Hartlie spotted a form, in the shape of a bird but quite out of the norm.

The rest stood staring, not believing their eyes, as Fred lowered their boys from the midnight skies.

Hartlie stood smiling, his arms open wide as Fred and the boys swooped down alongside.

He lifted the boys right out of Fred's bill, as the crowd watched astounded by Fred's flying skill.

Each family forgetting they couldn't stand the others, started jumping and hugging like sisters and brothers.

With their boys now in hand, all safe and sound, there was laughing and dancing, all was fine, they'd been found.

"Mom, I'm so glad everybody's OK, I've been looking for you ever since yesterday.

I passed out in the meadow, I don't know for how long, and when I got home, you guys were all gone."

"Oh Edgy...we weren't home as we were looking for you." "Gosh mom that's so weird, I hadn't a clue!"

Then Boo's pa picked Boo up, with tears in his eyes, telling how he wanted to apologize.

"I guess it took all this before I could see, that there's good in all folk, like there's good inside me.

"That's great," said Hartlie, "because it's never to late, to learn how to love rather than hate.

God made us all different for His very own reasons...different looks, different lives, different ways, different seasons.

Possums pass out and Badgers get mad, some folks are happy others are sad.

We shouldn't be scared if folks aren't like us, it's just something else we all need to discuss.

Why...just think how boring life would be, if everyone was a copy of just you and me.

Hey everyone! can you come inside, I've got plenty of cookies and milk!" Hartlie cried.

There were hugs, there were kisses, there were tears and big smiles, as they all marched down the narrow church aisles. Determined different looks wouldn't keep them apart, as folk all look the same from inside each heart.

THE END...OR COULD IT BE?
THE BEGINNING!

THE BEGINNING

Scriptures from the Holy Bible that help us understand that God created people to be different.

1 Thessalonians 3:12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and everyone else, just as ours does for you.

James 2:1 My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?

James 2:9 But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin.

James 2:13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others.

Galatians 6:10 As we have opportunity, let us do good to ALL people, especially those who belong to the family of believers.

Leviticus 19:34 The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, I am the Lord your God.

John 3:16 For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, that every one who believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life.

This series was written in an effort to help children understand that nothing can overcome us, if we are walking close to Jesus, trusting in His love and obeying His commandments.