



How The Peacock Rescued The Hoopoe Bird  
*Warning: This Story Must be Read aloud!*

Once upon a time, not so long-long ago, oh my most precious, there was night. Just the night. And the dark. And in the dark-dark night, there was the North Wind. Now, the young North Wind felt playful and tickled the sleepy clouds. And the clouds giggled and popped themselves into the teeny-weeny baby-clouds, “Pop! Plop! POW!”

The sun awoke with a shiver, clicked and flicked its mighty rays, shifting the baby-clouds further apart. Brilliant golden light sprinkled London Zoo and the Earth below with gold and red, “Tinkle! Sprinkle! Clink-clank-clunk!” And there was the morning.

The Peacock flapped her beautiful wings, “Whoosh... whoosh... whoosh,” stretched her neck and honked, “Honk! Honk! Lucy is coming!”

That’s me, oh my most precious, I’m Lucy! I’ve been friends with the Peacock since the time unimaginable. Since she ran away from London Zoo in search of stories and ended up at Belsize Community Library, where I’m the head librarian.

The Peacock loves stories as much as I do. And I’ve read thousands of books with brave and daring heroes and crazy adventures to the Peacock every day for a year and a day. By then, it was time for the Peacock to get back to London Zoo with her friends, Itty-Bitty Hippo and Zig-Zag Zebra, who really-really missed her very-very much! Hush and listen now, you could hear them answering the Peacock’s call.

“Hee-Haw! Hee-Haw! Hee-Haw!” brayed Zig-Zag Zebra happily. He stretched his stripy legs. “Click-Click-Clack,” his joints clicked and cracked. He shook his shoulders and his black-and-white stripes whirred and buzzed, “Brrrrrrr! Brrrrrrr! Brrrrrrr! Buzz!”

“Yippee! Yee-haw! Yo-ho-ho!” joined Itty-Bitty Hippo somersaulting “Zoom! Whizz! Whizz!” into her Olympic-sized pool, “Splash! Splosh! Splatter!”

The happy residents of London Zoo brayed and mooed, oinked and tweeted, woofed and quacked, and hooted and cuckooed, until their breakfast was served by the Zoo-Chef. Then, everything quietened to absolute hush but a regular jaw-biting and munching, “Crunch-Scrunch! Chomp-Chomp! Slurp-Slurp!”

Now, oh my most precious, look carefully and see and observe.

After tiring of a play with the white-puffed clouds, that mischievous North Wind looked for other mischief to do. He looked and looked and found a bird, wandering among fallen leaves and logs on the ground. It was not a very big bird, just the size of a small

pigeon. It was a Hoopoe Bird. One of the most exotic birds that we have here in England with a long black downcurved bill and a pinkish-brown crest, sitting proudly on the top of its head, like an Indian headdress. At times, when pecking on something especially scrumptious, he would tilt its buffy-rose head and lift his buffy-rose chest and gently flap his zebra-striped wings, lined in black-and-white!

The North Wind burst out with, “Woo-hoo-hoo! Woo-Hoo! Woo-Hoo! Woo-Hoo!” And then he huffed-and-puffed and puffed-and-huffed, and huffed-and-puffed some more, and propelled, and carried the small Hoopoe Bird all the way to London Zoo from the south coast of England. That’s where about hundred hoopoe birds stay every year while migrating from Africa to Europe. Unheard of, you say? Yes! Yet it happened on that sunny bright day of 17<sup>th</sup> April 2018. And the Hoopoe got hurt fighting against the North Wind. Still, it just needed a short rest to fly back to his family without anyone even noticing him. He was, so to say, just a small bird. And that’s what would absolutely, undeniably, indisputably happen... if not for Ginger!

There, not far from the happy zoo-kingdom, under the Foxglove tree, lived a street cat called Ginger, all-gingery except for white whiskers, amber eyes and a black shiny nose. He was a thief and a tramp. And he didn’t like his neighbours. He was also, shall we say, a plump cat, fatted on delicacies like quail eggs and tuna loins, beef sirloin and lamb chops, all stolen from the zoo.

On that glorious morning, Ginger squeezed through the bars of the Zoo fence with somewhat great difficulty, “Creak! Crack! Screeeech! Plop!”

He tapped his massive belly, contemplating some exercise and a diet, when he saw the Hoopoe on the Handkerchief tree with his wing limp and lifeless on his side. Forgetting the diet and exercise, Ginger sat himself right under the tree branch where the Hoopoe had perched upon.

“Kakakakakak!” he prattled.

“Kikikikikik!” He kept jabbering.

Ginger was hungry and eagerly awaited the poor wounded lonely Hoopoe to faint and drop right into his mouth. And that’s what would absolutely, undeniably, indisputably happen... if not for the Peacock!

The Peacock was watching! The Peacock saw the Hoopoe, weak and wounded. The Peacock saw Ginger, hungry and licking his chops.

So the Peacock flapped her wings, “Whoosh! Whoosh! Swoosh!”

So the Peacock leaped over the tall iron fence and ran and ran and ran to the Handkerchief tree.

Just on time, half skidding and half flying the last half meter, the Peacock pushed over Ginger and caught the Hoopoe on her back.

“Hold on to my feathers!” she called to the Hoopoe, “hold tight!”

And she ran and ran and ran, with Ginger at her tail, hissing, snarling and yowling, “KhEEEEEE! KhAAAAA! MYEEOOWWrrrr!”

Zig-Zag Zebra and Itty-Bitty Hippo took off and tagged along, wailing and howling, “Shoo! Shoo! Shoo!” And the three of them, that is if you do not count the Hoopoe riding on the back of the Peacock, ran and ran and ran in circles, round and round and round the Handkerchief tree. All being chased by hissing, snarling and yowling Ginger, “KhEEEEEE! KhAAAAA! MYEEOOWWrrrr!”

And that's what they would absolutely, undeniably, indisputably continue doing these days, that is, running in circles around the Handkerchief tree... if not for Lucy! Me!

A funny-looking vehicle that looked like a small house on wheels, but with only three wheels, appeared on the wide path. On that very same path where the Handkerchief tree was centred, and where the Three, if you do not count the Hoopoe on the back of the Peacock, along with their rival, Ginger, were running and running, round and round.

But wait... I didn't finish about the vehicle! Guess what? This funny vehicle was jam-packed with hundreds of exciting books! And the driver at the steering wheel was Lucy – me, that is!

I should explain that driving around and bringing these books to different places so that you, oh my precious, could discover amazing stories and adventures, was a habit of mine. Just imagine how much fun it would be to step inside this fairy-tale house on wheels and explore all the wonderful books waiting to be read!

I parked at the curb and jumped out of the bookmobile – that is what a mini library on wheels is called. Looking around, I assessed the situation and seized the Hoopoe off the Peacock, holding the little bird high, keeping him safe from Ginger. But oddly, Ginger, the Peacock, Itty-Bitty Hippo and Zig-Zag Zebra continued running and running and running, round and round and round the Handkerchief tree. That is... until the Hoopoe got very-very dizzy watching them and hooted imploringly, “Hoo-hoo-hoo! Stop! Stop! Stop!”

At that, everyone stopped.

Ginger looked around, eyes wide with fear, his ears flattened back against his head and hissed, “KhEEEEEE! KhEEEEEE! KhAAAAA!” and run away with his tail between his legs.

“Okay, little one.” I said to the Hoopoe, “Let's take you to the Zoo Vet. He will treat your wing in no time.”

All of us quickly made our way across the path to the Vet's clinic.

After inspecting the injured bird, the Vet announced that the wing wasn't broken. It was just a sprain. The Vet prescribed a day's rest in warmth, plenty of food and drink, and a hearty adventure story.

I got out a chunky book, titled *Just So Stories* by Rudyard Kipling. We sat together on comfy cushions in a circle in the bookmobile and read stories about 'How The Whale Got His Throat', 'How The Rhinoceros Got His Skin', 'How The Leopard Got His Spots', 'The Elephant's Child', and more.

Then, it was time to say goodbye. We all got out of the bookmobile.

The Hoopoe said his farewells with a gentle “Hoo-hoo-hoo!” his exotic crest raised into a fan-shape. He fluttered its rounded zebra-striped wings unevenly, like a giant butterfly, and was off.

“I must be off too.” I said, “I'll be back at the same time next week.” and with a jolly “hoot-hoot” I drove off.

The Peacock fluttered her feathers, stretched her neck and honked softly, “See you then, Lucy. Bring a new story!”

The end.

