

## Dresden at the Giraffe Store

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It was time. His friend James had one. His other friend Oleander had one. It was time.

He'd been thinking about it, seriously thinking about it, for seven Sundays now: Getting a giraffe.

Dresden felt brave. The sun was shining brightly outside, the birds sang from their perches in the hibiscus bush outside the kitchen window, and his parents were laughing over something they'd read in the funny papers.

He smoothed down the little section of hair that always seemed to pop up



right on the top of his head and walked slowly to where his parents were sitting. He cleared his throat, and this is what he said:

"Mother, Father, I think it's time for my giraffe."

His parents, Penelope and Troy, were reasonable people. Good people. They looked at each other, attempting to hide their smiles. Pretty Penelope put a hand up to her face. Her little boy was growing up. So fast!

Handsome Troy stroked his chin, deep in thought.

"You'll have to feed your giraffe every day. And give it fresh water. And walks. Can you do that?"

Dresden stood before his parents, his sandy blond hair sticking up at odd angles, his blue eyes wide with anticipation. He nodded solemnly (and seriously) at his father.

"All right then," his father said. "Let's go to the giraffe store."

And so they did.

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The golden brass doors of the Animal Emporium were massive. Once opened, they revealed a store longer and wider than two football fields. Shop clerks whizzed by wearing roller skates, carrying clipboards.

The monkeys chatted and traded gossip. Matilda the Capuchin monkey picked tiny bugs and fleas from her daughter Cecilia's fur, while Ted and Spencer told jokes and laughed at their own ridiculousness.



The kangaroos jumped, seeing who could hop the farthest, with Christopher beating Paul by a foot.

The rhinos, Alphonso and Rebecca, moved rhino-sized chess pieces around their chess board and discussed current events.

Francesca and Rosemary Giraffe played a game of Go Fish, but quickly put their cards away when they saw Dresden and his parents coming their way. Francesca gave Rosemary a little poke in the side with her very-large giraffe elbow.

"It'll be one of us this time, I just know it," she said, excited.

The giraffe section of the animal emporium was very large, and the giraffes roamed freely, nibbling the tender leaves of the tall baobab trees. The family walked carefully, not wanting to scare them.

Dresden was just tall enough to stand underneath the magnificent creatures. He looked up at them and thought of the ladder he'd have to use to climb onto their backs.

Standing up on his tiptoes, he put his hand out to Rosemary, carefully stroking the short hair on the top of her front leg, the highest place he could reach. The hair was rough and almost sharp if he rubbed it the wrong way.

Francesca sidled up to her friend and whispered in her ear, "He fancies you! He really likes you, luv." (Francesca was from an Animal Emporium in Mumbai, India and spoke with a lovely accent.)



"This one, Dad," Dresden told his father as he gave Rosemary's leg a few more pats.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes," he said, with determination in his voice.

"All right then. Let me just find a salesman to ring her up for us."  
Francesca Giraffe whispered to her friend, "I'll miss you."

Rosemary Giraffe felt a tear coming to her eyes. "I'll miss you too, Fran. But you know what they say."

"Yes, I do. A giraffe belongs to a little boy or girl. It's what we're meant for. Our destiny."

The two giraffe friends said their goodbyes as the family paid the cashier.

\* \* \* \*

Dresden's father blew the dust from the top of the box and opened it. The saddle was soft and shiny, made of red leather. It had been tucked away in a box at the top of his closet for many years, waiting for the right moment. Troy held the saddle in his hands and thought of himself as little boy, riding his own giraffe, Trixie. Oh, the fun they'd had together. Good times.

\* \* \* \*

Standing on the second rung of the ladder, Troy placed the red leather saddle on Rosemary's back fastening it with the long strap that went under



her slightly-round belly.

"Are you ready, son?"

Bravely (and boldly), Dresden nodded, calmly climbing the ladder--all six steps -- to the top. He hopped on and slipped his feet into the stirrups, patting Rosemary's very long neck, calling up to her, "Over to the persimmon tree, if you please, Rosemary."

Rosemary clomped slowly, her body swaying back and forth.

Dresden's body bounced with each step she took. Slowly and carefully, she made her way through the backyard, past the tire swing, past the blue-tiled fountain with the goldfish, ending up at the persimmon tree which stood tall and proud in the far corner of the backyard.

Riding atop Rosemary, Dresden was finally high enough to reach the persimmon fruit he'd had his eye on for the past seven Sundays.

He leaned over and plucked the fruit from the tree. Calling up to Rosemary, he instructed her to return to his ladder.

"Back to my ladder, if you please, Rosemary."

Slowly Rosemary Giraffe turned and clomped back to the ladder where Dresden's parents waited. (His mother was trying not to be too nervous.)

Carefully, Dresden climbed back down the ladder, showing the prize to his parents.



"It's beautiful, dear," his mother said. "A perfect fruit."

"It is," he agreed, polishing it on the sleeve of his shirt before offering the shiny orange gift to his new friend.

"I hope you like persimmons, Rosemary."

She did. Very much. In three small bites.

The End

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