

THE
VERDI BEARS
TAKE
A GOLDEN SEA-SIDE
HOLIDAY.

"Aren't SILVER and GOLD magic coloured words!" laughed Bessy, as she handed the sea front seaside shop keeper a silver coin and watched the silver scoop descend and dig out golden ice cream from a silver drum shaped container, then place it fair and square into a large GOLDEN ice cream cornet! Into the very centre!

The Punch and Judy man, at this very same moment in time, placed the small Punch and Judy striped cotton booth fair and square into the very centre of The Green, which was also on the sea front.

The sea front seaside shop keeper then poured a Golden Sauce over the topmost peak of the ice cream, and then sprinkled coloured sugary dusty petally coloured pieces over the golden sauce, before finally dropping some pieces of what could only be described as looking like chopped grass, over this now extremely well bedecked and besprinkled ice cream!

The tide, at this very same moment in time, turned, leaving coloured newly washed stones of yellow and pink and blue, and newly washed sea shells of yellow and pink

and blue, then finally, seemed the colour of dark green grass, all over the three beaches of the small sea side town of Three Beaches.

And when the five Verdi Bears stepped out of the sea front shop and into the Golden Sunlight, there were silvery glistening patches on the dancing waves of the sea, glistening patches like the scales on the skin of a beautiful leaping Giant Salmon!

But leaping silvery salmon were far from Bassy's mind as she looked lovingly at the ice cream cornet, which looked rather like a posy of flowers.

"The petally coloured pieces of sugar look like pieces of blue bell, and pieces of pink roses, and pieces of buttercup, and pieces of green grass... oh isn't the seaside a most Magic place... and isn't seaside ice cream a most Magic confection!"

She prepared to take a lick at the bedecked and besprinkled ice cream, finding time of course just to say before she did so "and I for one am glad we came to the seaside, because days like this are going to last all week!"

Ariadne, from her roosting place high in a nearby pine tree, watched the five ice cream eating Verdi Bears as they now walked across the Green towards the Punch and Judy show.

She watched them with great interest, and looked closely at the various types of ice cream and how it was contained, for Verdi Bears had interesting ideas on how to get the most value for money when it came to the subject of ice cream!

Buttermere liked a long cool squarish oblongy sort of lick - a lick which turned corners...which meant of course a squarish oblongy wafer. Grasmere watched Buttermere lick the ice cream, it was interesting, for Buttermere trailed his tongue around the oblong squarish shape.

"You look like a deer at its salt lick!" he laughed, and then looked at Old Man Coniston.

Old Man Coniston held a large cornet with a large chocolate log in it, which he was licking with great pleasure!

Lady Windermere ate out of a paper cup, a cup which contained strawberry ice cream, and she used a small wooden spoon, and as she ate her ice cream, she glanced from time to time at the Punch and Judy booth which was across the green, and luckily in the direction they were walking....

Ariadne now looked at Grasmere...oh, he was a wise one, the Verdi Bear who didn't usually say too much, the Verdi Bear who wrote story beginnings and middles!

Ariadne's feathers glistened in the sunlight as she looked at Grasmere...for Grasmere had a large cornet for his ice cream...a cornet with two sides, and one side held a pink ice cream and the other side held a chocolate ice cream!

Oh yes, he was a wise one, the Verdi Bear called Grasmere, who didn't usually say too much!

Oh yes, he knew how to get value for money, the wise Verdi Bear, Grasmere, who knew so much about writing stories!

But then, Bessy too knew all about value for money and value for time when on a holiday which was to last for one week! The Verdi Bears had been at the seaside for about one hour, and already Bessy had been hopping for presents, well, some of her take home presents, and had obtained value for money from the start!

The Punch and Judy show was about to start, and here now was the Punch and Judy man about to give value for time and money, after the Verdi Bears and the rest of the audience put their money in a cloth bag on the end of a wooden handle!

Ariadne laughed to herself, and why not indeed, for she could watch the show for nothing!

Yes, there were certain advantages in being a pigeon when one was on holiday, for pigeons could watch Punch and Judy for free!

So now the Verdi Bears, and some human beings, not forgetting Ariadne high in a pine tree, settled down to watch PUNCH AND JUDY!

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"Punch and Judy is all lies!" said an indignant Bessy, sounding quite unimpressed, as the five Verdi Bears and some human beings and their children watched the antics of Punch and Judy who were quarrelling!

The dog called TOBY jumped up and caught a string of pink sausages which Judy was about to fry in her small frying pan.

Off ran Toby, with the sausages hanging from either side of his mouth!

"Those pink sausages are made of cloth, and a dog wouldn't eat cloth sausages! And that dog called Toby is a pretend dog! It is all lies!" said Bessy.

But everyone else seemed most impressed with the punch and Judy show!

So, Bessy left the small crowd of people, and four Verdi Bears, and walked over to the nearby bench seat where she had left her knitting bag which was now a shopping bag.

The knitting bag was quite full, because seaside shops were much fun, and she had bought presents today and a postcard. The postcard was lovely, showing a picture of a donkey standing on the green near a sand pit where human being children were making sand castles with buckets and spades. A Seaside View it was called.

Yes, the postcard was lovely, and was for herself and not bought to send to anyone. Just a lovely card for herself to keep as a reminder. She would keep it for ever and ever and ever.

She looked at the presents she had bought to take home and give away.

While people laughed at Punch and Judy, Bessy looked at what looked very interesting indeed, so thought Ariadne who could see very clearly from her lofty perch in the pine tree.

Bessy had bought a bag of broken biscuits to feed to the hens when she got home after this holiday.

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Ezzy looked at the present she had bought for Uncle Apple's large horse - Black Prince, even although she didn't like Black Prince! She had bought a pound of carrots for Black Prince! Yes, although she felt very happy about this present, because, well, although she was afraid of him really, he was such a large horse, almost as tall as a large prehistoric monster creature, or so she thought, he was still deserving of a seaside present!

She had bought a small tin of brown shoe polish for Uncle Apple, because he wore brown leather leggings which reached his knees, and they took a lot of polish!

For Severina, she had bought a skein of embroidery wool, a lovely darkish sort of blue colour, so that Severina could mend her coloured stockings when winter came around again!

Thaddeus hadn't been bought his present yet, for she wasn't sure about Thaddeus!

Thaddeus was always sort of surrounded by sea birds, for he did most of the ploughing, and the sea birds seemed to like watching him, as did Old Man Coniston, and in fact, so did Greasere and Buttermere.

Perhaps she should buy Thaddeus some bird seed in a box, perhaps some bird seed might just keep sea birds and the like off his special seeds for growing crops?

Why didn't Thaddeus and Uncle Apple grow seeds especially for birds? What a wonderful idea!

She looked into the sky, and yes, there were a lot of sea birds flying around today, so she put away her presents quickly, just in case the birds decided to steal them away!

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The sky seemed very busy today, she just couldn't help noticing\*\*\*\*\*

Birds were flying all over the sky, and there were some paper kites flying too. Yes, she would like a kite, someday perhaps, but not today.

It was silly, watching Punch and Judy today, when the sky was so busy and interesting and real, and not pretend, say, like a Punch and Judy dog.

These seaside birds were different to the garden birds she saw at home most of the time, for these birds flying around nearby were large sea birds, and were usually only seen at home when the plough was out.

She looked at the large sea birds, flying, wheeling, screeching, sounding angry. Perhaps they were angry because they hadn't green hills and lakes of fresh water.

She felt sorry for sea birds, for they weren't pretty like little sparrows or robins, and what was worse, they couldn't sing at all nicely, not like, say, a Blackbird! Oh yes, Blackbirds were beautiful singers!

Probably sea birds couldn't sing because they weren't happy, and she understood perfectly, for she knew for certain sure any bird who ate lots of fish wouldn't be very happy!

Country birds seemed much happier, for country birds could eat pease and lettuce seeds and strawberries because they lived in the country!

She didn't like fish herself all that much!  
Poor sad sea birds!

She was surprised to see a sparrow flutter past her and settle on a nearby litter bin, searching for food. But the bin had been recently emptied! What a shame!

She took some pieces of broken biscuit out of her shopping bag and threw them onto the bench beside her, when to her surprise the sparrow flew down and sat beside her and began pecking at them, and eating them now as he realised they seemed to be especially there for him!

Now, this WAS a lovely surprise, a sparrow sitting beside her, so near in fact that if she had put out a paw she could have touched him!

But perhaps this was a country sparrow, from Uncle Apple's farm, a sparrow who knew her, and had perhaps followed her from the country.

The trouble was, all sparrows sort of looked alike! But then, it didn't really matter, for she was just pleased to make friends with any creature today, because she just didn't like watching Punch and Judy!

Yes, sparrows were nicer than silly Punch and

Judy!

Oh, what a lovely day she was having while everyone else was watching Punch and Judy!

But not EVERYONE else, for there was a small donkey nearby, and the small donkey was watching her! So, she stared right back at the small donkey, and began to think about donkeys.....

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Donkeys had pretty faces, well, sort of, and much prettier than Black Prince.

The small donkey was still watching her, but the others seemed to be snoozing, and from time to time they would open their eyes, and crop the grass with white teeth which seemed to be quite sharp!

They blinked from time to time, and didn't seem to show any interest whatever in Punch and Judy!

She liked donkeys, yes, she liked donkeys, and what made it more interesting, donkeys didn't watch Punch and Judy!

Do Donkeys dream, she wondered. After all, they would probably think about all sorts of things as they stood there eating short grass, and trying not to listen to the Punch and Judy show!

The small donkey was now looking at the pecking sparrow....was the donkey hungry?

Bessy now looked at her knitting bag....the carrots she had bought for Black Prince were making the bag feel heavy, and quite spoiling the shape....should she feed the donkeys? Were the donkeys hungry?

Everyone seemed to be hungry at the seaside, for even the other four Verdi Bears were still eating their ice creams.

Yes, she would feed the donkey....while Verdi Bears and human beings ate ice creams!

Buttermore trailed his tongue along his squarish oblongy wafer which was now almost empty. He had discovered that if one was careful, one could press an ice cream sandwich and the ice cream would come out

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of four sides - but alas and a lack - his ice cream sandwich was now empty!

Mmmm...he thought...he didn't want to eat the soggy biscuity wafer, and looking enquiringly at Old Man Coniston, was informed "Put it in the litter bin over near the donkeys."

Bessy was feeding carrots to a very small donkey called DORA, and as she saw Buttermere walking away from Punch and Judy, and towards her, she said to him "I'm not afraid of small horses - just giant farmy ones" ~~was~~, and then added as she now fed DORA the soggy biscuity wafer which Buttermere didn't want to eat "Do donkeys dream I wonder? Do you know if donkeys dream Buttermere?"

But Buttermere was returning to Punch and Judy, and now standing beside Old Man Coniston once more, said, "Bessy wants to know if donkeys dream..."

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Old Man Coniston looked away from Punch and Judy, and looked to where Bessy was standing feeding carrots to a donkey.

Well! Now that was truly amazing! Bessy feeding a donkey, and not looking at all nervous.

"The seaside must be a magic sort of place after all," he laughed. Yes, Bessy was so right, there was magic at the seaside. But then, she often was right, and as he walked over to place his empty ice cream cone in the litter bin, he began thinking about other types of learning, apart from learning donkeys were worth

feeding with special presents bought for Black Prince.

Should the three young Verdi Bears be learning while on holiday, perhaps even have a paw writing exercise each evening?

He was now eating his chocolate log, which he had left till last.

Perhaps if he made his poems about something they had either seen or done whilst on holiday, even something today, their first day at the seaside, and then put them into a sort of book to read aloud while winter was upon them or read even on their last picnic out of doors before the cold water running through their water tap told them cold weather was upon the fells!

"Do little donkeys on the Green dream, Old Man Coniston?" asked Bessy as Old Man Coniston walked over to say hello to Dora.

"There must be a rhyme there, or the beginnings of one" he said, as he made a few notes in one of Bessy's note books.

Later today, he would make this into a paw writing exercise, perhaps he could write it on left beach, which was the next place they were to visit that fine afternoon, now that Punch and Judy was ended, on this their first afternoon at the seaside.

"Next stop - the Left Beach...." said Lady Windermere.

Ariadne, of course, was already on the Left Beach, and could be seen sitting on a large log which had drifted onto the beach with a high tide....for she, too, had found Punch and Judy extremely boring, and like Bessy, had left early!

It was a real sort of Robinson Crusoe sort of beach - was what Gramsere planned to write in one of his story beginnings notebooks later in the day - and indeed it was, just that, a real sort of Robinson Crusoe sort of beach!

Bessy however had no intention of writing a story beginning either now or later, for she had some rather important thoughts to find words for! "It's all Golden!" said Bessy. "Oh, it's all Golden!" she said once more, as she looked at the long left Beach. "It seems such a shame to walk on it and scuffle it up and shuffle it up and dirty it with our feet paws!"

And now turning her attention on the sea, she had words to say about it "The sea is flat, wet, empty and boring!" she laughed.

But Old Man Coniston was looking rather thoughtful, the way he looked when he had lessons to teach, and word lists to hand to everyone, so she quickly added "There isn't much need to learn to keep an eye on

anything at the side of the sea, for there is nothing on the side of the sea it seems to me" she said happily.

She looked at the long stretch of golden beach, and the long stretch of the edge of the dunes, where waving grass, like long green knitting needles, moved slightly in the warm breeze.

"There are no hedges on the beach with nests to count, and no crops, and the grass has forgotten to come down onto the beach!" she said hopefully, looking at Old Man Coniston, who still looked in a thoughtful mood.

"And there are no green hills to climb up to look down from either, only a long yellow cake frill edged with green weeds on top growing like green knitting needles!" she added.

Old Man Coniston looked at the long beautiful beach on which there were no hedges, and he looked at the yellow cake frill edged with green weeds which looked like knitting needles!

"Oh dear, oh dear" he said sadly. What a dreadful way to describe the brave marram grass which was such a useful grass!

With thoughts such as how useful marram grass was, and how erosion had to be stopped, he began his first lesson.... "To get down to grass roots.... now, and erosion and reclamation and esters.... and old forests.... yes, old forests...." began Old Man Coniston bravely.

"Aha!" thought Lady Windermere, admiring the

seaweeds which lay along the high water mark. "A collage would be a nice change...I wonder if..." and she began walking along the tide mark, which had nothing growing on it!

"Aha!" thought Crasmere, as he saw pebbles shining in the sunlight all along the beach on the tide mark, which could be clearly seen because it had nothing growing on it!

He too began walking along the beach, as did Buttermere, as he saw the beautiful driftwood all along the tide mark!

And before one could say Good Afternoon, Old Man Coniston found himself in the company of Bessy only, who seemed to be enjoying eating a packet of shrimps!

"Marram grass is green and has sharply pointed leaves and is growing...." said Old Man Coniston, realising no one wanted to know anything at all about marram grass, for they were walking along the beach happily, well, everyone, that is, apart from Bessy, who had just dropped a tomato sandwich on the soft sand.

They now sat on the soft sand, just where the dunes and the beach meet, and just where Bessy had dropped the sandwich.

She left the sandwich lying there for the birds to eat, and sighed "Oh deary me, do we HAVE to keep an eye on things at the edges of the sea when we are on holiday! Must we?"

She looked hopefully at Old Man Coniston. He seemed to be looking at his newspaper now, and from time to time made some notes in a notebook which was

lying near him, on the soft warm sand. The notebook had just been newly bought as they had walked away from Punch and Judy, and made their way to the left Beach.

He seemed to be looking very closely at his newspaper now, and seemed to have forgotten all about grass roots and etceteras....not, that WAS lucky, she thought...but where were the other Verdil Bears?

She put her green binoculars to her eyes and looked through them, hoping to see the others.

Oh yes, there they were. She could see Lady Windermere, Grassmere and Buttermere. It was such fun...she thought...as she turned her green binoculars towards a large clump of knitting needles, I beg your pardon, I mean Marram Grass, of course!

She looked at this special sort of grass, of which Old Man Comiston seemed fond. Through her binoculars it looked like a sort of jungle....and there and then she met the startled gaze of a Prehistoric Creature!

Oh dear, these binoculars weren't magnifying things - they were sort of horrifying things - so she looked in her knitting bag now used for shopping, and brought out a magnifying glass, and looked through that.

Oh dear, that magnifying glass too was horrifying things - for yes, there was indeed a Prehistoric Monster of sorts, and what was more, it seemed to be walking towards her!

But a wonderful thing happened - for as it walked nearer she realised it was a beautiful creature. No need to be afraid of it at all, it being so beautiful, and

and so she sat very still for a moment or two, hoping it might just come nearer, because, it was so beautiful, and she could tell for certain sure it just was NOT to be afraid of, not like a big farm horse with feet which could send sparks a'flying as it walked quickly on a tar mac sort of road!

She put her binoculars and magnifying glass on the sand beside her, where she sat, and she continued watching this prehistoric creature which was now quite small indeed, not of course now being observed through either binoculars or magnifying glass which seemed to horrify things!

It stopped walking now, and sat looking instead at the tomato sandwich which barred its way.

It began eating it! In fact, it seemed to enjoy eating it, for it kept right on eating it even when Old Man Coniston rustled his newspaper as he looked for something interesting to read!

As she watched the small creature eating the sandwich, she wondered, should she tell Old Man Coniston about the prehistoric monster, or creature, or whatever it was? If she spoke, would the little monster run away? What could one call this little creature? It couldn't be called a monster, not this little creature!

Oh, it must be awful, being a prehistoric monster or creature, and have to wait until damp soggy tomato sandwiches were dropped accidentally, one could become very hungry if one lived like that!

Is that why it was so small? Was it hungry?

She would ask someone, perhaps Buttermore, for he said

prehistoric creatures went away because there wasn't enough food for them!

With eyes bright like a star, she watched the prehistoric creature eat a tomato sandwich....as Old Man Coniaton suddenly became aware that there was a silence....a stillness....which was rare when there was a Verdi Bear called Bessy anywhere near!

So he looked in her direction over the top of his newspaper....what was she looking at? She seemed very happy.....

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The small Sand Lizard felt very safe today. He liked the look of the Verdi Bears, yes, he liked their safe green colour, and he was sure he was among friends. He didn't mind being looked at, or being talked about, or studied closely, as these two Verdi Bears were doing.

The older and larger of the two Verdi Bears was studying him by looking over the top of his newspaper, and from time to time, he made notes in a notebook.

The younger and smaller of the two Verdi Bears was looking through a small green magnifying glass, held at a distance, of course. She also looked at him without the magnifying glass from time to time.

The Sand Lizard, although busily eating, from time to time cast a glance at both Verdi Bears. He too could see through Bessy's magnifying glass, but from the other side, and her eyes looked blue as the sky as he gazed at her.

The small Verdi Bear looked very friendly, thought the little Sand Lizard, and she had probably dropped the sandwich deliberately, knowing Sand Lizards could become extremely hungry from time to time.

Perhaps he had found a friend at last, a Green, Verdi Bear friend. Oh, he hoped so, for sand dunes and beaches could be very lonely places when one was small, and a Sand Lizard, and almost extinct, or so it seemed!

The five Verdi Bears were lucky, having this holiday, and how wise of them to come to this little resort of Three Beaches, he couldn't help thinking, as he ate his sandwich.

He also couldn't help thinking how wise these two Verdi Bears were, for they were sitting quietly watching him and not walking over to have a better look!

He shuddered as he thought about feet, for he didn't like feet coming closer to him, for he was a very small Sand Lizard indeed, and he didn't like feet walking near to him...so he was glad to see these two Verdi Bears had a lot of sense....and were just sitting quietly.

No stress, no fear of damage from these two Verdi Bears. In fact, life was just fine and dandy today. Yes, just fine and dandy today!

Oh, but it wasn't always so, unfortunately. For instance, there were cold days when no one dropped a crumb. Indeed, there were days when no one came onto Left Beach and the dunes at all!

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In fact, there were days, usually when it was snowy and the winds were cold and icy, when not even a little sea weed fly would fly, and when even sea gulls sat on the sea and floated on rough waves.

Surf riding, could it be called? Not really, but similar.

Errrrr! Not for a Sand Lizard was the sea, and sitting on an ocean, or even standing surf riding like human beings trying to show off! Or even like the Storm Petrel who seemed to try to walk on waves, or so it would appear!

Dignity, that is what a Sand Lizard had, dignity! He knew his place, and his place was among the Marram Grass! Of course, a clump of wild roses, or was it called a patch of wild roses, could afford shelter even better than marram grass when the beach was busy!

Feet, yes, one had to take shelter from pounding feet from time to time, when the beach was crowded.

These Verdi Bears were sensible. Even the Verdi Bears walking on the lovely Left Beach were walking with care, as they looked among the driftwood, seaweed pebbles and shells.

He continued eating, feeling so very happy, for it was quiet on Left Beach today, and he liked quiet times. No Siree, he didn't like busy times, especially near the refreshment sort of tea hut, where if one was hungry one could find food.

Yes, if one didn't want to become extinct, one had to live near a source of food, even if it was to be found around litter bins near a refreshment hut!

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Strange to admit, he found he liked company now, because to be truthful, he was lonely. He liked the comforting sound of human voices, and he loved these Verdi Bears who too had human voices.

Oh how he wished he could talk to them, and just pass the time of day with them. There were very few Sand Lizards hereabouts, in fact, he hadn't seen another Sand Lizard for weeks now. Just no one to talk to, even in Lizardy language!

He worried about this, for he was rather a talkative, friendly, sort of Sand Lizard.

Oh, but one had to be brave when one was lonely, and no mistake.....

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"Robinson Crusoe must have been a very lonely fellow, and no mistake.." said Grasmere as he walked along the beach.....Lady Windermere was walking to his right, and Buttermere to his left.

The left beach was just perfect for a straight walk. The sand was clean and newly washed as the tide receded.

Shells glistened, and he wished to fulfill a promise to Bassy..the promise to make a pink necklace from pink shells which were shaped like human finger nails. Beautiful pink shells.

"Yes, I suppose he must have been a very lonely fellow.." said lady Windermere, as she too took a straight walk on the left Beach which was just the

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perfect place for a straight walk.

The sand lay firm and damp as the tide receded, leaving pebbles which glistened in the sunlight. Other pebbles had a sort of glow as the sunlight shone through them in a strange way. Probably worth collecting and polishing, she thought. She was looking for interesting pieces of seaweed, and was trying to explain to the two small Verdi Bears she would make a sort of picture in a frame, using useful pieces.

The Left Beach certainly was just perfect for finding interesting things, she thought, as she picked up a beautiful piece of seaweed which was attached to an interesting looking stone.

"I think Robinson Crusoe would have been extremely happy nevertheless" said Grasmere.

"Mum" said Lady Windermere, agreeing with him.

Buttermere, however, was busily sorting among tangled seaweed, looking for sharkskin with which to polish some of his wood carvings, which, in his opinion, were worth polishing!

Furthermore, he was looking for wood in order to fulfill promises made to other Verdi Bears, promises such as a Golden Eagle carved in wood, made for Grasmere, and also for Lady Windermere and Old Man Conington.

Well, that was what he told Lady Windermere and Grasmere, as they enjoyed looking along the tide mark. ".....that is, of course, until Buttermere saw something rather special!....."

The old tree lay high on the beach, away from this recent receding tide - clear evidence of a very high

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tide, once upon a time.

It was a beautiful old tree, and as smooth as silk as Buttermere touched it carefully. There was no bark at all, and the tree was the colour of a biscuit.

In fact, the tree trunk was so smooth, it looked as though it had been sandpapered with a very fine sand paper. Or perhaps some of the special shark skin had polished it as it had floated, probably for years and years, before it had drifted into this area and been stranded on the strand.

This had been a useful <sup>top</sup> tree, too, for he saw there was a hole in the <sup>top</sup> side of the trunk just the right size say for a squirrel to sleep in, perhaps years ago. Now, it was full of sand and pebbles, so he scooped it out.

As he scooped out warm sand, and clean pebbles, he wondered if perhaps some sort of wood pecking bird had nested in it. Would he find some sort of evidence as he scooped and scraped?

Perhaps, if he pecked some wood out with a sort of chisel, he could make a ship or canoe of wood. Tin ships become so rusty and nasty, wood must make wonderful ships, and no mistake!

Oh dear, what a shame wooden ships weren't still used for voyaging to Australia, for a ship made of tin would rust on such a long voyage! Was that why no one just EVER saw a boomerang hereabouts? Did all ships just rust on the way there.

But which way was Australia? The roots of the

tree were facing the direction of the sea, and the part which had once had more branches than it had at this present moment in time was facing in the direction of the green hills and lakes. In fact, if one stood on the tree trunk, one could see the hills in the far distance.

He sat down now on the warm sand, and rested against the tree trunk. He watched Greenmore pick up a blue stone shaped like a hen's egg, and the blue stone had bands of white marble through it.

Lady Windermere had collected quite a few pieces of seaweed, a till attached to stone, and she had also found a piece of driftwood, a small piece, shaped rather like a pipe for blowing bubbles through.

Everyone else seemed happy, but he wasn't. He had emptied the hole in the tree, and had found neither evidence of squirrels, or woodpeckers.

He hadn't managed to find wood of either Golden Eagle shape, or Boomerang shape! He knew he would never discover Australia either, but if ships were made of wood instead of like tins of beans, he might have!

He couldn't make a canoe either, for they were only here for one week, and one couldn't make a canoe in one week!

He turned his head in the direction of the sea, and looked into the offing through the roots, and he began to cry, just a little.

His tears were very small, not big splashy ones, for one shouldn't really cry at the sea side, absolutely

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everyone knew that - even Buttermore!

There was a strange sort of pitter-patter now, as large coin marks dropped onto the sand... oh dear... he would have to stop crying... he thought... but...

It was NOT his tears - it was raining!

He ran quickly to where Lady Windermere and Grams were making ready to run back to where Old Man Coniston and Bessy were making ready to run home for shelter - as the little Sand Lizard had already done!

It was a most as good as taking a bath, one would suppose, thought Buttermore hopefully, not liking taking a bath, especially when on a holiday. Perhaps he wouldn't need take a bath today - and - there was to be an all day picnic on this beach tomorrow if the weather was good - and one could perhaps make a start on making a canoe - if the rains tayed away - oh wasn't that just wonderful - he couldn't help thinking as he hurried along!

Tomorrow sounded just wonderful, and really, today had been really exciting, really it had!

Tomorrow and its all day picnic just couldn't come quickly enough, really it couldn't!

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But one must not forget the Man in the Moon, thought Bessy, on this the first evening of her sea-side holiday...

But was he here?

She knelt by the bedroom window, and spoke through the gap at the bottom of the window where the sea breeze blew in and fluttered the curtains...

"Man in the Moon - we are at the sea-side" she said, hoping the Man in the Moon could hear her; after all, the sea-side was a long way from the village, and the Man in the Moon could be spoken to at the village.

"How nice for you" said the Man in the Moon, who evidently could hear from all that long way away.

"Man in the Moon, I saw a Sand Lizard many times today, and it liked the sandwiches I like best of all, the damp soggy ones, made with red tomato...and there will be a picnic on the beach tomorrow...but if it rains tomorrow, there will not be a picnic." She hoped he would hear all of her words, and now listened to hear his reply, if there was to be one.

There was a reply..."How lucky you are to

have seen a lizard." This was followed by a question.

"What do you think of the sea, Bessy?" asked the Man in the Moon, who now waited to hear the reply, if there was to be one.

There was a reply from Bessy.... "Well, I rather think the sea is rather flat, wet, empty, and boring. In fact, do you know something, Man in the Moon, there have to be donkeys on the green and Punch and Judy just because it is so boring hereabouts...for there are no hens, and lakes, and hills...."

Here she yawned, and as she yawned yet again, decided she must bid the Man in the Moon Goodnight, for the sea air made one very tired rather quickly.

"Good night Bessy" said the Man in the Moon, but he need not have bothered, for she was by now quite fast asleep in her bed.

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LITTLE DONKEY ON THE GREEN

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Little Donkey on the Green,  
Do you dream?  
Are you in Arizona  
Where the sand is warm?

Or, do you see yourself  
Walking on a mountain path so green,  
Daisies growing either side of path  
To guide the way?

Little Donkey on the Green,  
Do you dream?  
Are you in a Bible Story,  
Where the snow is cold?

And do you see yourself  
Carrying Mary to a stable, like a Queen,  
Joseph walking at the side of you  
To guide the way?

Please tell me, little Donkey on the Green!

And when tomorrow came -

"I couldn't sleep for the noise of frogs croaking or something like a frog. They sat on the garden path for ages, just looking up at us...something greeny and strange looking they were..." said Bassy, as she yawned, on this day, which yesterday, had been tomorrow!

"Imagine!" said Lady Windermere, looking rather thoughtful, realising there would be no picnic!

"It seems" continued Bassy, as they all watched Grammere trace his name on the closed glass door, the door which led to the path, which led to the garden gate, which led to the narrow road, which if one crossed with a hop skip and a jump, would take one to Right Beach in all of one second.

The glass door was firmly closed, keeping out the sound of the weather and the roaring waves, which were dark grey with white frills.

"It seems" said Bassy once again, as she tried not to yawn "It seems frogs stay in a hallow water ponds or ditches, only half full ponds and ditches, until one day the rain comes in a storm. Then the rain fills

the ditches as the Good Lord intended, and they get up and go away at the ~~payche-wet-it-moment~~ to somewhere else...and that's why we heard them creaking on the path, they were probably talking amongst themselves, making plans to move, or something like that!"

"Imagine!" said Lady Windermere, looking now at her watch, which usually didn't tell the time correctly anyway, because she usually forgot to wind it up.

"They wait for the right moment, for safe conditions to travel in or something like that" went on Gresham. "It seems they wait for the grass and undergrowth and etceteras which are usually dry and scratchy and a hazard to a little tender frog, to become all soggy and wet all around the countryside..."

"Imagine!" said Lady Windermere, but now with a sound of, or a hint of, excitement in her voice.

"Oh, what clever little frogs, what a good idea!"

Lady Windermere rushed over to where the local small evening paper had been dropped soggy and wet, through the letter box by an extremely soggy wet newspaper boy the previous evening.

Evidently it was still readable, well, some of the pieces were... "Hum!" she said, looking at the clock on the mantelpiece of the small sun porch in which they were standing. "The frogs can tell us a lot" she

laughed. "Tell me again please someone."

Buttermere began to speak now, realising Lady Windermere was beginning to sound interesting... "The frogs find a safe path on a wet day and move away quickly at the right moment when conditions are safe

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to somewhere more interesting, or something like that"

"Now, my little green frogs" said Lady Windermere looking rather happy, as she looked carefully out of one of the windows of the sun porch.. "Our right moment could be now...our path is up there to the centre of the town and our somewhere more interesting is the small cinema..."

Everyone looked at her in amazement.

She laughed. "Yes, the time is now, for at two o'clock sharp, there is to be a film show if the weather is wet...just for holidaymakers...and it is wet...so off we hop like the frogs...and that is what the rain has made us do at our right moment..."

There was no time for three cheers. The cinema was a one minute scamper or hop away, as of course this was a very small holiday resort indeed, and the rain had temporarily ceased. Yes, it was indeed the right moment, or time....

And so it was that five green frogs, I beg your pardon, five green Verdi Bears, hopped, I beg your pardon, walked quickly to the local Cinema at two o'clock one wet afternoon at the seaside, having learned a valuable lesson from the frogs, and the Man in the Moon, of course, who had declared that....rainy days were of use to someone, now and again!

There were Indians in the film, and they wore feathers in their hair!

But what was this? One of the Indians wore a long feathered headdress!

Grassie looked at the head dress in admiration! Oh yes, the feathers in the headdress were beautiful!

What a capital idea! Not to wear of course,

he would make a sort of head dress and it would house his collection of feathers as he searched for a Golden Eagle feather!

What a splendid idea, and he had found his good idea simply because the rain had poured all day, and a cinema was next best to a picnic! Oh how glad he was it had rained today!

That was the best idea he had had for a long time! He would start a collection of feathers! There were many on the beach, and of course, many millions of millions more on the hills at home.

He realised he was looking forward to going home,

well, in a few days, because he was still enjoying his holiday immensely!

"My word, this is a good film!" said Lady Windermere, as she admired the beautiful colours in this film she was enjoying. The colours were vibrant, bright and bold, quite different to the beautiful pastels of her beloved hills and fields and flowers!

Now, these colours would be nice to paint, perhaps she could paint later this evening, but oh dear, she hadn't brought paints with her on her holiday!

It would be easily remedied of course, for she could buy a small box of pencils, or paints, in a sort of toy shop. It was a small holiday resort, but there would be paints on sale somewhere.

Oh yes, this film about a desert and cowboys and Indians had been filmed in beautiful colour! The colours were warm, made one feel warm, on this cold wet day at the seaside!

Buttermere watched the film with great interest, thought Bessy, rather surprised. She wasn't in the least interested in the silly film! There were too many horses, and she didn't like big horses!

It was bad enough seeing a horse on a farm, but on this film, they galloped around in hundreds quite all of the time!

Oh, she didn't like sitting here in the dark watching horses gallop, for she didn't like horses one little bit!

Oh how boring! Sand and horses! Oh dear!

So this was Arizona! Buttermere was quite impressed, to say the least.

What was more, the Arizona desert looked warm, not like outside the cinema today, where winds blew the rain high and low, and the sandy beach was cold!

As he scraped the last of his vanilla ice cream out of the tub, he realised he liked sand when it was warm, not cold.

No Siree, he didn't like cold sand, sand when the waves bubbled down over it and the shingle to be de-frothed under the dark carpet of the oncoming sea at the very edge... he liked sand high and dry, well, almost dry, if it didn't rain. That part just above the splash zone, where sand could warm your paws, and one could sunbathe, and watch the clouds hurry away to Australia!

Western films were exciting. Oh it must be wonderful to be a Cowboy, or even an Australian, for the sand was warm in Australia too, one would suppose.

The sand on this film looked golden and warm, and

the cactus plants were large, much larger than those one could grow in a plant pot! Probably these in this film were artificial pretend sort of ones, because Christmas trees could be artificial these days.

Yes, these cactus plants must be all lies! Still, he didn't really care, in fact, he was glad the rain had spoiled the planned picnic!

What a blessing there was a tiny cinema in this tiny town, just for rainy days, and how lucky there were two films all about horses and cowboys and Indians!

Oh he was so happy, just sitting in the small cinema, and what a blessing the rain had come!

One just got tired of picnics, well, sometimes, that is!

"Oh Old Man Coniston, aren't we lucky!" he said sounding as if he really meant it.

But Old Man Coniston didn't bother to reply!

Old Man Coniston stared glumly at the Cinema screen!

He sighed wearily! If there was anything he disliked in all the world, it was a cowboy film, and today, there were two, a double feature, and all because the rain was pouring down!

Oh dear, how he wished he was at home, in his garden shed, just pottering about, perhaps sorting out seed packets or looking through seed catalogues! Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, how he hated cowboy films and horses galloping, and galloping - not that he hated horses, he assured himself, of course, for he was the first to admit he loved the farm horses.

In fact, he could stand and watch Uncle Apple ploughing a field with Black Prince any day of the week hour after hour!

Come to think of it, the earth had a lovely smell when it was being ploughed. The earth had a lovely smell when the rain fell on it. He would be glad when this fancy holiday of theirs was over and he could return home. Yes Sirree, the sea side was all very well, but he loved the village he lived in much better!

Of course, this very little seaside resort was more or less in the country, so to speak, surrounded as it was with fields, and dunes, and marshes. In fact, it was a sort of large village on the edge of the sea! Nothing fancy!

He looked at the clock on the cinema wall. Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, time was a-dragging!

He tried to sneak a sideways glance in the direction

of Lady Windermere, Buttermere and Grosmere. They seemed to be gazing at the cinema screen in wonder, not looking in the least bored, in fact, he could see very clearly they weren't in the least bored, as it was a very bright film, and light seemed to be lighting up their happy looking faces. Yes, he could see at a glance they were looking happy!

Of course, he already knew Lady Windermere loved a visit to the cinema, and today, just to sit in comfort with no work to do was sheer enjoyment for her, because she had already told him on their way into the cinema!

So Old Man Coniston stared at the screen, feeling very glum indeed!

But help was on the way.....

"I wish someone else was as bored as I am!" said a voice from somewhere in the direction of Bassy.

And from out of the darkness, which from time to time was replaced with light from a bright cinema screen reflection, came a reply from someone....

"Why Bassy?" said a voice, which sounded rather like the voice of Old Man Coniston.

"Well, if someone else was as bored as I am, we could both go OUT of this cinema together, and perhaps have a pot of tea, or an ice cream in a shop, or even look around a junk shop for horse brasses!" replied Bassy.

Lady Windermere, who had heard every word, smiled a sweet smile.

Old Man Coniston, too, smiled a sweet smile.

And so it was that a surprised Cinema ticket lady had to open a door, and allow two Verdi Bears to leave the Cinema so that they might stop being bored by Cowboy and Indian films on a very wet day indeed!

As she closed the door behind the two Verdi Bears, she couldn't help overhearing a few words...such as...

"Do you suppose we are the only two souls out on a wet day like today?" asked the small Verdi Bear, as she looked at the deserted streets outside the cinema.

"It wouldn't surprise me in the slightest..." laughed the grown up Verdi Bear....

And that was all she heard, for the strong wind carried words and leaves along the deserted streets, and up and away!

Ariadne, the wood pigeon, who was also on holiday, sat in a small tree outside the Cinema, pigeons of course, not being allowed inside the Cinema.

The strong wind which carried words and leaves along deserted streets and up and away carried some of the conversation between Bessy and Old Man Coniston as they began walking away from the Cinema to where she sat, and she could hear the words quite clearly.

There were words such as... "they haven't even got a chicken here on the sea side Green" from Bessy, followed by "I enjoy myself when I can see hens walking about just where they like, and I like seeing hens on walls and on gates and in blackcurrant bushes..."

Old Man Coniston said something which sounded like "...Holiday Weather Shelter Cabin..." across the Green... after we have been in a shop or two..."

"Good" thought Ariadne, as off she flew. If the Holiday Weather Shelter Cabin was good enough for Old Man Coniston and Bessy, it was quite good enough for her.

She would fly there and wait for them!

Bessy was so right, thought Ariadne, the Wood Pigeon, as she sat under the eaves of the Holiday Weather Shelter Cabin and preened her rather dampish feathers.

Yes, Bessy was so right, for they hadn't even a chicken here on the sea side green. Yes, life was always more enjoyable when there were hens and chickens abounding!

Errrr! But that was a cold breeze, and the rain very very cold indeed! Invigorating though, she had to admit!

Not many people about today, just the two Verdi Bears! She gave a pigeon's chuckle!

Dreadful weather for a seaside holiday. Poor Verdi Bears!

My word, but she was hungry, and there didn't seem anything worth eating hereabouts! No Punch and Judy shows today! No children eating chocolate!

No biscuit crumbs to be seen anywhere! No discarded ice cream cones! Even the sea side donkeys were under a metal shelter today, and there didn't seem to be any spilt food around where they were usually tethered waiting their young riders.

My word, but this cold salty air gave one an appetite!

Pity there weren't any hens being reared in hen runs hereabouts, for there were good rich pickings indeed to be had where hens were fed.

For instance corn, and crusts, and a sort of bran! Oh my, but how she wished there were some crusts and corn

heseabouts. Trouble was, of course, she was more used to the ways of the country, not at all like the fancy type blue Racing Pigeon which was now in residence at Uncle Apple's Calf Country Farm!

Delphinium, that was her name. Delphinium. Rather a nice Pigeon, rather sophisticated city ways, but there, it took all kinds to make a world!

Brrr! It was cold and damp today. No doubt Delphinium would have been able to find some food in the nearby back yards and front gardens of this strange little sea sidey place!

If she was not mistaken, didn't hotelly places make neels? There was a small sort of hotelly place facing the green, near the small shops. She would think about looking for food after a while. She watched Old Man Coniston and Bessy walk into a shop.

Holidays were all very well, but now she missed the fields back home! She missed the other birds too, the small birds, not like these greedy noisy sea birds!

She thought about the fields around the Verdell Pear village and Uncle Apple's farm.

The fields there were wonderfully exciting.

Hen runs were wonderfully exciting, and quite safe places to feed. Hens had small feet, not like these large alarming feet on all the human beings she had seen since arriving at the Sea Side! Pecking among hen feet was a pleasure, but pecking around human beings feet was a dangerous way to find food, that was for sure!

Her wood pigeon feet weren't used to having to walk on tarmac footpaths, or pavements, or on wet sand such as sea side sand.

Dark earth of a newly ploughed field was more like, yes, a newly sown field of corn in spring time or whenever it was, for she sometimes wasn't too sure what was sown when. She just watched for the signs.

Signs were a scarecrow being set on its feet, the sound of a harness brass jingle-jangling, and sea birds wheeling!

Spring was a wonderful time. Garden seeds were planted, just ready for the pecking out of the soft brown earth within minutes of being planted, a miniature field, more or less, was a garden.

Of course, when young green corn began to show in a brown field, now that was exciting, so was the appearance of the young green fruit on the top of the corn stalk!

Mumma! She liked young corn. Of course, she liked ripe corn, for when corn was ripe it became hard and crunchy. Easy to pick up among the stubble after harvesting too!

Better though by far when green and soft and yet unripe, for it was milky and soft. A taste of soft bread, as when one ate soft bread out of the crowdie bucket back at home when food was being prepared in a hurry for the hens!

There was a smell of food being prepared in the nearby kitchen of the hotelly place, of that she was

now quite sure. She raised her beak into the air and sniffed. Yes, there was definitely a smell of freshly baked bread.

She was sure of her facts, she knew the special smell of freshly baked bread, for at home, whenever Lady Windermere baked bread, the special warm yeasty delicious smell would waft and drift up the chimney to where she would be standing listening to conversations which would also drift up and out.

Yes, bread put to rise on a fender sent up tempting aromas to a perching wood pigeon.

Old Nan Coniston and Bessy were now walking past the hotelly place, having at last finished shopping in a rock selling newspaper shop, which also sold vegetables and dusters and polish.

Thank goodness, for she was tired of being alone, and here they were at last, starting their short walk across the green towards this seaside holiday weather shelter made of pine wood and large glass windows, which seemed to have been made to keep the rain out and let the sun in, if there were ever any sun to be had worth a mention at this seaside silly sort of holiday place!

It was quite warm under the eaves, thank goodness! But how she wished she could just fly home, but home just wasn't home without the Verdi Bears, and if they were brave enough to endure this strange length of time called a holiday, well then, she would just have to try to endure it herself.

She thought about her life in the village, and her walks in the fields. It was always so cool under

cover of the young green corn.

There was a soft dampness about the earth which could be shaded from the warm sun, by growing corn.

No shelter for Verdi Beers walking on the green at the sea side today. Gusts of wind, heavy rain, swirling dead leaves and words and pine needles! But onward Old Man Coniston and Bessy bravely walked towards the weather's helter.

"It seems miles and miles away, that shelter!" said Bessy, who was beginning to wonder if she had been foolish to leave the warmth of the Cinema.

Ariadne chuckled as some of the words reached her... what was it Bessy had said... miles and miles?

One could walk miles and miles on the cool brown earth of a cornfield. Up and down the acres of growing corn, between the stalks, which were young and soft and delicious.

Thistles weren't yet so prickly, and poppies perhaps not yet blooming. Little paths for rabbits to run along, and long tailed pheasants.

There was shelter from rain there too when the corn grew long stalks, not like now, not like this green, where there wasn't much growing on it.

This Sea Side Green was very short indeed, no shelter at all from anything for anything... and here they were... Old Man Coniston and Bessy... and into the Sea Side weather shelter for anyone on holiday they rushed... and closed the door behind them!

But Ariadne, huddling under the eaves, could still hear them...  
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The sound of the angry sea did not dare enter the Holiday Weather Shelter Cabin made of glass and pinewood once Old Man Coniston and Bessy had closed the door behind them.

"How lucky we came into the Weather Shelter Cabin, because it is just full of loneliness and dried brown leaves today" said Bessy as she walked around the four sides of the Cabin.

Old Man Coniston sat down on a long bench type seat which faced the door through which they had just entered, and which looked out to sea.

"It is surprisingly warm in this Cabin" said Old Man Coniston, "and much more interesting than sitting in a cinema."

"And a lovely place for a picnic in the winter!" laughed Bessy, who now having completed a four cornered walk, now sat down beside Old Man Coniston and began to wonder what he was looking at.

"I am looking at the sea" said Old Man Coniston, when her question had been asked.

The sea looked angry. Waves jumped high in

the air and white foam blew this way and that as water crashed on rocks.

"I'm ever so glad I'm not a mermaid today" said Bessy, looking thoughtful. "It must be dreadful to be a sea bird today, too."

"Or a Sea Captain" said Old Man Coniston, as he put both paws over the top of his sheep on his sheep handled walking stick, and rested his chin on them.

Bessy looked at Old Man Coniston, who was staring out to sea. "You look like a Sea Captain, Old Man Coniston" she said, "and this Cabin we are in could be a Cabin on a ship where a Captain is in command as he sails the Seven Seas!"

Old Man Coniston smiled as he looked out to sea, and into the far horizon, which seemed to look a little brighter now, a little lighter, perhaps like a curtain being raised at a pantomime to show a bright stage - but there was no pantomime and no stage - just moving sea and lifting cloud.

"A bright horizon" said Old Man Coniston.

Bessy looked at the horizon. "Is that the edge

of the world?" she asked. "Is that where the sea ends, or does it fall over like a waterfall?"

She wiped the glass with a paw, and realised the windows needed cleaning. Perhaps if the windows were just a little cleaner, she might just see what happened to the sea at the edge of the world, and tell the others all about it.

Bessy looked into her knitting bag. "I have that nice yellow duster I bought in the seaside rock

shop for Thaddeus, for polishing the horse brasses on Black Prince, do you think I might clean the windows in here with it?"

"Most certainly" said Old Man Coniston, as he picked up a newspaper, which too, had been bought in the sea side rock shop.

Benny walked to the right side of the warm cabin, and looked out of the window, which was greatly in need of a soft duster...she could see the storm which was all around her and all over the three beaches. But she couldn't hear the storm.

Buttermere said he didn't mind storms, for storms at sea could wash up driftwood...and he needed some driftwood...but while driftwood was being washed onto the three beaches hereabouts...Buttermere was warm and dry in the Cinema.

It was broing in a cinema, she couldn't help thinking, as the window began to look much more clean or sparkling or whatever one should really call a large window at the Sea Side...in a piney sort of cabin.

There seemed to be lots of pine trees hereabouts, and they seemed to be nodding and swaying in the strong stormy weather...but inside this cabin...one could watch a storm, even though it was invisible... "This Cabin must be Magic, sort of, don't you think, Old Man Coniston?" she said as she worked, but Old Man Coniston was reading his newspaper.

"Is there Magic on these windows?" she said, as she looked at the dark dust which was now on the

duster.

Bessy now walked to the window behind Old Man Coniston. This window behind Old Man Coniston faced the Green, and which was also facing the direction of the village where the Verdi Bears lived, which of course, was some miles away.

She looked at the Green, which became much brighter, and much greener, as her magic duster cleaned away a lot of cobwebs.

The Green was empty! No Punch and Judy! No one flying kites! Not even a pecking bird around the where one usually put ice cream cartons, and chocolate wrappers!

"Oh, I miss the hens. Oh isn't this a terrible place, for they don't even have a chicken hereabouts and just look at all the grass! Chickens surely do love a good peck at the grass, absolutely everyone knows that!"

"Towmy folks don't keep chickens Bessy" said Old Man Coniston, as he turned a page of his newspaper. "I don't understand lots of things" she said

as she kept right on cleaning her window on the Green.

"Such as" said Old Man Coniston, who regretted saying "such as" the very minute the words had been spoken.

"Such as" began Bessy, "I don't understand why rivers run into the sea, and how a sea doesn't run into the hills up from the sea instead, and take sand and shells whizzing up the mountains. Our hens would love that, wouldn't they, Old Man Coniston, to have

some sand and shells to peck among". She sighed wistfully on her clean window, clean, that is, apart from a few cobwebs, one in each corner of the glass panes.

"They surely would Bessy, they surely would" said Old Man Coniston, trying to find something of interest in the newspaper. He wondered if the high tide and low tide times would be in this newspaper. Could be of interest.

"Why do we like home best" said Bessy, looking far beyond the Green in her imagination, in the direction of her village, which was some miles away as the crows fly.

"A sense of belonging, like a little <sup>home</sup> pigeon," Bessy he said, as he read the information he was looking for on the subject of tides.

"I miss the hens, Old Man Coniston" sighed Bessy. "Do you think Uncle Apple has remembered to feed them for us? Will he remember where you left the crowdie bucket and everything?"

Old Man Coniston turned the pages of his newspaper, not really reading anything which could hold his interest. What was it Bessy was saying? "What was that you said Bessy, was it something about the hens?"

"I said, I hope Uncle Apple feeds the hens for us, for if he has forgotten, the hens might all just be thin when we get home....can hens be thin?" she asked.

"Whisper" said Old Man Coniston thoughtfully, as he folded up his newspaper, and put it on the long park bench sort of seat which faced the sea, and on which

he was sitting.

He looked thoughtfully at the brown leaves which were lying around his feet/back paws as he sat. Strange, brown leaves like these being hereabouts, for as far as he could see there were pine trees growing hereabouts, so where had these come from? Strange?

He thought about brown leaves, leaves like these, which one usually saw on country paths and roads, and very often when one was out walking where one knew the primroses grew, if one pushed a few leaves to one side, one could see the primrose just beginning to bud. It was nice to see familiar flowers, familiar paths, and even his brown hens, his familiar brown hens.

Yes, he knew how Bessy was feeling right this very minute, for he too was worrying about his hens.

Bessy sighed on the window once more, and as he saw it must have been a large sigh, for the cobwebs were fluttering and her sigh had made a silvery mist on the glass.

"Oh dear, will I have to clean these windows again, for my sighs are spoiling them? Sighs, you know, can put a spider in a spin, leastways, little red spiders on Josephs coats, and on the blackcurrent bushes" she said, as she looked now towards Old Man Coniston, in order to find out if he knew about spiders spinning in a sigh....

And so it was that while she was for the moment looking at Old Man Coniston, who seemed to be listening to her, two little brown spiders ran higher up the window frame for safety...(they were called Poseidon and Neptune,

of course, those two special spiders, for they were the owners of that special Sea Side Weather Shelter Cabin made of glass and pine wood...and considered it their summer and winter residence - so Graeme tells me!)

"You see" continued Bessy, as she now tried to spell her name on the window which was nicely misted over with her silvery sigh...and at the same time watching a man in a small wooden shelter which had a roof and sides but no front, just a long piece of wood to which were tethered the donkeys.

The man in the shelter polished the brasses on the donkey's harnesses or whatever one called them. She wasn't quite sure about horsey items of wear.

The donkeys were being sheltered from the bad weather too, hens, of course, seemed to shelter from the rain too, at home, on wet days, she thought... "You see," she went on. "I am worried that the hens might not eat if we aren't there... I usually say goodnight at night and good morning in the morning... to the hens... they could be fretting for me..."

As Bessy said once more "could the hens be fretting for me, do you think?" he studied the brown leaves on the floor of the shelter.

Old Man Coniston, tired of watching a turning tide, looked at the lonely brown leaf which was making the only sound to be heard - that of one dry leaf being blown slowly across the concrete floor...and he looked at his watch...thinking Uncle Apple should be having his mid afternoon cup of tea now...in his warm kitchen.

And if Uncle Apple could be having his mid afternoon cup of tea now...in his warm kitchen...well...so could a Sea Captain...Sea Captains needed tea...and without more ado he began folding the newspaper, which once folded, he put it carefully into Bassy's knitting bag.

And Bassy, as she put the special present for Thaddens into its original brown paper bag, said "Will the hens be fretting for us, and what can I take back home as a present for the hens?"

The Sea Captain, or should I say, Old Man Coniston, happy now with the thought of a pot of tea, laughed and said to her "Take your own sweet self Bassy, your own sweet self back to the hens, in a few days, they don't need a present...and as to our hens fretting for us, and has Uncle Apple fed them...why...let's go and telephone him and ask him."

"On the new fangled contraption called tell-the-phone" laughed Bassy as she opened the door of the Holiday Weather Shelter Cabin, allowing the sound of the angry sea to enter the cabin, and she closed the door behind them, now not allowing the sound of the angry sea to enter...and leaving the Cabin as they had found it -(apart-that is-from clean windows as far as she could clean with her magic duster) full of dry brown leaves and loneliness.

As they walked across the green, Ariadne, who was about to follow them, heard Bassy say to Old Man Coniston "and do you see the froth on the waves on a stormy day? Well, then, Lady Windermere declares that is because the Mermaids are shampooing their long golden tresses!"

Ariadne chuckled as she flew carefully over the Green, towards the hotelly sort of place where one could have tea and also make tell-the-phone calls.

Nermaids shampooing their hair indeed! Lady Windermere had some strange ideas, and no mistake. Grammere was another to keep an eye on, for he could write story beginnings and middles, and he was a clever Verdi Bear.

It was so interesting, listening to Verdi Bears, and no mistake...for as Old Men Coniston and Bassy walked their words carried to her pigeony ears.... "You can telephone, while I order tea, and see what we can have as a snack..." said Old Men Coniston.

"And I can ask about the hens..." laughed Bassy, as they now approached the front door of the hotelly place, and Ariadne settled herself comfortably on a window box which overlooked the tea room, and a nice small table which already seemed to have a plate of cakes on it!

The rain drops stopped dropping from the sky just as Bessy and Old Man Coniston settled themselves comfortably at a table which overlooked a small window with an outside small window box, which already seemed to have a pigeon settled comfortably on it.

Bessy stared out of the small window at the pigeon who was staring in at her. From time to time the pigeon seemed to look at the cakes, or so Bessy thought. Was it, too, on holiday? Was it, too, hungry? Did pigeons drink tea? But before she could ask even one of her questions, someone called Maud walked to the table, and said to Old Man Coniston that his pot of tea would be served as soon as the water in the copper kettle was boiling.

"Do pigeons come here on holiday too?" asked Bessy, who was absolutely sure they did.

"It wouldn't surprise me at all," said Old Man

Coniston. "No sire, it wouldn't surprise me at all if that beautiful pigeon on the window box wasn't

the pigeon from our garden, the one with the fancy name Ariadne."

Ariadne smiled to herself. Beautiful is what Old Man Coniston had said. Beautiful. Well, of course, she knew she was beautiful, for hadn't she seen so for herself each time she looked into the rain barrel, or into the drinking water in the hen run?

Beautiful! Hmm! Nice to know someone else thought she was beautiful!

She was hungry too. Now, what could she do to let Old Man Coniston and Bessy <sup>Knick</sup> she was hungry, in fact, she was extremely hungry.

She looked down into the window box, and pecked at the brown earth. Yes, there was something there, please not be garlic, she said to herself as she tugged at her prize!

A tulip bulb! Oh dear! A tulip bulb! This was a dreadful state of affairs, for there was nothing more exciting in the window box than old tulip bulbs and stalky reminders of forget me not plants! Someone in this hotelly place had forgotten to tidy up this window box, and no mistake!

She lifted the tulip bulb in her beak sadly, and trying to look as hungry and forlorn as she could, she stared into the room to where everything seemed to be nice.

Luckily, she met the gaze of Bessy, who was still waiting for someone called Hannah to bring the telephone which evidently could be plugged into

the wall.

Here came a person called Hensh, carrying a creamy coloured telephone, and it was plugged into the wall.

Old Man Coniston wrote a set of numbers on Bessy's newspaper, Bessy's now of course, because it was to remind her of her exciting time spent in the ocean going liner with Old Man Coniston as Captain.

Bessy picked up the part of the telephone through which one could speak and also listen....

"Now Bessy, if you dial these numbers on this circle of numbers....you will hear the voice of someone at Calf Country Farm..." said Old Man Coniston.

Bessy dialled the numbers carefully, and waited.

"Hello" said Uncle Apple.

"Hello" said Bessy. "This is Bessy speaking from the seaside, are you surprised to hear from me?"

Ariadne moved a little closer to the window so that she could hear the conversation more clearly.

"Well, well, well, this is a fine surprise!" laughed Uncle Apple.

"I wanted to ask you some questions" said Bessy. "First of all, are you remembering to feed the hens for us."

"To be sure, to be sure" replied Uncle Apple.

"Do you wish them goodnight when you put them to bed?" she asked.

"Certainly, certainly I do wish them goodnight," said Uncle Apple. "I also wish them good morning each morning too. Does that please you?"

"Yes it does" said Bessy. "Now this is the last question, do you think the hens are pining for us, and are they thin now because they haven't eaten their food because they are missing us?"

"Bessy, your hens are happy, very happy" said Uncle Apple. "I have told them you will all be home in a few days, and they understand perfectly."

"Well, that's all right then" smiled Bessy.

"Good" said Uncle Apple, from down the telephone. "Now tell me all about the sea and the seaside and how you are all enjoying yourselves."

"I don't think much of the sea" said Bessy. "I must say it must be a mighty magic place, the sea, for it disappears, sort of, twice in a day, and returns, sort of, twice in a day, and it doesn't run away like a river.."

"My word, now that does sound strange" said Uncle Apple.

"Yes, the sea is strange, and it is flat and wet and empty and boring" said Bessy, as she saw a pot of tea being brought to the table.

"Is it really?" laughed Uncle Apple.

"Yes, and did you know it is boring hereabouts -so boring- that Punch and Judy shows are shown, and so boring - there are donkeys to sit on and ride about

on because one is bored....I just like the donkeys, and not Punch and Judy, and they haven't any hills here, just the sea, and it is flat and wet and empty and boring, and the beach is flat and boring, and I just like the lizard!"

She could see that the small table now had a plate of biscuits out in the shapes of animals, and they looked so nice.

"I like lizards too" said Uncle Apple, sounding rather happy.

"They haven't any hens hereabouts, not even a chicken on the beach!" she said.

"Oh what a terrible place, no hens!" said Uncle Apple.

"They seem to have nice biscuits and cakes hereabouts" she said looking at the table. "And nice church bells, but there isn't much for pigeons to eat hereabouts."

"What a shame for the pigeons!" said Uncle Apple.

"Do you know, pigeons hereabouts just seem to eat old tulip bulbs and plants which bloomed long ago, not like real food like your crops and the hen food and your apples and pears which the pigeons can eat at Calf Country Farm where you live!"

"Well, well, well" laughed Uncle Apple.

"Do you know something, Uncle Apple, do you know that speaking to you on this tell-the-phone is nearly the same as talking to The Man in The Moon" she said, as she watched Old Man Coniston pouring two cups of tea and spilling some tea onto the newspaper into the bargain!

"Is it really, do I really sound like the Man in The Moon?" said an amazed Uncle Apple.

"Sort of" said Bassy. "I can't explain the sea to you, about how and why it is salty, and as I can't understand how a sea doesn't run away like a river, I can't explain that either!"

But it was time to say goodbye now, for it was the time Uncle Apple had his afternoon cup of tea, and Old Man Coniston too, indeed, Old Man Coniston had already started to drink his tea, and seemed to be looking at the plates of cake, scones, and biscuits.

Maud and Hannah opened the window now, so that the sound of the church bells could be heard as they had their tea.

The church was just across the road from the window, sort of, and as Bassy ate a biscuit shaped like an elephant, she couldn't help noticing that a young tree seemed to be sprouting out of the guttering of the church roof.

"Seeds must float about here because of the sea breeze" she couldn't help remarking as a small seed with a luffy umbrella blew into the open window, and landed on a chocolate éclair.

Bassy lifted the chocolate éclair onto her plate, removed the seed, and wrapped it carefully inside her bright green paper napkin.

"Oh, haven't we had an exciting day so far" she laughed.

Old Man Coniston, of course, just had to agree!

Ariadne, of course, didn't agree, for she hadn't even been able to peck the dandelion seed as it had floated into the window!

Animal biscuits indeed! Chocolate éclair!

My word, no one seemed to care about pigeons hereabouts! So off she flew, up to the church roof, for a

sniff!

Yes, Bessy had been right, it was a terrible place, for there weren't any hens, and one could always find food where there were hens pecking corn for hens weren't at all unfriendly.

No, hens were friendly, not like these greedy seagulls!

But what was this!

From the top of the small tree which was sprouting out of the top of the church guttering, Ariadne could just see a small green paw crumble a biscuit onto the top of the window box which contained tulips bulbs and forget me not stalks!

So that was why they opened the window! So that they might feed the birds, and Bessy had been allowed to put out the crumbs!

Down she flew, shame to waste the crumbs, for she knew for certain sure that they had been put out especially for her!

As she ate the crumbs, she listened to Bessy and Old Man Coniston from time to time.

As she ate the last crumb out of the window box, she heard Bessy say to Old Man Coniston.....

"I have lots to tell the others when we meet them outside the cinema in a little while....."

And before very long, she was able to tell them...

....."I have had an exciting afternoon! I have been at the helm of an ocean-going liner, with Old Man Coniston as Captain..." she said, turning now to look at the Sea Captain.

"Yes, we have had a wonderful afternoon" said Old Man Coniston, smiling happily, and glad to be with the reminder of his crew!

"And, I have cleaned some windows - and I have used a new fadgled contraption called a tell-the-phone - and I had tea in a tea-room in a hotelly place and <sup>days</sup> seen a tree growing in a rain water gutter on a roof - and eaten a cream cake after a magic seed had floated onto it - and used a bright green paper napkin! See!"

She now produced the paper napkin, which was now neatly folded.

Lady Windermere looked at the neat green crepe paper package.

Bessy went on to explain why she had kept the paper napkin - "and I have kept that green paper napkin to wrap around the Magic Seed which drifted towards me and onto the chocolate colais, and here is the seed wrapped in here...."

She now opened the neat parcel, and let them all see the small seed with the fluffy parachute.

"AND" she said, and here she paused....

"AND" said Old Man Coniston as he saw the doors open on the small church hall - "if we are smartish we can all visit a bazaar or jumbley-wotsit and have a strawberry tea in aid ....."

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But Lady Windermere was already on her way through the small door, closely followed by Cressmere, Buttermere, and Bassy.

He laughed, and walked into the small hall and was just in time to see money changing hands. Bassy buying a postcard, with many small pictures on it showing all the interesting places at this seaside holiday place. It looked interesting.

Some of Bassy's words drifted towards him... "we can visit each and every place on this card and put a date beside the small picture and then we will remember exactly which day we visited it..."

She was addressing her words to Cressmere, but Cressmere was speaking to Lady Windermere in a very excited manner, and all because he had bought a very small dictionary for a penny and had just discovered a super word -

"D-I-Y-E-R-S-I-F-Y means...among other things... TO GIVE VARIETY TO, TO BREAK THE MONOTONY OF..."

But Lady Windermere was in the process of buying some paints, a small tin box, with some missing of course, and some well used, but luckily many which had much paint in the small pans, perhaps a good half dozen, which would do nicely for sea escapes, donkeys and daisies!

She seemed very pleased indeed, "How lucky, and all for a halfpenny!"

Buttermere remained quite unimpressed, "Hm! It's just half a box!" said Buttermere arrogantly, or so thought Cressmere, still mightily pleased with his small

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dictionary.

"I am mightily pleased with all of these!" said Buttermere who had bought a small cactus plant in a yoghurt tub or carton, some mint growing in an old cup, and a small lavender bush growing in an old ice cream carton of about the same size as the yoghurt tub.

"How much were they?" asked a very impressed Lady Windermere.

"All a penny each" he replied, knowing he had indeed been given good value for his money.

Everyone now decided to look at Gramere's small dictionary and Bessy's wonderful picture postcard.

"What a good idea, Bessy, to visit each of these places on this card. One each day, and that will see us through our holiday week quite nicely!" said Lady Windermere, pleased to hear the card cost only one penny.

Lady Windermere now proceeded to explain the merits of the half empty well used paint box. "You see, the bright reds and yellows one would usually need for flowers were I at home and painting in the Floral Acres are all used up."

They all agreed with her, yes, those colours were all used up.

"One would safely assume then that someone hereabouts has painted flowers. Then the bright greens have gone, so we would assume someone has been perhaps painting

....."

"Holly?" asked Gramere.

"Or grass?" asked Buttermere.

Lady Windermere agreed, that in fact, someone could have perhaps have painted holly or grass.

Bessy looked at the half empty paint box, and couldn't help noticing the brown colour of a hen!

"Nobody ever painted a brown hen hereabouts, because that brown hen colour hasn't been used at all, and anyway, there aren't any brown hens here to paint! Hm!" she said.

Brown hens and cactus plants were discussed, along with the use of a dictionary which could be carried in a paw without the paw becoming tired. The stalls were now emptying, and there was the sound of many happy voices discussing this bargain and that, and raffle tickets were being drawn for this item and that.

And so it was that when the excited Buttermere,

Bessy, Gramere and Lady Windermere had finished discussing their various bargains, and realised they hadn't won a raffle prize, they suddenly realised Old Man Coniston was not near them, as he was usually found to be.

"I know where he is" said someone selling tickets for something which wasn't for a raffle.

"Really?" said Lady Windermere, sounding rather hopeful.

"He bought five tickets from me for five Strawberry Toss on the lawn, and he is waiting there for you all."

And that is where they found him - sitting at a

table which had on it's table cloth 5 plates of strawberries and cream, and five cups of tea.

Old Man Coniston was sitting calmly throwing pieces of scones to Ariadne who too had found tea on the small lawn an attraction.

As the five Verdi Bears began eating strawberries, various happy conversations could be overheard by the happy pigeon, or rather Wood Pigeon, called Ariadne.

The best conversation of course being that of the Verdi Bears as soon as eating had ceased -

"And of course, all the lovely colours I need for a seascape and pebbles. yes, all I need, and haven't I been lucky...." from Lady Windermere.

Grasmere was heard to say to anyone who cared to listen.. "one new word to learn each day will help with story ends...."

Buttermere was saying.. "and I wonder what sort of experiment will make the cactus grow as tall as the ones in the films about Arizona and cowboys.."

Bessy sat quietly looking at her postcard, to where the seagulls flew silently and the sea parked.. and roses bloomed in a small half sunken garden. Oh, she just couldn't just wait for tomorrow to come... for there were so many places to visit....

And Old Man Coniston sat smiling, knowing full well he had the happiest possession or prize of all - he had his four beloved Verdi Bears, (his crew in fact, for he was still a Captain or so he had been told by Bessy) - just sounding so happy this afternoon, and as an extra bonus, the sun shining on their five Strawberry Trees!

Yes Sirree, he was always at his happiest when they were all together, especially when eating strawberries.

He was so happy himself at that moment, he threw a large strawberry he had been keeping to the side of his plate in front of Ariadne.

There! He had kept that specially for her! He was in a very good mood, not crotchety, like at home, when he kept his best strawberries safely under large nets!

Even Wood Pigeons had to share strawberries when one was on holiday!

Ariadne of course, had discovered that if one wanted to enjoy ones self, one must indeed stay close to the Verdi Bears, especially when they were having such a nice holiday!

She pecked at the berry happily, for the weather now was so much better, tee on the lawn which would have been tea in the hall had the rain not gone would not have been any fun for a wood pigeon at all!

The small lawn was still rather damp, but no one was caring because the sun was shining!

Trouble was there were now very many feet moving about on the lawn because all the bargains had gone, had been snapped up in fact, in the hall.

So Ariadne fluttered up into the air, and perched on the small tree growing in the rain water guttering!

My word, but what a view from up here, almost as good as being up a mountain!

She could look out to sea, and the dark curtain

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of storm cloud had lifted and gone, and sunlight had appeared in its place.

Yes, the weather was nice now, and children were now walking in the special pool for walking in and sailing small boats.

The sand pit was being used again for castle building.

Punch and Judy were being watched again, and the donkeys were on the green once more.

She smiled a sweet pigeonysort of smile. Oh yes, seaside holidays could be fun, that is, if the rain stayed away!

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"And if the rain stays away....." said Old Man Conlston next morning.....and that is how the Pineapple picnic came about, well, more or less.....

Now it just so happened that Bassy was looking at one of her many small pictures on her picture postcard bought the previous day at the Jubble sale.

The picture which held her attention was that of a small plantation of pine trees, which sheltered a small sunken garden. This plantation had the name THE PINEY PINETUM printed underneath it, on the card.

"PINEY PINETUM" she said aloud, as Grasmere looked at PINE words in his Dictionary.

Lady Windermere was sorting painting papers and brushes and was only half listening.

Buttermere too, was only half listening, for he was still feeling rather annoyed that some jelly fish, a stinging sort, had been beached high and dry on the beach in front of their holiday house, and this beach

being one of the three beaches, and called Right Beach, being on the right of the small town. Just happened to be the best beach of the three for looking for driftwood shaped like a boomerang.

No one dare go near a beach when stinging jelly fish were lying there glistening in the sun!

Buttermere said glumly "pity pineapples hadn't drifted on to the shore instead of those silly Portuguese wotsits! We could have picked pineapples and etum - like your card PINEFUM!"

Everyone laughed. All, that is, except Old Man Coniston, who had prepared a lesson and list of words to go with it in the event of it being a fine day and the rain staying away!

"....Ahem!" said Old Man Coniston, sounding rather important and rather pleased with himself.

Everyone now looked at Old Man Coniston, all, that is, except Lady Windermere, who was now preparing to pack her prepared papers and brushes into a paper carrier bag, one which was rather nice, and which had been had a large pheasant painted on it, and which had been bought from a fish and poultry shop one day.

"Ahem!" said Old Man Coniston as Gramsere said to Bessy, as he looked at Old Man Coniston, "those piney words only mean - PINE TREES ABOUNDING IN A PINE TREE PLANTATION, it says so in my dictionary!"

"Ahem....now as I was saying, if the rain stays away, we will study life on the sea-shore. I have prepared lists of names of plants, sea creatures, other words of interest, and lists of what one can see

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as the tide recedes..."

"Oh how boring" whispered Bessy, and Grasmere nodding in agreement with her, began looking in his dictionary once more..."

Buttermere looked at the large sheets of paper Old Man Coniston was holding...he began to read aloud..."Neptune - Poseidon - tangle-dulse-seawracks-fetch-swash-backwash-benthos-nekton-plankton-land emergence, reclamation, subsidence, sea mouse, sea nettle, sea nettles and stinging jelly fish, sea mat, sea lace, sea jelly..."

Lady Windermere began to look thoughtful as she heard the important sounding words.

Grasmere said "It would be nice to make a special study of a special something, and not sort of - DIVERSIFY..." He had of course, just found this word again in his pocket dictionary, the one bought in the church bazaar of jumble sale, for one penny!

"Good idea" said Buttermere. "perhaps today, we could study rocks..."after all, rocks hereabouts are very interesting."

"I would say pineapple rock is about the best of all," said Lady Windermere, as she sharpened a couple of pencils, "although I agree with you Buttermere, rocks hereabouts are very interesting. But pineapple is about the best of all!"

"And what is more, I rather like pineapple jam, and pineapple jelly, and pineapple chunks, and as I have all of these in the holiday larder, I vote we have a PINEAPPLE PICNIC!" she added sounding very happy.

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That then, is how the Pineapple Picnic came about, well, more or less.

Who prepared what for this famous Pineapple Picnic is of no importance. One would suppose Ariadne could have told all, having secured herself a wonderful vantage point on top of the holiday house chimney from where the three cheers and happy words escaped into the blue sky. But Ariadne was more interested in the strange jelly fish sort of creatures which were stranded on the beach, and were glistening in the warm sun.

What a strange place this sea side was, to be sure. Not like the country. My word, but she was glad she was a Wood Pigeon, and not a Sea Gull!

She could understand mushrooms, which would pop up in a field overnight, yes, that she understood. But jelly fish! No, she just couldn't understand jelly fish! Errr! Nasty things!

So too were tides! Tides just seemed to drift onto land, then drift away again, leaving all sorts of interesting things which seemed to interest sea gulls! Ariadne preferred fields, which stayed there twenty four hours a day. Stayed where they were. One could keep ones feet dry, well, most of the time.

What a noise of laughing and chattering came out of the Verdi Bear Holiday House as doors were now being closed.

Ariadne kept a close watch on Gramere, who seemed to be finding the most wonderful words in a small book. A wise one, was Gramere, the quiet one, who didn't say

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much, the Verdi Bear who could write story beginnings and middles, but didn't always get a good story end, or as he said from time to time,

"I have found an interesting word" said Grasmere who closed the little gate after him.

"Oh dear" sighed Old Man Coniston, who was now rather weary of being asked if he knew the meaning of this word or another, and if he didn't would he like Grasmere to tell him.

"TRANSHUMANCE" said Grasmere proudly.

"Do you know what that strange word means?" asked

Bessy, looking at Old Man Coniston.

Old Man Coniston began to smile, even although he seemed to be carrying most of the picnic items.

Yes, one could honestly say that Old Man Coniston was wearing a rather pleasant smile as he thought about the new word Grasmere had just found!

"TRANSHUMANCE did you say Grasmere?" he asked with a chuckle.

Grasmere looked at the small book carefully.

He read to himself "THE MOVING OF SHEEP FROM ONE PASTURAGE TO ANOTHER ACCORDING TO THE SEASON..."

He now looked at Old Man Coniston warily. This was a rather faded old yellow book, and he didn't want Old Man Coniston to look as though he didn't know very much, really he didn't. Perhaps Old Man Coniston could turn a roachety if he didn't know the meaning. Perhaps he shouldn't ask any more word meanings... well, not until the picnic was ended.

"TRANSHUMANCE" said Old Man Coniston with a smile.

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"TRANSMUNANCE means - THE MOVING OF VERDI BEARS  
FROM A HOLIDAY HOUSE TO A LEFT SIDE OF TOWN BEACH  
ACCORDING TO THE PINEAPPLE EATING SEASON BEING  
UPON US...ACCORDING TO LADY WINDERMERE..."

But Lady Windermere was now walking away from  
the holiday house gate, and she was talking all the  
while to Buttermere, and both of them, incidentally,  
very proud to be the Verdi Bears who thought about  
eating pineapples in the first instance...and  
Lady Windermere was heard to say to Buttermere...

".....and the paints in my half paint box  
luckily contain the colours I need for the seaside..."

....ochres...."

"Sounds like a good word..." said Gramme, who  
now began turning the pages, backwards, to reach the  
words beginning with the letter - O - "Ochre..."  
he said with a smile.

But only Ariadne heard him, for as Lady Windermere  
chatted happily to Buttermere about how paints were  
mixed, Bessy was dreaming of the conversation she would  
have with the Sand Lizard, for she had prepared him  
two sandwiches, one of Pineapple Jam, and the other of  
red tomatoe. She would be interested to know if  
Sand Lizards liked jam sandwiches half as well as they  
seemed to like tomatoe ones, the red ones, the soggy  
ones, which were her own favourite.

Old Man Coniston carried his much beloved cricket  
bat under his arm, nothing quite so important as a good  
cricket match if one was going to a beach...yes, cricket.  
Young Verdi Bears would have to use spades as their bats,

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young paws and wrists couldn't wield the large cricket bat he was so fond of...but in time, yes, but in time...oh, there was much to look forward to as young Verdi Bears learned how to play cricket!

No better place to learn than a beach. Not so much fielding either, as a well's truck cricket ball would only travel into a sandy bank, or hit a wall made of boulders and wood behind stump, or go into the sea!

A lazy way to play cricket, one would say, he thought to himself, but great sport, nevertheless.

Yes, this Pineapple Picnic promised to be rather special, he thought.

Yes indeed<sup>ly</sup>, Pineapple Picnics promised to rather special, well, at least, this one did!

Only hope all of this laughing and chattering didn't disturb the little Sand Lizard too much. Still, Bessy had prepared it a sandwich or two, so perhaps there was room on the beach for them all, Verdi Bear and Sand Lizard alike!

He hoped so, yes Sirree, he hoped there was room on the Left Beach for Verdi Bear and Sand Lizard alike!

And as they approached the beach, Ariadne, who was following on wing, heard Bessy say quietly to Old Men Coniston, "do you think I will see my Lizard again....will it be on the dunes today?"

And so, the Pineapple Picnic began...on that very sunny day...and in a sand dune, a little Sand Lizard awoke with a little yawn.....

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"Well, well, well!" he smiled. "visitors!"

The Sleepy little Sand Lizard yawned again.

He had been having a wonderful day so far, and had been having forty winks after breakfast.

He smiled. Seems he had overslept rather. Still, Sand Lizards had no way of telling the time, not like humans or Verdi Bears. And after all, he was free to live as he did please!

He hadn't heard anyone approaching his particular part of the beach and dunes, and began to wonder who was encroaching on his territory, not that he cared, really.

He made his way carefully to the top of the narrow grassy covered dune, and peering down carefully from between grassy stalks recognised the Verdi Bears immediately!

How wonderful! The Green Lakeland visitors! The Verdi Bears!

Now feeling very happy indeed, he sat and watched and listened, not feeling in the least bit nervous, and not caring that one shouldn't ever eavesdrop on a picnic being held by someone other than ones self, and quite ignoring the fact that one shouldn't look at either!

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"How lovely! How exciting!" We are going to have Jellyfish or tea!" said Lady Windermere, as she read the Menu for the Pineapple Picnic.

"Don't worry, Old Man Coniston," said Buttermere, who could see the alarmed expression on Old Man Coniston's face. "It's really only Pineapple jelly set in suet, and turned out to make it sort of upside down..."

"Yes," laughed Bessy, "and we have put a one piece of all kinds of fruit in to give it eyes..."

"...and we gave them orange sections to make it have a mouth..." said Crasmore, who for the moment had forgotten all about new words and Golden Eagles.

"Oh how exciting..." said Lady Windermere looking very pleased indeed.

"Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!" sighed Old Man Coniston, who didn't like fancy names for his food. "How clever!"

"There aren't any Pineapples on this beach or on this menu really" went on Buttermere, as he handed a Menu to Old Man Coniston. "We just have tinned Pineapple

in a plastic container, and five dishes and five spoons....."

"...and the pieces of Pineapple Plantation Rock you read on that Menu is just sweet shop Pineapple rock chopped up, and put into five sweet packets.." went on Bassy, who wanted Old Man Coniston to have an enjoyable picnic tea.

"...and those Pineapple Magic Carpets are just slices of white and brown bread with Pineapple Jam between.." laughed Greshmere, who was secretly hoping that a Golden Eagle might show a preference for a Golden sort of jam - and be tempted by the left overs from this picnic!

Bassy had no thoughts to spare for Golden Eagles, only for Sand Lizards, and there was no thought of just left overs for anything so special as a Sand Lizard, so as Lady Windermere now formally declared the Pineapple Picnic well and truly ready...Bassy placed her specially prepared tomato sandwich in a clump of warren grass, which she knew for sure was part of the territory the wise creature had already claimed as its own.

There was now the sound of much cheery talk and merrymaking. The sound of lemonade sippers being taken off bottles with a decided 'pop'. Paper bags were being rustled.

There was the beautiful aroma of pineapple jam! My word, but this was a wonderful picnic, thought the Sand Lizard, who basked in the sun.

What a wonderful day this was, to be sure!

CRICKET ON THE BEACH

Cricket on the BEACH
Is a very fine sport!
Not like Cricket on the GREEN
Which is an entirely different sort!

For Cricket on the BEACH
You have a very special Bat,
Which is the spade for digging sandcastles!
Now, what do you think of that!

The WICKET is between two BOWLERS
Covered with LIMPETS and BARNACLES Bold!
We abandon game when the tide comes in,
And the PITCH is choppy and cold!

MERMAIDS watch us playing Cricket on the Beach,
The SEAGULLS view our sport -
Which is NOT like cricket on the GREEN -
But is an entirely DIFFERENT sort!

Cricket on the beach is best played when the tide is coming in, the field becoming smaller for the fielding. game, of course, to be abandoned when the tide was completely in, and the pitch covered.

Cricket on the green can be quite boring of course, as everyone knows, but when played on a beach, can be quite enjoyable.

The fielder at the sand dunes was the lucky one - and each Verdi Bear of course had a spell of fielding here after ^{bowling} batting and being 'out' and here one was allowed refreshments by way of clean drinking water out of Lady Windermere's painting water bottle, to be drunk out of a paper cup of course!

Fielding the sea was easy, because a ball was retrieved by a yellow fishing net on a thin bamboo cane, which had been bought just for this very purpose from a small shop on the way to the beach, which had also sold the Verdi Bears a small size cricket bat, nice and new, as a special treat.

'FIZZING' the sea called for that Verdi Bear on duty

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at the water's edge to carry this net on a stick - and when Old Man Coniston called "WET everyone else had a rest until who was on the duty called fielding the Sea retrieved the cricket ball.....!"

Cricket was played against a long wooden sort of fence or wall, which stretched from the top of the beach down into the water almost in a long line, and seemed to be made of wooden railway sleepers, the sort which holds up the railway lines from the ground.

One side of the long wooden wall had pebbles heaped against it, brought in by the tide, and left there, in a sort of heaped drift.

The other side had sand, and pools of water in the sand here and there, so that the wicket was a length of this wooden wall which stretched almost from the narrow grass right down into the sea, the length between a limpet encrusted rock on the right of the chalked wicket, and on this rock, incidentally, was Lady Windermere's painting hat, and on the left of the chalked wicket was a very large boulder, which had a clump of damp seaweed on it.

Cricket, was in fact, played between a limpet encrusted rock and painting hat and a boulder covered with seaweed.

Missing the cricket ball meant it hit the fence and fell into a pool which was between this famous rock and boulder.....that was 'OUT'

Anyone sending the ball over the fence had to lay down the bat and collect it himself or herself!

So as cricket commenced, it was watched by the

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lizard, for lizards, of course, as everyone knows, cannot play cricket...

From the top of the sand dune, near the picnic spot, the lizard watched silently...and the first Verdi Bear to field the Dunes was Bassy...while the other four Verdi Bears played cricket on the beach.

So nice to see Verdi Bears enjoying themselves, he thought to himself. Poor Verdi Bears didn't have a sea side to live beside, just lakes and hills.

Such a shame! No wonder they were trying to have a splendid holiday!

Such fun it sounded, cricket on the beach, and is seemed it was very easy. But watching cricket made one extremely hungry...so he scampered over to where the food basket was, in the centre of a clump of marram grass.

My word, but he was hungry, and here was a tomato sandwich. Someone had left it on the sand for him, he was sure, all for himself.

He liked the... Verdi Bears, and he liked watching a good cricket match too, and this one promised to be an interesting one, this one being played by the Verdi Bears.

He would soon understand the Verdi Bear cricket rules...he would watch...and listen... and it didn't take long before this eavesdropping, overhearing overlooking lizard to understand cricket on the beach!

There was now a call of 'OUT' and there was now a change of fielder of the Dunes... Lady Windermere... who had just been bowling!

Lady Windermere sat and painted as she fielded the dunes!

She worked quickly on more than one sheet of paper at a time - as she tried to put a dab on a paper to represent a Verdi Bear at the wicket - then a dab of paint on a paper to represent a lizard eating a tomato sandwich - then a spot or two of paint to represent a seagull eating a crust!

She moved a paintbrush quickly from one piece of paper to the other...no need to be too particular... just a hint of shape and then a touch of colour - for colours changed quickly even in daytime - and as the objects being painted moved!

She had brought several saucers with her, so that she could have colour already as a 'wash', which helped speed up her painting, for there wasn't really much time to ones self when one was playing cricket.

"NEXT!" called Old Man Coniston, as he now proceeded to retrieve the cricket ball from the sea by way of the yellow fishing net on the thin bamboo cane, which had been bought just for this very purpose from a small shop that very afternoon....

As usual, everyone else had a rest until the cricket ball had been rescued from the sea....and now the three young Verdi Beers stood near Lady Windermere and watched her painting.

"these saucers have been jolly useful" said lady

Windermere, who had produced a strange greeny coloured wash in a saucer by way of mixing a scrap of yellow with a scrap of blue...and having found this useful for sketching and painting in the marram grass...

"I caught a shrimp when I was fielding the See" said Bassy, as she watched another sheet of painting paper become tinted with a colour which looked rather like the colour of the sand herabouts or thereabouts....

"How nice" said Lady Windermere...as Grasmere sighed....

"I wish I could paint a Golden Eagle" he said wistfully....as Buttermere sighed....

"I wish I could make a boomerang" he said, as the little lizard said quietly....."Do Verdi Bears know how lucky they are?"...but nobody heard him - for in truth - his voice, like his tears, was very, very small, and went completely un-noticed.

Buttermere threw a piece of driftwood high into the air, hoping it would zoom away, but it dropped back down onto the shingle....as Bassy thought for a moment or two on the subject of boomerangs.

"You will never-never find a boomerang on the beach or in the sky Buttermere," she said with a hint of authority. "Because - because - absolutely everyone knows a boomerang turns a round and goes back and the boomerangs will all be back in Australia.... even boomerangs floating on the sea MUST go back, must do the same - for after all - boomerangs are all the same shape...."

It was now Lady Windermere's turn to bat!
Buttermere now to take charge of fielding the
Dunes!

Lady Windermere was in good form! She knew
it as soon as she stood at the wicket and faced
the bowler!

It became evident to everyone else that afternoon
that Lady Windermere was indeed in good form as she
hit out at the first ball of the first over....and
it went for six....along the beach...behind the
bowler!

Not that everyone else was watching, of course.
Buttermere wasn't watching, he was too busy
reading.....a fact which hadn't gone completely
un-noticed by Old Man Coniston, who wasn't any too
pleased. Blacking wasn't allowed, especially when
six runs had been made at the start of an innings!

The little lizard wasn't watching now, for he
had some investigating, or rather, pre-viewing, to
do, for hadn't he heard just a few minutes ago that
he had been painted by Lady Windermere?

This he must see - his first ever portrait!

Buttermere wouldn't mind, he was sure, if he
scampered across to where the paintings were spread
out in the sun to dry....first of all...he had to
step through a sort of pool of water...a saucer it
was called....and then he walked over the various paintings!

It was so nice to be fielding the news (I thought Buttermere had made his way carefully towards the picnic area... and one had to take some extra of pad and pen... and spread way carefully here, for Lady Windermere had spread several sheets of painting paper on which he had painted, to dry in the warm sun,

One of course could also read a book here in the dunes while waiting to field if necessary, always supposing one had brought a book along, of course, and of course, he had!

Buttermere looked at his Australia book. My word, but this had been a grand Christmas present last Christmas, and no mistake!

But it hadn't been a Christmas present, not really, more a thank you for taking me to the pantomime sort of present.....

Uncle Apple had bought it for him and had written his name BUTTERMERE and the date in it, with a few words thanking him for allowing the giver of the present - UNCLE APPLE - to accompany him on that very special day.

The name, at Buttermere's special request, had been written big and large and bold, so that everyone knew for certain sure it belonged to BUTTERMERE.

This book, he couldn't help thinking, as he read various very special paragraphs, had already travelled many miles... for he had taken this book up a hilly sort of mountain one day, too.

Not that he had had a lot of spare time to read his book that day, up the hilly sort of mountain, of course,

for on that day there had been much to do, for instance, eating cake and watching Lady Windermere paint a mountain with a man climbing up it, and there had been mists and poetry being read aloud through the mists.....would there be descending mists in Australia, he wondered?

As he read his Australian book, he came upon the chapter dealing with a Simpson Desert, and camels? Could there be camels? In Australia? There weren't any herabouts, so was it all lies?

"Well done!" he heard Lady Windermere say, as someone dropped a catch!

Cricket was a bit of a bore, really, he couldn't help thinking, as he picked up a piece of driftwood which was lying near..this would make a good throwing stick....not a boomerang exactly..but a throwing stick....and as he daydreamed for all he was worth about Australia.....he could hear pounding feet coming towards him.....camels?

"Come on - stop your daydreaming.....you're in next to bowl....and you haven't made a very good job of fielding here.....Lady Windermere has made six runs already, and you haven't made any attempt to field...."

Oh dear, he hadn't been thinking about cricket at all.....and there were green paws standing before him, and he was supposed to be fielding the dunes.. not reading about far away places....

More camels...or rather more Verdi Bears, or at least, one Verdi Bear, now stood before him...."Come and bowl Lady Windermere out if you can, for the tide

is coming in fast, and we won't have time to have our Pineapple Sandcastle Building Competition if someone doesn't bowl Lady Windermere out rather quickly now.....she seems to have been batting for ages and ages..... "

Standing in front of him now was Bessy, who looked rather sad. Gremmere, who was standing beside her looked sad, too.

Buttermere laughed. "It isn't my turn to bowl yet, and even if it was, Lady Windermere will make lots of runs more than she has already, for it is very easy to play cricket with me as bowler, for the truth is, I am a very bad bowler...."

Sadly, Gremmere had to agree with him, and as he now turned away and began walking towards the Cricket area, away from the dunes...he now agreed with Bessy, who was saying...."hens are lucky, they don't have to play cricket...."

And as Gremmere bowled, and Lady Windermere batted on, Bessy told the watching seagulls, and the mermaids who were watching, but from somewhere from which they couldn't be seen"We could be looking out to sea and counting sea monsters as big as horses....and talk to mermaids on rocks....instead of playing cricket.. "

Lady Windermere batted on and on....and Buttermere collected throwing sticks, the throwing of which would improve his boomerang throwing skills....and the sand lizard continued his viewing of the paintings.....

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The Sand Lizard had left his footprints as he had wandered across the spread out paintings - for he had stepped into saucers of coloured water then across the paint box - then over paper - and so on and so forth - until - he saw the word LIZARD written on a sheet of painting paper!

This had taken some searching for! Lady Windermere had been in good form as she had painted, and there were many sheets of painting paper!

But here it was, his very own portrait!

The Sand Lizard studied the painting of himself, for if he was on it, well, he jolly well wanted to see what he looked like - for after all - Sand Lizards hadn't mirrors to look in...and if one tried to look at ones reflection in a rock pool after the tide receded...the seagulls would laugh at him and laugh at him and screech at him... "how vain you are - how vain you are"...Which indeed was not the truth, for after all, one really did want to know what one looked like, didn't one...

Some of the creatures in the pools were just as bad...hermit crabs...they laughed at him...as did the small green crabs...and if one went for a walk into Three Beaches(himself, he meant, not a little green crab!).

As he had thought just before, if he went for a walk into Three Beaches, the shop windows were too high for a small sand lizard like himself to preen himself in!

He studied his portrait with great interest.

Mmmm! He preened himself! My, did he look like that?

My word, but he was handsome. He had forgotten just how handsome he was. No one ever told him for it was lonely being a Sand Lizard. But now he knew he was good looking, of that he was now quite sure!

What a lovely day he was having, to be sure, and as Buttermere began throwing sticks in all directions, he looked about him, just to add up the number of things which made him happy to-day....

There was a small pool of water, all to himself, in which Lady Windermere had been washing her paint brushes....clean water now, as she had changed the water prior to bathing at the wicket....and it was in a deep saucer...not that Sand Lizards needed pools of course, but it was nice to walk through and wash the sand from ones feet...from time to time....

Saucers were wonderful objects, and no mistake.

Another saucer lying nearby had some dirty greeny water in it, this one was useful when one wanted to leave ones footprints on painting paper...as he had done earlier. That had been fun..

So he scampered across once more, dipped his feet in it...and scampered across the painting which was nearest...and to his delight, he once more left his

footprints!

What fun -- he could leave footprints if he stepped into his pool of dirty painting water or the greeny pool, and scampered across various sheets of paintings...and what was even more fun... he could run at the same time the cricketer was making runs.... Lady Windermere....for she was making many runs...because no one had yet bowled her out!

Up and up went another make-believe boomerang, which was no more than a piece of gnarled well washed driftwood...and on and on Lady Windermere ran to make another run...and Old Man Coniston removed his monocle in order to polish it...and think over his cricketing problems!

Grasmere was a bad cricketer, or at least, he was to-day, for his mind was too much on Golden Eagles.

Bessy was a bad cricketer, or at least, she was to-day, for her mind was too much on tomato sandwiches and Sand Lizards, not to mention Mermaids, and she was apt to make runs when she shouldn't be thinking of making runs, and her bowling was dreadful.

Of course, there were no hard and fast rules for the three young Verdi Bears, when it came to cricket... and Lady Windermere who had gladly fielded the dunes while painting was now playing cricket as though she really meant it!

My word, but these runs would have to be stopped. One hundred, and still not out!

It was while Old Man Coniston was replacing his monocle, prior to taking the ball for a spell of bowling.

that he noticed the throwing stick which was a pretend boomerang rise into the air, and fall again in the sand dunes...he smiled...It was Buttermere practising for the day he actually had a real for sure honest to goodness boomerang!

Poor Buttermere!

But just a moment! Boomerangs - Australia - and cricket - and bowlers - Australian Bowlers!

There was now a look of hope on Old Man Coniston's face as he marched off smartly now in the direction of the dunes...and Buttermere!

As Lady Windermere watched him march away, she smiled. Going off to bring on a replacement bowler, no doubt, and what a mistake it would be, for it was very easy to notch up a few more runs if he did, for it was very easy to bat against Buttermere's bowling, or it used to be, for in truth he was a very bad bowler!

She smiled, as she stood at the wicket, waiting for a bowler to appear, and Crasmore took the opportunity of a good stare at the sky, looking for Golden Eagles, and Bessy tried to catch a shrimp in the net!

"I say - I say - er Buttermere" said Old Man Coniston, as he approached the picnic eating area, and Buttermere,

The Lizard heard the interesting words, no one else did, that is apart from Buttermere...words such as... "throwing the ball like a boomerang...a flick of the wrist...googly...daisy cutter...under arm...over arm...run up..."

And as Old Man Coniston, and Buttermere, walked

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confidently towards the cricket pitch, Grassmere put away his binoculars, and Bessy blinked away a salty tear, not of course enjoying this cricket game very much at all this particular afternoon...and paid attention to Old Man Coniston, who told them all to pay attention....

Saweed, shells, and pebbles, were all cleared away, so that Buttermere could make a good run up - and he now prepared to do so - watched very carefully by Old Man Coniston, who was wearing his monocle so that he might see something interesting!

As Buttermere began his run up, before delivering a good cricket ball,...Lady Windermere just saw a movement of something near her damp paintings...was it a bird? Was it a bird hopping, or was it a lizard?

And as she hesitated for that one vital second, she was bowled out! "Out" yelled Bessy happily.

Clean bowled, first ball of the first over by Buttermere. Oh how marvellous, thought Old Man Coniston.

"Well done!" said Old Man Coniston.

"Well done!" said Grassmere.

"You are clever" said both Lady Windermere and Bessy.

Buttermere, pleased now at his new found skills, tried hard not to become too proud, and instead of smiling proudly, instead, said quite modestly. "I think it is because of practising throwing a stick as I pretend it is a boomerang. I suppose that is why Australians are all so clever at playing cricket, because they all throw boomerangs!"

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"You are very probably right!" said Old Man Coniston with a chuckle, as he walked to the wicket at long last.....Old Man Coniston, of course being last to bat, being of course the maker of the rules and the keeper of the scores,...and the umpire...for Cricket on the Beach!

Yes, Old Man Coniston had worked very hard that afternoon at keeping scores, keeping his temper, and being umpire. Now, the time he liked best, the time to stand at the wicket with his cricket bat...only today, he had found a good bowler!

"Out!" yelled Bessy happily.

Clean bowled, first ball of the over, by Buttermere. "Well done" said Old Man Coniston, as he threw the cricket ball back to Buttermere.

Another good run up, a flick of the wrist, and "Out!" yelled Bessy happily.

"You are clever" laughed Lady Windermere, as the cricket ball was returned to Buttermere yet again.

Old Man Coniston polished his monocle, replaced it, and once more faced the bowler bravely.

Another good run up, and wocah!

"Out!" yelled Bessy happily. "And this makes the third time!"

But before there could be a fourth fifth and sixth time, the tide came over the pitch in a rush!

"Thank goodness for that!" said Bessy happily, as the water swirled around her, "the tide has come in, and we can't play cricket any more this afternoon!"

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During your visitation, and during your stay in the Federal House, you were very friendly and helpful. You were very kind and generous in your treatment of me. You were very kind and generous in your treatment of me. You were very kind and generous in your treatment of me.

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*****oldenrod to exit
the car for the car's door.

He looked at the car and said, "It looks like
the car is not there."

"It looks like the car is not there."

He looked at the car and said, "It looks like
the car is not there."

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He looked at the car and said, "It looks like
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his little sister tears and moved higher on the
 bench in order to listen and observe this
 little sister's conversation. For after a while
 it was a very day. People's conversations were
 full of laughter. No one was serious. No one
 was angry. No one was sad. No one was
 surprised to see, especially when a friend had
 had his portrait painted that very day.

Sandcastle building has to be taken quite seriously if one is to try to win a prize, especially if one has to build a sandcastle which looks like a fine old

castle. It doesn't seem to come.

"In fact the spiders Old Man Constant

"see" the ladder and all around her as she goes into the sand with her small spider. The spider is not very happy but she looks like she is for the best sandcastle looking like

a diamond in that lady's window. All right what ever she says about, and who ever wins can also choose the next day's place to visit. She will point the painting who ever wins chooses on the visit to where she ever wins chooses to visit. "I want on Grandpa as he too attempted sandcastle building on the soft sand.

"If I win, I will specially request red tomatoes sandwiches and lemonade and milk." said Buttercup as he looked around for some damp firm sand on which and with which to build his sandcastle. "and gingerbread!"

Old Man Coniston wasn't really bothering to think about picnic food, he was too busy thinking about his sandcastle, which he hadn't yet started to build.

Sandcastle building had to be taken quite seriously if one was trying to win the prize, and Buttermore, realising now that Old Man Coniston seemed to be in a thoughtful frame of mind, stood near to him, just in case Old Man Coniston might just know more about sandcastle building than one would have supposed.

After all, Bessy and Orsmore, who were digging on soft dry sand, weren't really making much progress, really.

Old Man Coniston hadn't yet started to dig, instead, he was looking at his wrist watch, and keeping a close watch on the cricket pitch, which strangely enough, seemed to be reappearing as the tide seemed to be leaving the area!

He wondered what Old Man Coniston could be thinking, hopefully, not more cricket....

Old Man Coniston was feeling extremely happy at this moment in time...He would be the first to admit it was a long time since he had built a sandcastle of any description, let alone a pineapple shaped one. Be he could build a good sandcastle, yes he could, he knew that much.

He couldn't paint poppies in cornfields, but he could make a good sandcastle!

My word, but he was loving this holiday at the sea-side!

What was more, in about three minutes the part of the beach best suited to making sandcastles would appear as the once full tide receded inch by inch second by second!

Yes Sirree, damp sand was what one needed to make sandcastles.....and he watched the cricket pitch slowly appear, nice and damp, newly washed, just right for making sandcastles....

"We aren't going to play cricket again are we?" asked Bessy, sounding rather worried.

But she need never have worried, for as the other Verdi Bears watched Old Man Coniston, they saw him mark out a circle on the sand, then lift his spade, and begin throwing spadeful of damp sand into the centre of the circle.

"Oh dear" laughed the Sand Lizard, who knew sandcastles came with visitors to the beach, and went with the tide, day after day.

"What a waste of time! Really!" he couldn't help saying to himself.

Still, cricket was a waste of time and energy too. There was a imply no understanding Verdi Bears of human beings either!

It soon became quite clear to the watching Sand Lizard, and Lady Windermere who also sat and watched the sandcastles being built with great interest, that Old Man Coniston would be the winner.

Old Man Coniston's Pinceapple Sandcastle was now

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like a small hill, at least, it looked like a small hill to the small Sand Lizard!

But within a second or two, the small Sand Lizard would have declared the small hill was well on its way to becoming as large as a mountain, for Buttermere was now landing a paw!

Now this looked most interesting, for both Old Man Coniston and Buttermere had stopped digging, and were discussing decorating the sandcastle.

Old Man Coniston picked up a piece of driftwood which lay nearby, and began to decorate the large sandcastle... now this looked interesting... for Old Man Coniston was making shapes on this would be pineapple by pressing onto the wet sand something which looked like a piece of boomerang... and that was interesting, for the Sand Lizard had never seen anything which even remotely resembled a boomerang being washed onto his beach.... my word!

"No, of course not, it isn't a boomerang" laughed Old Man Coniston, "Just simply a piece of wood, driftwood, which makes a pattern on the damp sand, come around and watch me."

Buttermere walked around from his side of the sandcastle, and stood watching.

"I say, that is rather clever of you!" said an admiring Buttermere. "Can I help?" he asked hopefully, holding out a paw.

Old Man Coniston gave him the piece of wood, glad of another offer of help from Buttermere.

"And for your help, you can keep that piece of wood,

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It is a sort of half a boomerang already, the half in the middle of a boomerang.." he said, as he now stood and watched Butternere begin to make the sandcastle more like a pineapple, like an extremely large pineapple, by the second.

This piece of wood, which had drifted in with the tide, when held upside down, left a Y mark on the side of the hill which was looking more like a pineapple by the second.

Grammere and Bassy stood watching.

"Ha" said Bassy. "I have lost the prize already and so have you Grammere!"

"Oh, I am sorry about that" said Grammere. "For if I had won, I would have asked to have a look at the harbour, and grapefruit a quash and cheesy craps on the menu...."

"I would have asked for a look at the mackerel in the harbour" said Butternere, "and who knows, perhaps a boomerang would be floating in the harbour..."

"I would have asked to visit the harbour too," said Bassy. "I want to speak to a mermaid or a whale, and there aren't any mermaids of whales whereabouts on the beach, I suppose the jelly fish will have scared them away, and they might be in the harbour..."

"I suppose" said Old Man Coniston, as he polished his monocle, and smiled. "I suppose you all know how keen I am to visit the harbour myself....."

Three cheers now rang out around the pineapple sandcastle... much to the amazement of the tiny sand lizard who now scampered away and hid himself behind a clump of marram grass... and watched the Verdi Bears walk away in the direction of the harbour....

As the Verdi Bears approached the harbour, Bassy could be heard to say..."and I once wished, please can we have a Harbour Day with ships and sand and a shrimp and not another day with trees and flowers, soon please, before Old Man Coniston becomes an old fogey, and all the sea shells turn into fossils, and are put to bed in stone... and here we are! At a HARBOUR!

The Verdi Bears locked down into the harbour, from behind the safety of a large thick chain which was a long its sides...

The mackerel were large and dark, and they swam silently around the ships..ships which were rusty..or so it seemed...."What a funny place this is..." said Bassy...who went on to say....

"Did God make mackerel?" asked Bassy, as she looked down into the harbour from behind the safety of a very large chain rail, to where mackerel swam.

"Course he did" said Buttermere.

"He didn't give them a very nice place to live in!" she said, looking down at the floating scraps of wood, orange skins, and old paper.

She looked at the small picture of the harbour on the picture postcard.

"The post card makes the harbour water look blue!" she said, full of rightful indignation. "Hm!"

Did picture postcards tell lies? She studied the picture postcard carefully, particularly the view of the harbour. On her postcard, the water in the harbour looked blue, but for real, it looked a dark greeny bluey strange colour, so that much was a lie.

The sky as shown on her picture postcard was a bright bonny blue, with seagulls soaring high with outstretched wings, and the sun shone.

She looked up into the bright blue sky, oh thank

goodness, that wasn't another lie.

She looked again into the bright blue sky, and yes, for certain sure the seagulls soared high with outstretched wings. They were very noisy too, which was probably to tell her that they were indeed in residence at the small harbour with its many small buildings on the edges, well nearly on the edges.

So the seagulls weren't a lie on a postcard. And of course, the sun did indeed shine in the sky above the harbour today, for real, and so that wasn't another lie.

"Lots of things on the postcard aren't lies," she said, sounding rather pleased at last. "Probably one lie about the blue sea water isn't really too bad after all" she concluded.

"You are so right" added Lady Windermere. "After all Bessy, if the water on your postcard hadn't been that beautiful blue, it would have made the harbour look rather dull, and you might not have bought it. That is what an artist can do when something isn't just the right colour, that is called ***" she said as she searched for her sketch book.

She began sketching a small ship now, very quickly indeed.

"That is called Artistic license. The Artist can make changes..."

The other Verdi Bessy now looked closely at the clever sketch, which was being made with a dark grayish black leaded pencil.

And as Bessy watched Lady Windermere use her Artistic

Licence, and transform a rusty old ship in a harbour, into a grey ship in a daker grey harbour, making it look more like a rusty red squirrel which had turned into a grey squirrel, the colour of a Grey Wolf... on paper only of course... she couldn't help remarking... "I wouldn't like to be a mackerel - they only get to eat the orange peel!"

"I don't know so much!" observed an observant Grasmere, who had been looking at the rusty ship through binoculars, just to make sure a Golden Eagle hadn't been overlooked.

He hadn't needed to use binoculars of course, the small rusty ship just being within a pebbles throw from where they were standing. In fact, there was a small gangplank in position between the harbour side and the ship, and on this, seagulls were pecking, for there seemed to be crusts to fight over, even on a gangplank in a harbour!

"The bread seems to be coming from there, and someone is dropping it out of that round window onto the hovering mackerel below..." observed Buttermere, "someone is feeding them."

Sure enough, if one looked carefully through a small sort of round window, which was half open, a pair of hands seemed to be using a rolling pin, and from time to time, pieces of either pastry or bread dough were thrown out...!

The dark mackerel stayed close to the ship. They seemed to glide like sharks, or so thought Grasmere.

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They were graceful, and silent, and thought Bassy, not like the noisy seagulls, who would swoop and catch some of the scraps even before they reached the sea water.

"Leaves and fishes" said Lady Windermere, with a laugh.

"That's interesting" said Bassy. "A fish will say hello if you throw bread into the water!"

Down into the water fell more bread, and up came a mackerel mouth. But Bassy had other things to discover, for instance, "Why do metal ships float?" she asked.

"I don't think Verdi Bears need to know about things like that" said the ever wise Grasmere, as he watched Lady Windermere sketching a man mending nets. But Bassy had other comments to make, for instance, "Rust is such a lovely colour, it is the colour of leaves, and,...." but it was time to go, for there was still much to see.

Rusting chains, lying coiled, but luckily, daisies were growing around them, so even if Lady Windermere sketched these, there would be daisies to complete the picture.

"It is very exciting, being at the sea side!" said Buttermere, convinced that ships cooks too had fad lures. Lucky ships cooks! Seagulls and mackerel would eat their cockery failures! His had to lie for all to see on the compost heap, where on occasions, even hungry birds would refuse even the merest crumb!

"People who work on ships must be clever!" he

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said admiringly. "Lucky people too, for perhaps they may sail to Australia even, and perhaps be able to buy themselves a boomerang."

Perhaps he should save his money, but it was difficult to save money when one was on a holiday. For the Verdi Bears were now on their way to a small gift shop....

There were no department stores at this holiday town called Three Beaches, just a few small shops, but they were all interesting.

For instance, there was a shop which sold fish, lobsters, and crabs, and large fish.

There were large nets draped on the walls, and one could buy large shells to place on one's ear, and one could listen to the sea.

Oh dear, if he bought one, it would take pennies he wanted to save for Australia...but he did so want to hear the sea.

Luckily, so too did Lady Windermere, so she bought the shell, and so he didn't spend his money.

Sams with the brass lizard. Lady Windermere thought it would look rather nice on the brass fender at home, so she bought this.

Lady Windermere then decided all five of them should hear the sea when they wanted, so she bought four more shells.

As they left the gift shop, which seemed to sell fish, or was it just a fish sort of shop which sold sea side decorations...Buttermere couldn't quite make out, he couldn't help noticing a long fish in

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a long soft straw basket, and the fish had a ticket like a raffle ticket on it's bright skin.

"Did someone win this in a raffle" whispered Butternore, as he walked past it.

"It arrived just a few minutes ago, handed in by someone who brought it on a bus journey. In from the country, a river fish...." said Crammore.

But Butternore didn't seem to listen to the reply from Crammore, for he was listening to the sea from somewhere inside his sea shell.

The wonderful sea, which went all the way to Australia.

And he still had his money in his paw.

It had been a nice day, truly it had, and it still had some hours to go before it reached bed-time!

My word, but this sea side holiday was fun!

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"Man in the Moon...did you know mackerel heresbouts don't have a very nice place to swim in?" she asked, later that evening, at bed time.

"No, I must admit I know very little about mackerel" said the Man in the Moon.

"Well," began Bessy, "the mackerel heresbouts live in the harbour amid the ~~xx~~ rusty ships and the greyish ones, and eat orange peel and crumbs and crumbs dropped from ships."

"Interesting, how very interesting" said the Man in the Moon with a chuckle.

"I don't like sea-sidey colours all that much either" she said, not sounding pleased at thinking about sea-sidey colours.

"Why?" asked the Man in the Moon.

"Well, for instance, ships in harbours aren't nicely coloured at all, not like bluebells in a field, and forget-me-nots in the hedges."

"How awful" laughed The Man in the Moon.

"But artist people can change colours, they are allowed to, did you know that? Because, Man in the Moon, did you know a ship doesn't need to look like a grey wolf if one is a painting sort of artist, for if one is clever, it can be made to look like a red rusty squirrel, or an autumn leaf!"

"Whummm!" said an impressed Man in the Moon.

"Lady Windermere declares that a ship already coloured a rusty colour doesn't have to be depicted on paper as such, for one can then turn the rusty red squirrel coloured ship into the grey wolf colour, for one can do exactly as one pleases, when one is a painting sort of artist!"

"It must be wonderful to be an artist of the painting sort" sighed The Man in the Moon wistfully.

"There are no Golden Eagles hereabouts, but we can admire the seagulls," said Bassy with a yawn.

"Very true" said The Man in the Moon.

"Of course, seagulls can't sing, they can only squawk and shriek, and that's why I often wish this week of holiday days was over, for you see, I seem to need a blackbird singing all over the place and around me." she said.

"I like to hear the blackbird sing too" said the Man in the Moon, sounding as though he meant it.

"Of course, we bought a large sea shells today, in a small shop, and if one holds it to ones ear, one can hear the sea, but there weren't any shells with the sound of a blackbird, or I would have bought it. We bought a small brass lizard too, and when we get home to our village, we shall let the brass lizard lie on the brass fender near the fire, where we can see it every day, warning itself near the toasting fork..."

But she was tired now, and a quick good night was whispered to The Man in the Moon, and once she

was in bed, she went quickly to sleep, and probably thought of the blackbirds in her sleep, for she smiled as she slept.

Roses in a Sunken Garden

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Roses in a Sunken Garden

Are calm, unruffled,

The breeze cannot harm them.

Over the top of a Sunken Garden -

Breezes float,

Leaving leaves clinging

On stems slender.

Leaving rose blooming

Just a while longer.

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The roses in the Sunken Rose Garden were calm, unruffled.

The sea breezes hadn't harmed them, for one would suppose the sea breezes would float over the top of the sunken rose garden.

Or so one would suppose, thought Old Man Coniston, as he walked around the edges of the rose garden, pausing now and again to make a note or two as he read the little name tags on the wooden stakes which were at the side of each rose bush.

Rose leaves clinging on the slender stems of the beautiful rose blooms.

The perfume was just wonderful too, just wonderful.

But the young Verdi Bears weren't at all impressed with the roses at all. In fact, Buttermore and Crasmore said they would rather explore the small clump or group of pine trees nearby... The Piney Pinetum it was called, according to Bessy... who had a small picture of it on her card of seaside views. In fact, the Piney Pinetum was at one end of the sunken rose garden, on a raised bank, and part of the protection plan for these superb roses!

Grahamere and Buttermere having walked around the outside of the group of trees now ventured into the middle, and once in the middle, set with their backs to a tree and looked around them.

It was warm in the small plantation - not really a plantation - just a group of about thirty pine trees, which were to give shelter from sea breezes, on cold days probably.

Grahamere wrote lines of words, such as those just written by me, in a small note book. Buttermere couldn't be bothered to make notes, instead, he looked above his head...and as he looked up he could see the clouds passing overhead in what Bassy would have said was a bluebell coloured sky.

He could see a pigeon looking down at him.

It was quiet, and darkish too, <sup>in this plantation</sup> and if one looked to ones left one could see the sea. As he looked now all around where his feet paws were resting, he could see millions and millions of pine needles, all brown and dry.

He could also see there were millions, well,

perhaps dozens of pine cones, so he began collecting these now for Lady Windermere, who liked to paint these

for Christmas...where was Lady Windermere...he looked to his right...and he could see Lady Windermere,

painting a picture of a donkey...a donkey which was tethered to a sort of bench where Bassy was feeding it biscuits...so that it stood still in order that it could be painted accurately and not a lightning sketch...Bassy, however, seemed to be asking questions as she fed it..

Luckily, Old Man Coniston was near enough to answer the questions which Buttermere and Grasmere couldn't hear..

"Why are roses in sunken gardens?" asked Bessy.

Lady Windermere paused just for a moment, before painting just one little part of the painting which needed just a touch of the paintbrush and no more... would Old Man Coniston answer Bessy's questions and just allow her to put the finishing touches to this painting which was in fact part of the prize for the West Sandesdale looking like a pineapple... and of course, Old Man Coniston began trying to find answers to Bessy's questions.

"Roses, Bessy, are in sunken gardens at the sea-side because sunken gardens shelter them from salty sea breezes," said Old Man Coniston, sounding not in the least crotchety.

Lady Windermere smiled as she worked. Bessy sounded as though she had more questions...

"Can we have a sunken garden... can we sink a garden... when we finish our holiday and return home please?" asked Bessy, sounding extremely hopeful.

"Ahem," said Old Man Coniston, pausing now to polish his monocle.

"If we did just that, Bessy, sink a garden such as this... it would surely just become a muddy pond..." he replied, sounding now just a little crotchety, thought Lady Windermere.

"Or even a lake!" giggled Bessy. "We seem to have a lot of lakes at home already!"

Oh dear, thought Lady Windermere, who could now see a question forming in Bessy's honny blue eyes.....

"Old Man Coniston..." said Bessy, as she watched Lady Windermere untie the rope which had held the donkey's rein loosely to the side of the bench whilst the painting had been done.....

"Yes Bessy" said Old Man Coniston, sounding rather as though he didn't want to be asked any more questions.

"What is the difference between a muddy pond and a lake....." asked Bessy...

But as Bessy and Old Man Coniston now led the donkey up a small green grassy bank, and away to the green to return her to the donkey owner...Old Man Coniston's replies couldn't be heard by Lady Windermere.

Parts of other questions floated over the top of the sunken rose garden, and she could just hear some of Bessy's words.....such as "plant roses in an empty rock pool...see the sunken rose garden becomes a boasting lake.....surely a mistake, wouldn't it be... can we see a rock pool....."

Oh what a good idea, a rock pool, thought Lady Windermere, as she now began tidying up the bench which had on it a cup of water for painting purposes...and all manner of this and that.

In fact, painting in this garden had reminded her of being at home, in her own garden, and although it was nice being at home, Lady Windermere was the first to admit that one needed to change ones environment when

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one had an interest in painting.

Colours interested her. Especially the colour green - her own colour - and the colour of all Verdi Bears. Green yogurt interested her too, green yogurt had to be eaten once each day when one was a Verdi Bear, even at the sea side.

Which reminded her, there hadn't been green yogurt at breakfast....she must see to it as soon as she cleared away all her painting etceteras!

There was a nice fresh vegetable shop, next to the rock and sweet shop, which, if her memory served her correctly, sold small boxes of paints!

She needed a green colour for the grass around the donkey's feet...Mabel...that was the name of the Donkey. Mabel. A pretty name. Mable or Mabel? She wasn't too sure which way to spell it.

The names of human beings were quite difficult to remember, and never more so if used for a donkey....pity they hadn't called the donkey a sensible name.. perhaps a Verdi Bear sort of name, a name taken from one of the lakes.

Yes, Bessy was so right, there were quite a lot of lakes in the Lake District, when one thought about it...and what was the difference between a Lake and a Muddy Pond? That had been the question Bessy had asked. Little wonder Old Man Coniston sounded just a little crotchety...poor Old Man Coniston.

And the bench was empty now, apart from the now just about empty paint box which had been bought for a half penny!

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But there, she had been lucky to find even the smallest scrap of paint in a discarded paint box, for one never really discarded ones paint box, not really.

She would just have to find another box of paints, even a very small box of paints, for she needed to paint the brighter sea side colours now... one should enjoy the sea side on a holiday, and this painting of the donkey, all in shades of beige and brown and blue was almost complete, complete, that is apart from the green grass.

She would try to find a particularly good green paint colour, or perhaps use coloured pencils, but she must just have a good browse around in these sea side shops... and as for green yogurt, perhaps today she would make do with a fruit coloured yogurt bought in one of the small sea front shops... and boil a big cabbage before the day was out!

She smiled... better not tell Bessy about cabbage for supper!

She giggled as she walked up the seven small steps - one for each day of the week Bessy had informed her - and now she was on the green... and where were her loved ones?

Never far away, for now that Mabel or Mable had been safely handed over, Bessy and Old Man Coniston were walking towards the paddling pool and sand pit, to join Butterware and Cransmore, who seemed to be carrying pine cones in a paper carrier bag!

Good! pine cones for Christmas. Christmas

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was never far from ones thoughts, even on a seaside holiday!

Time was a-wasting, so she walked just a little more quickly en route for the sand pit and paddling pool, for she didn't intend staying long at the paddling pool and sand pit, all there for human beings and their children.

The rock pool and the beach were all a-waiting for the Verdi Bears today, and although she hadn't even built even the smallest sort of pineapple sandcastle, and hadn't of course been allowed a prize, naturally, she had chosen the afternoon's outing!

Or rather, Bassy had, when she had asked Old Man Coniston hopefully on her way to handing back Mabel or Mable's reins to her owner - "...can we see a rock pool?"

Oh what a good idea, a Rock Pool, good old Bassy, thought Lady Windermere, as she hurried over the Green towards the other Verdi Bears, who now seemed to be eating ice cream.....

"I've just had a very good idea about what we should do this afternoon..." she said as she put out a paw and received an ice cream cone.....and just before she took a long lick, managed to say "...a Rock Pool."

Surprisingly, there was no sound of the usual three cheers.....which was quite understandable, for absolutely everyone knows that eating ice cream takes all of ones attention, especially when one is eating at the Golden Sea Side, whilst one is walking in the direction of Left Beach, where rock pools were being uncovered by the receding tide by the second!

## IN THE LITTLE ROCK POOLS\*\*\*

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In the little Rock Pools  
Where the sea weed grows  
Live the Crab  
And the Lobster  
Who can snap their claws!

Crabs and Lobsters  
Snap their Claws!  
When they hear  
SPLISH-SPLOSH  
From feet with toes!

So watch very carefully  
Where you put your toes  
When you walk  
In a pool  
Where the sea weed grows!

Where the sea weed grows!  
Where the sea weed grows!  
When you walk  
In a pool  
Where the sea weed grows!

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"rock pools are very interesting" said Old Man Coniston, as he, Crasmore, Buttermere and Bessy, sat on small rocks and looked down into the rock pool.

At first glance, the small rock pool which was being considered interesting, looked quite ordinary, looking more or less like a pool of still water which covered smallish rocks and pebbles, with an occasional frond of seaweed.

"Look at the calm surface of the rock pool, for on that ever so still rock pool you will see a reflection, for as you will have noticed already, I suppose, that the sea can only give a clear smooth reflection when the surface is perfectly calm, in, say, a sheltered rock pool such as this..."

"Is that why Mermaids find rock pools interesting? Is that why they sit on rocks and comb their silken tresses, because they haven't got proper mirrors?" asked Bessy, showing interest for the first time.

"Exactly" said Old Man Coniston.

Buttermere and Crasmore laughed, but didn't say anything at all.

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"Would mermaids find this little rock pool

interesting, do you suppose?" asked Bessy hopefully.

But Old Man Coniston didn't seem to know the answer to this particular question, instead, he went on to talk about salt.

"Some pools can be more salty than the sea because water can evaporate..." he began.

"Or it could rain between tides" said Grasmere, as he looked into the sky through his green binoculars, looking of course for a Golden Eagle, "and the rain could make it less salty than the sea, or water could trickle out of the sand dunes and marram grass..."

"Exactly" said Old Man Coniston.

Old Man Coniston polished his monocle, and began talking once more. He seemed rather pleased now that he was talking about rock pools. And why not, for he had made notes earlier in the week, and quite honestly had never thought he would have a chance of using them, as the holiday days were speedily passing by.

"Would a whale have a drink here?" asked Bessy.

"Silly!" laughed Buttermere. "Whales drink all of the time, and wouldn't want to drink here."

".....and we must not forget that there are small ledges in these pools, under which small sea creatures may hide.....and small rocks which have small creatures hiding under whilst plants grow over it, and shells of one kind or another cling to..." said Old Man Coniston

"How big is a whale?" asked Bessy.

"Rather large" said Grasmere.

"Look at the seaweed..." began Old Man Coniston.

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Lady Windermere, who was sitting on the beach nearby, was listening to the lesson.

She now removed her sun glasses, in order to see the seaweed which was under discussion at this moment.

A very interesting lesson it was too, and seaweed interested her greatly.

Old Man Coniston was a wonderful teacher, and had tried very hard to make this lesson on Rock Pools interesting, and had prepared his notes days before, and had waited patiently for this first visit to a Rock Pool.

"These seaweeds are of different colours, here we have red..," and Old Man Coniston handed a piece of damp seaweed to Grasmere, and asked him to look at it and pass it to Buttermere, who had then to pass it on to Bessy.

"...this is green, and this is brown...and the correct names for these are..." went on Old Man Coniston, sounding exceedingly happy, now that his lesson was going so well.

"What would be a good name for a whale, I mean a proper name, could a whale have a name like a human being sort of person..." asked Bessy.

Grasmere laughed, so did Buttermere, but not Old Man Coniston.

"Oh Bessy, why don't you pay attention," laughed Lady Windermere. "Seaweed is very interesting, and of course, some of it can be eaten..."

"Oh, I didn't think Rock Pools could be so boring,

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and I don't like the colours" sighed Bessy.

"...and seaweeds have no flowers..." continued Old Man Coniston, glad to know that Lady Windermere was nearby and ready to encourage the young Verdi Bears.

"This piece of seaweed seems to have grown on a little stone" said Cra snare. "The root of the seaweed is attached to a stone..."

"Now that is interesting, don't you think, Old Man Coniston," said Lady Windermere, sounding rather interested.

"That is what one would call a holdfast, as there is no root on seaweed..." said Old Man Coniston, as he glanced momentarily at his notes.

"Did you know that the Australian aborigines have a throwing stick..." said Buttermere, who had read it in a book.

He now stood up, and holding the seaweed tightly, turned his arm backwards, and backwards, time after time, then let go...and away sailed the long piece of seaweed which was holding fast to the stone.

"My word, that was clever" said Lady Windermere, hoping Old Man Coniston would not be deterred from continuing his lesson.

"SEA-ANEMONES sound like flowers of course, and of course there is a *Peachia hastata*, then we have a *Daisy Anemone*..." went on Old Man Coniston, and the *Peachia hastata* burrows, whereas others are fastened to rocks such as these..."

"I wish we could plant daisy seeds all over the

world, so that everyone could make daisy chains" said Bessy.

"Hmph!" said Old Man Coniston, as he studied his notes.

"If people grew daisies, they would be happy. Perhaps we should have Daisy Farms. Oh Old Man Coniston, I hope the daisies will be safely growing and safely sleeping at night, on our lawn.."

She had a wistful note in her voice, thought Lady Windermere. Old Man Coniston sounded very confident as he continued....

"There shouldn't be daisies on the lawn!" he said. "Now pay attention Bessy!"

Bessy tried very hard to pay attention to Old Man Coniston...but it was very difficult.

"forgetting all about daisy chains for a moment, I would like to draw to your attention that there is such a thing as a FOOD-CHAIN in the sea, as there is on land..."

"Would Daisy be a good name for a whale, do you think, Old Man Coniston?" asked Bessy, who found on this fine day that her thoughts just wouldn't stay with Old Man Coniston's lesson.

Old Man Coniston removed his monocle, and looked despairingly at Lady Windermere. "Perhaps, Lady Windermere, if you found a good name for a whale, we might all then have Bessy's attention."

"Lucy" said Lady Windermere. "Lucy," she smiled. "If my name hadn't been a lake name, I would have liked the name Lucy. You have my permission to call a blue

whale Lucy."

"Crabs and lobsters are to be found in rock pools, and of course, one should leave crabs and lobsters just where they are hiding, for they both 'nip' if disturbed..," went on Old Man Coniston, as he now handed paper and pencils to the young Verdi Beare.

"Is a whale called Lucy quite as happy as a sand lizard, do you suppose, Old Man Coniston?" asked Bessy, as she scribbled her name and the words ROCK POOL and LUCY on her paper.

"Every bit as happy, Bessy, every bit as happy" said Lady Windermere, as she found a paper and pencil and put her name on the paper.....

"Crabs and lobsters snap their claws, so..." warned Old Man Coniston, but he was interrupted once more by Bessy.

"If a blue whale called Lucy was ever to be stranded on a beach just for a few minutes, this left beach would be an ideal beach to be stranded on..." she said.

"Why?" asked a puzzled Gramere.

"Because the sand lizard could talk to her" said Bessy.

"Oh, I see" said Gramere.

"Do you know a shell can walk away..." said Bessy, sounding rather surprised. "Look!"

Gramere and Buttermere looked into the pool, and saw a shell which did indeed seem to be walking about in the bottom of the small rock pool.

"That is a HERMIT CRAB" said Old Man Coniston happily. "The Hermit Crab lives in old empty shells, in a spiral..."

"It can't be very happy, then, can it, just walking about in an old shell," she went on. "A Blue Whale called Lucy could travel, and see a coconut island, and dolphins, and mermaids. But a Hermit Crab must have a very dull life indeed. Why do you think God made Hermit Crabs?"

Old Man Coniston sighed wearily. Bessy was so inquisitive, and never more so than today.

Nevertheless, he looked down at his list once more, and tried to select a word which might interest someone.

"Did you know brown ink can come from a CUTTLE FISH, a sort of Sepia Ink..." he said proudly, hoping the young Verdi Bears would believe him, and that there would be no further interruptions.

But Lady Windermere interrupted.... "Oh deary me" she said. "Talking of ink... I have just remembered I haven't written our postcard views to our friends... and I have the stamps... somewhere... and we are going home soon."

She put down her pencil and paper, and began looking in her handbag.

"S-Q-U-I..." began Old Man Coniston. Bessy seemed to be interested in this word, so he began once more. "S-Q-U-I-D spells squid, and I would like now to talk to you about this creature, which is very interesting."

The young Verdi Bears began writing once more, and there was a silence which didn't last long, for Grasmere remarked casually "I thought you were going to spell out the word SQUIRREL when you began to spell out SQUID."

Old Man Coniston remarked, "Yes, there is a similarity, I must admit, in the spelling, but the SQUID is what I am about to talk to you about."

"But I would rather talk about squirrels - it is nearly the same word, isn't it, as squid, so there can't be much difference" said Bessy.

Buttermere and Grasmere laughed aloud now, but Old Man Coniston was not amused at all.

Adjusting his monocle, he looked at his notes and said "and now to the colour of a squid."

"Why can't a squirrel be golden and beautiful coloured, like a butterfly?" sighed Bessy, not at all impressed by the description of a squid, a cuttle fish and sepia ink.

No one seemed to know the answer to her question. So she asked another.

"Why must a squirrel be coloured like a rusty ship in a harbour or a sort of rabbit colour?"

Old Man Coniston removed his monocle, and looked at Lady Windermere, but she seemed not to be looking in his direction. He now tried to answer the question the best way he could.

"Well, you see" he began. "Well, er, if squirrels were golden, they would be so beautiful, human beings would search for them and make pets of them."

He now replaced his monocle, and as he did so, said a few more words. "As it is, squirrels are free, and autumn leaves hide the rusty squirrels and dark branches hide grey ones.."

"Hm!" said Bessy. "Do you suppose the Golden Eagle, if called a rusty eagle, or a drab grey eagle, might not have been hunted so, and there would have been more of them?"

Cranmore now seemed to be wanting to know the answer to this last question of Bessy's.

Oh dear, oh dear, what was the use of continuing the lesson, thought Old Man Coniston.

He looked towards Lady Windermere, who seemed to be deeply engrossed in tidying her handbag!

Goodness knows that she might find in there!

Bessy looked into the rock pool!

Old Man Coniston couldn't help wondering what she might find in the rock pool which would cause comment!

Lady Windermere and Bessy! My goodness, but at times, one didn't know whether to be crotchety or just laugh. Rock pools and handbags! How could he give a lecture when no one was taking any notice of him, for even Cranmore was now searching the heavens ~~with~~ with his green binoculars, looking for Golden Eagles, and Buttermere seemed to be about to throw seaweed holding fast to stones far into the sea!

Should he throw his notes into the sea, perhaps?

Instead he said to anyone who cared to listen, "Do you suppose that Hermit Crab Bessy is watching is bored with hearing about squids and brown ink and

brown seaweed, and that is why it is walking away?"

"Yes!" said Bessy without hesitation.

Old Man Coniston chuckled, removed his monocle, and said "Well then, why not walk away like that little Hermit Crab, and find something to do which will not bore you?"

Buttermore had been listening very carefully to what Old Man Coniston had been saying, and asked hopefully, "Do you suppose I could walk away, too, and look at that old tree washed up on the beach?"

"I don't see why not" smiled Old Man Coniston.

"And I promised Bessy I would make her a necklace of pink shells shaped like small finger nails on human beings, and I haven't begun to collect the shells yet..." said Creamere.

"All of you, just do as you please, on one condition" said Lady Windermere, who, although she had been tidying her handbag had evidently been listening.

"And what is that?" asked Bessy.

"As Old Man Coniston has his notes on three sheets of my painting paper, I think it only fair that each one of you takes a sheet of notes off him, and write on the blank side exactly what you find of such great interest on this beach instead of your lesson from Old Man Coniston."

"What a good idea" said Old Man Coniston, who was not really enjoying giving lessons to unwilling young Verdi Bessie, and would rather read the morning paper,

given half a chance, and here was half a chance, and he would take it.

Ma gave each of the young Verdi Bears a sheet of paper, one side containing notes, the other, beautifully clean and just waiting to be scribbled on.

"Whales interest me, but there isn't one on the beach, but if there was, I would write all sorts about it....but if a whale was as big as a cricket pitch I could just measure the cricket pitch...the one we played cricket on the beach on...and I would count the steps I took...." said Bessy, as she scampered away clutching a pencil and paper, en route for the part of the beach on which they had played cricket earlier in the week.....

She began counting, "one - two - three steps. Four - five - six - paws."

All great fun of course, but she lost count of the number of tens she had stepped out - and had to begin again at the beginning - which is a good place to begin of course - one - two - three paws - she began counting, and these counting sort of words were what the Sand Lizard heard.

Oh how exciting!

But how could he let the little Verdi Bear know he was here, and would like some sort of food from her?

Or would she remember that here was his appointed place, his territory?

Then the counting sort of words stopped, and much

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more interesting sort of words began... words such as... "Is a whale quite as happy as a Sand Lizard, or is a Sand Lizard happy as a whale, and does a Lizard like to see Verdi Bears play cricket, and I wonder if Sand Lizards would eat cabbage yogurt... because I have just remembered I kept some cabbage yogurt from another day just to try an experiment with... and I have just remembered..."

This was what Bessy said, as she now approached the territory which belonged to the Sand Lizard.

She sat on the sand, looked into her knitting bag, found what she was looking for, and began scraping the cabbage yogurt which she had been looking for and found, onto an empty space in the mram grass which was growing nearby.

Bessy now sat and watched the cabbage yogurt, hoping the Sand Lizard would appear if she sat very still, still, that is apart from an occasional scribble on the unwritten side of the painting paper Old Man Coniston had given to her.

She really couldn't be bothered to write many of her own words, instead, turned over the painting paper which had lots of words and interesting lists written on it <sup>on its other side</sup> in such very neat printing and writing, as usual, for

Old Man Coniston was rather pernickety when it came to paw writing!

And here she read aloud... "and tomorrow, we will study a sandy pool and have a first salty swimming lesson... and there will be no Crabs and Lobsters in this Sandy Pool... for this pool will be an ideal pool for

Verdi Bears to have a salty swimming lesson in. In fact..." went on Bessy's voice which was telling the world exactly what Old Man Coniston had written on his page of notes in his beautiful writing....

"In fact...the SANDY POOL would be a perfect place for a Mermaid - one would suppose - and young Verdi Bears alike!"

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Bessy's voice seemed to sound rather excited, thought Old Man Coniston, as some of her excited words reached his ears, and what was more, some of her excited words seemed to sound mighty familiar to him.

Yes Sirree, he recognised words, such as SANDY POOL, then the word Mermaid, and now he chuckled to himself! So Bessy had been reading his notes!

My word, but that was amusing, Bessy reading his carefully prepared notes, and here was Bessy, walking along the beach towards him.

"What a good idea, a SANDY POOL and a picnic tomorrow. You have some very good ideas, Old Man Coniston. I can't just wait for tomorrow, Old Man Coniston" she said, as she studied the notes carefully.

"Tomorrow, Bessy, is only a dream away" replied Old Man Coniston.

Grassmere, however, was just a few paces away, and he sounded rather excited as he hurried along

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the sand.

"I've found out something interesting," he said, as he now stood beside Bessy, and looked up at Old Man Coniston.

"Really?" said Old Man Coniston, rather suspecting Greamere had been looking at the notes and reading what he hadn't wanted to listen to.

"Do you remember the page of old notes we didn't want to be bothered to listen to?" he asked looking very pleased indeed.

"Yes, vaguely" said Old Man Coniston, trying not to sound too pleased, for he now found he had an audience, because Lady Windermere and Buttermere were now walking towards him, and they too were holding a page of notes in their paws.

"Well, well, well," he couldn't help thinking, as he polished his monocle, and prepared to listen to them all in turn, for indeed, they all seemed in a mighty hurry to tell him something.

But Greamere had started first, so he turned to him and said "What was it you wanted to tell me. Have I made a spelling mistake?"

"Oh, no, nothing like that" laughed Greamere.

"It was just that I had a good idea for a story, and when I wanted to turn over the page to see what you had been writing, I mean, one never knows for sure what you might be writing, and I wondered if you had written a sort of story or one of your paw writing poems...for our paw writing exercise..."

"Oh do hurry up" said Buttermere, sounding rather

impatient. "I have something far more important to talk about than writing stories..."

"Can I read my piece of a story?" asked Grasmere.

"Of course" beamed Old Man Coniston.

No one else seemed to speak, no one else seemed to want to hear the piece of a story Grasmere had written.

Old Man Coniston seemed to understand perfectly, about what one thought was important, thought Grasmere, so he prepared to read his lines as carefully and correctly as he could.

And so read Grasmere... "You are not a SEAGULL" said the Seagull to an owl.

"Yes I am" said an owl, who thought he was a seagull.

The Seagull and the Owl were sitting on a rooftop side by side at the time.

They were watching a field on Uncle Apple's Farm, and the rooftop was on a barn.

A horse began ploughing the field... and so the birds flew down and began to follow the plough... the seagull said to the owl... "

"yes?" said lady Windermere. "So what happened next?"

"What happened next" asked Bessy.

"Well go on reading then" said Buttermere.

"That's all I have managed to write so far, because I turned over the page of painting paper to read what Old Man Coniston had made notes about... and you'll never guess what he had written about!"

"What?" asked Buttermere and Bessy, both at the same time.

"I thought he was telling fibs at first, but I sort of remembered in time that Old Man Coniston just doesn't tell fibs, do you, Old Man Coniston." And now, Grammore looked hopefully at Old Man Coniston.

"No Sires, I don't tell fibs, especially on a page of notes!" said Old Man Coniston quite sincerely.

"What was there on the notes which looked as though it was fibs, for goodness sake!" implored Lady Windermere.

"Well, it started as a sort of short poem," replied Grammore.

"Better read it to them I suppose" said Old Man Coniston.

So Grammore obligingly read it to them, as follows--

# STORM PETREL

=====

Storm Petrel,

Little Peter,

Tries to walk on waves!

Storm Petrel,

Little Peter,

Is so very Brave!

"But you'll never guess what a Storm Petrel which is called Little Peter which can be called a Mother Carey's Chicken is....and which I thought was a fib!" said Grasmere sounding very proud of his newly acquired knowledge.

"What is it then, for goodness sake!" implored Lady Windermere.

"It's a little bird, and it is true, and I can show you that word, PETER, in my half dictionary! See!" Grasmere held his half book open now, and allowed Buttermere, Bessy, and Lady Windermere, read the word.

"What else is written on your sheet of notes?" asked Bessy.

"Well, the bird takes it's name from a Saint called Peter, who walked on the waters, somewhere, some time ago, evidently. Sailors watch the petrel follow their ship and sometimes the bird..." and here Grasmere stopped.

"What next?" asked Bessy.

"That is the end of the page, actually, so I don't know, actually" said Grasmere, sounding rather sorry.

Lady Windermere looked at her sheet of painting paper.

"Hm!" she said, sounding rather pleased. "I have the next sheet of notes, the one after the last word on Grasmere's notes. Now what were your last words Grasmere?"

"Continued on next page are my next words" he said

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in reply.

"My first words are PETER/LITTLE PETER

continued, so this must be next." said lady Windermere, sounding rather pleased with herself.

Bessy, Gramsere, and Buttermere, all looking rather excited, and rather more interested in notes discovered by themselves, listened very carefully to what lady Windermere read aloud.

"Sometimes the bird lowers its long legs and patters along the surface of the sea, and the sailors very cleverly thought of calling the little bird

LITTLE PETER striving to walk on the waves!"

"Well, well, well" said Gramsere, sounding very impressed.

"Read on" said Buttermere, and lady Windermere obliged beautifully, for indeed, she had a very good reading voice.

"How clever, how very clever, is this bird, for on this running flight it dips its head for food, and this food can consist of oil floating on the surface of the sea, and a bird was once kept alive by floating oil on a saucer of water!"

"Gracious me!" said Buttermere, who liked very much to experiment by floating all manner of things on saucers on the top of the garden hedge, which was not tall and had a square sort of clipped off top!

"Peter is a name from Greek - PETER means a rocky said Gramsere, who had found the name in the half of book which he was still holding.

"And it says here" went on lady Windermere, "it

says here on the notes that PETRIY means to turn into stone, and that because land subsides forests can be submerged, and that because land re-emerges many years later, trees remerge and now the forests are FOSSIL FORESTS of tree roots and trunks which have been turned into stone..."

There was silence for a moment or two, and now, Old Man Coniston, feeling rather smug, asked Bassy if he could borrow the newspaper which he knew was in her knitting bag.

It was a few days old, but it seemed Old Man Coniston was interested in old news today, and the other four Verdi Bears were interested in turned to stone forests!

"Old Man Coniston" began Butternore. "Do you think that washed upon the beach tree could be a sort of something which has drifted off a FOSSIL FOREST?"

"Perhaps" said Bassy. "The tide has been and gone since yesterday. Strange sorts of things seem to happen heresabouts!"

"I wish I knew about fossils and birds" sighed Butternore. "One feels one is a sort of silly person if one doesn't know about sea birds, and tree names. You see, there is a hole in that tree trunk there, and I don't know if a woodpecker or a squirrel made it!"

Everyone laughed.

"Don't worry dear" said Lady Windermore. "I didn't know about a bird which tried to walk on water, neither did I remember about petrified trees!"

But there were still words to read, for Old Man Conlston had made quite a few more notes on the sheet of painting paper.... "and a petrified tree cannot renew its branches, twigs, or buds, being stone. Unlike, of course, the word" ....and here she paused for a moment.

"Grammure, look up the word AU-TOT-OMY," and now everyone looked at Old Man Conlston, who seemed to be finishing off a half finished crossword, or pretending to.

"I can't find the word, really I can't, as some of the AUTO words seem to be torn out of the dictionary!" said Grammure.

"Well, it says here on the notes that AUTOTOMY means - that a Lizard can re-grow its tail, and a Lobster can re-grow a lost claw!" But Lady Windermere didn't seem at all to believe it.

"I say" said Buttermere. "I have that word on my sheet of notes...and a short poem...can I read it?" Without waiting for a yes or no he began, as

follows -

AUTOTOMY - or - AN EVER-EVER CHOCOLATE CAKE  
=====

You didn't sughter talk to me  
Of something called AUT/OT/O/MI  
And Lizard's tails  
And Lobster's claws

GROWING AGAIN  
JUST AS BEFORE!

I wish instead you'd talk to me  
Of chocolate cake too at for tea  
Which, when it's all gone,  
We could see once more -

IF GROWING AGAIN  
JUST AS BEFORE!

"If that word isn't in that dictionary, it could be a fib!" said Bessy.

But no one else seemed to think it could be a fib, but Bessy couldn't be convinced.

"But nice things like an ever-ever chocolate cake don't happen, and so I don't think I believe about Lizard's tails and Lobster's claws either! So there!" she said.

"We can study all these facts when we get home" said Gressmere, a cunning very learned indeed. "In fact, we can study Lobsters and Crabs on our way home, because one can buy these creatures ready to eat in a shop on a white marble slab..."

"There is a P.S. on my notes" said Buttemere.

"Read it to us" said Gressmere, quite enjoying himself.

"Can anyone guess the colour of a lobster?" is the P.S. "and you'll just never guess what the answer is" laughed Buttemere, reading the answer.

"A lobster is red" said Bessy.

"A lobster is blue" said Bessy. Gressmere.

"But it turns red when it is cooked, it says so here" said Lady Windermere, "so you are both correct!"

"There is another P.S." said Buttemere. "And this P.S. tells us that blue skies turn to another colour in the evening, and are then called a sort of sunset, which is a favourite time for painters."

"So it is" smiled Lady Windermere, as she now read the P.S. list for herself.

"And the next P.S. is..." and as tomorrow is our

very last day in our holiday week, I suggest that after we visit our sandy pool, and after we pack our belongings for home later in the day....." and here ended the P.S.

"What next, Old Man Coniston?" asked Bessy.

"Yes, what next, after we pack our belongings later in the day?" asked Greasmere.

"Well, what surprises are there in store now may one ask?" asked Lady Windermere.

"We will take a last walk, in the evening, so that we may see the colours change. Take a last look at that magnificent washed up on the beach tree. Say goodnight to the Lizard. Then return to our holiday establishment, and wait for Museum Sandy to arrive in the mini-bus." *Said Greasmere.*

"Is this all to happen tomorrow, truly?" asked Bessy hopefully.

"Yes Sirree, tomorrow" said Old Man Coniston, handing her the few days old newspaper.

"Oh I for one am glad we came to the sea-side, for days like tomorrow seem to have lasted all week!" said Bessy. "And I just can't wait for tomorrow!"

As the Verdi Bears walked away from the picnic are, and eventually away from the beach, the tides seemed to speed up the beach now, covering the rock pool.

The Sand Lizard looked at the cabbage yogurt, and decided that, yes, Bessy was right. Cabbage was dreadful, and not the thing one should eat whilst on holiday!

Yes, he too looked forward to tomorrow, and the

last day of the holiday for the Verdi Bears, which luckily was to be spent on the beach.

Wise of them to plan an evening stroll to watch the sunset, for indeed, the colours to be seen hereabouts and on the horizon were splendid!

Being a Sand Lizard, of course, he already knew that tomorrow, when it came, would be beautiful.

Sand Lizards just know about these sort of things!

He camped happily to his bed!

He, like Bessy, just couldn't wait for tomorrow!

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There was much to tell the Man in the Moon on this the last evening before the last full day of the holiday before returning home to the village....and home....

"Man in the Moon - we are going home tomorrow" she said, sounding very pleased.

"How wonderful" replied the Man in the Moon, sounding rather pleased himself.

"We haven't been able to see a whale or a mermaid while we have been here, or a golden eagle. In fact, we have never ever seen a whale or a mermaid anywhere, ever."

"Now I call that a pity, indeed I do, not ever seeing a whale or a mermaid..." said the Man in the Moon, sounding ever so sorry.

"Man in the Moon, did you know that Rock Pools are very interesting?" said Betsy.

"Is that a fact" said Old Man Coniston, pretending as usual to be the Man in the Moon.

"Did you know, some pools can be more salty than the sea, but I just forget why..." she said.

"But I do remember that a rock pool is not as big as a lake or a duck pond. It is a sort of clean small un muddy duck pond, really, I suppose.

"How interesting" said the Man in the Moon.

"Did you know, Man in the Moon, that one mustn't overturn rocks in a rock pool, and disturb the underneath, for underneath the rocky stone are creatures and plants.."

"How interesting" said the Man in the Moon.

"Did you know that the Hermit Crab is a strange little fellow?" she asked.

"No, I certainly did not" said the Man in the Moon.

"Well then, I shall tell you, for the Hermit Crab is a very strange little fellow. He lives inside empty shells which once upon a time belonged to some other creature than himself, and he can walk very quickly and hide under a rocky shelf in the rock pool..." she said, sounding very happy.

"How very interesting" said the Man in the Moon, he too sounding happy at hearing all about Hermit Crabs.

"The trouble is, Man in the Moon, that there is so much to interest one at the sea side, that one has to be careful not to miss anything of interest, for instance, we are to have our first salty swimming lesson tomorrow, and it is our last day, and it is only a dream away now...our last day..." and here she yawned.

The Man in the Moon smiled in the darkness below. Bassy was right, tomorrow as only a dream away....

Was Bassy still awake, and kneeling by the window...yes, she was awake, for here came her words.

"Oh, the sea side is a very strange place indeed. And the sea itself contains all manner of strange and wonderful things, and Old Man Coniston is very learned on all subjects including the sea and what it contains...I myself don't like the colours of sea things, but..." and here she began to sound sleepy.

"The sea air makes one very tired, does it not, Bassy" said the Man in the Moon, sounding kindly.

"Mmmmm...so it does" said Bassy. "I still don't understand why lobsters change from sky colours to strawberry colours when they are cooked...and I don't know how the tide remembers to come back...and I still don't know if a whale can be as long as a cricket pitch...and the bird called Little Peter...was something I had never even heard of...for there seems to be so much in the world, don't you think...Mr. Man in the Moon."

"Yes Bassy, there is very much in this world to interest one..." said the Man in the Moon.

"I am rather scared of rock pool creatures, really. Man in the Moon...perhaps one day Old Man Coniston may let us study a muddy pond...for there is absolutely nothing in a pond, absolutely everyone knows that!" said Bassy.

And here Bassy said goodnight to the Man in the Moon....telling him she would speak to him when she returned home....and that as tomorrow was just a dream away...she should try to sleep now....for tomorrow...she might even see a mermaid...at the sandy pool.....

But the Man in the Moon had words yet to say, for he had written a sort of poem, and so he read his words aloud. Babsy of course would now be asleep, so he faced the sea, and said his words to the mermaids and the evening stars\*\*\*

SO THE LIZARD WAVED FAREWELL...

=====

Stranded on a beach

A whale called LUCY

Looked down her nose.....

"I suppose" said the Sand Lizard

Who was standing at the whale's nose...

"You have come here just to see me!"

"Of course I did" said stranded Lucy,

telling a FIN

As the Sand Lizard retreated

As the tide came higher up

The Shingle....

Proud Lucy then began to speak...

In tone so haughty...

"A Lizard's life seems drab" said

Proud Lucy

And in tone so haughty - went on to say -

"I much prefer my own way of life -

For I travel much -

And see such - - "

But the tide arrived in full

Before she could say much about such

So the Sand Lizard waved "farewell"

To Lucy -

And returned to live his life so cosy!

=====

LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING...

Let me tell you something

See - over there - now that the  
tide has gone -

There is a pool of water

Left by the tide

And there are long

The Mermaids will come

And sing a song

And comb their silken tresses.

But we must leave this spot  
For I quite forgot -

That they don't allow anyone  
To watch them

So really, I suppose,  
You will just have to believe  
What I have been speaking about  
About Mermaids!

...

"We're just like the sparrows, Old Man Coniston!" laughed Bassy. "See!"

She splashed happily in the water, as did Buttermore and Grasmere, but alas, there were no Mermaids!

The Sandy Pool was a perfect place for young Verdi Bears to take a first salty swimming lesson in, for there were no crabs and lobsters lurking under small ledges waiting to snap their claws.

"Sparrows would like this pool, don't you think?" asked Bassy.

But before Old Man Coniston could talk about sparrows, Bassy began to ask questions as she pushed her green paws through the water... "Where did this pool come from?"

"It was left by the tide" replied Lady Windermere, as she watched the young Verdi Bears.

The Sandy Pool had a soft sandy floor under the warm water, which had been warmed by the sun as it waited silently to welcome the returning tide later that afternoon.

There really isn't much one can say about splashing about, and having a sort of lesson about swimming, thought Creamere, as he now realized he was becoming bored with just a sandy pool.

He now walked out of the pool, which was about knee high, and walked towards where Lady Windermere was sitting.

She seemed to be tidying her large handbag.

"Mhm. I had forgotten about that" she said as she looked into a paper ~~knave~~ bag.

"Paper bags can be very interesting" said Creamere hopefully. "See sir seems to make one rather hungry!"

And now Bessy left the pool, and ran to where the dry towels were.

She felt rather cold and damp now, and began to dry herself.

And here came Buttermore, followed by Old Man Coniston, and the swimming lessons seemed to be over for the moment.

"Huffuff-uff-uff!" shivered Bessy as she stood drying herself on a towel after her first dip in the sea water. "Do human people really and truly like swimming in cold salty water?" she asked.

"I think it could be all lies!" shivered Buttermore, as he too shivered and said "huffuff-uff!" followed by "I don't even like taking a bath in warm water, so I can't believe anyone could want to swim in the heastly sea, do you?"

"Ah well, you see, we have sort of become advanced" said Creamere, who didn't really know what

to say. "We are different. Human beings like sea water, and we don't."

"I don't like sea water much either myself" observed Bessy as she watched Lady Windermere tidy her handbag. "Sea water seems to give one a hungry feeling, and it changes from warm to cold after you have been splashing about... perhaps Mermaids don't like cold water either."

Lady Windermere was aware of being watched, so she looked up to where four pairs of eyes were waiting to see what she had discovered in her handbag which made her look so thrilled.

"Do you remember the green woody pears we couldn't eat a few days ago?" she asked.

"Yes" said Old Man Coniston, speaking on behalf of the three young Verdi Bears.

"Well, you would never believe - but - I have just discovered them in my handbag - and - you would never believe - but - they are golden and beautiful today! Look!" she said, showing each of the watching Verdi Bears in turn just how beautiful the five pears now seemed to be.

"Why don't we walk over to the sand dunes, and eat them where the Sand Lizard can watch us?" Perhaps even eat the pear peelings?" asked Bessy.

The five Verdi Bears walked towards the picnic area they usually used, spread the damp towels over the top of the merren grasses pikes to dry, then sat down to enjoy the pears, which of course, had to be peeled first so that the Sand Lizard could be fed.

"I wish we could take some of this Golden Sunshine in our paws, and put it into a bottle together with some Golden Pears, and keep it for Christmas..." said a wistful voice.

It was Lady Windermere's voice, but no one seemed to take any notice... so she spoke again.

"I wish we could put Golden Sunshine and Golden Pears into a bottle, and open it up on Christmas Day!" said Lady Windermere, as she now put the pear cores into a small paper bag, and wiped her paws on a damp flannel.

"Let's all take something home, and tie it on the pear tree, and look at it on Christmas Day!" said an excited voice, which seemed to belong to Buttermere.

"Like what for instance?" asked Grammore.

"Seaweed, and driftwood, large amounts of it, and lots of shells..." replied Buttermere, who was looking admiringly at a piece of gnarled seaweed driftwood, and large mound of seaweed just newly collected that afternoon.

"Why don't we just wish a wish instead" said

Old Man Coniston hopefully. "No need to clutter up the pear tree with seaweed and driftwood."

"Do you mean we can wish our Christmas wishes right here and now?" asked Gressmere, sounding rather pleased at the idea.

"Can't see why not!" laughed Lady Windermere.

"I would wish for footpaths at the side of every road everywhere for ever for everyone, so that everyone could walk to everywhere on them" said Buttermere.

"I would wish for no more weeds in the garden"

said Old Man Coniston.

"I would wish for a large barrel of nail varnish or else a large barrel of strawberries, or perhaps a Golden Horse which I wouldn't be afraid of, one which didn't make sparks fly off its feet when it galloped on a road" said Bassy.

"Sounds nice" said Lady Windermere sounding rather happy.

"Perhaps if I had a yellow horse, with a yellow flower necklace around its neck, that would be nice" said Bassy wistfully.

"You couldn't expect flowers at Christmas Bassy, so why not wish for yellow beads for the horse's necklace..." said Old Man Coniston.

Yellow horse, indeed, and yellow flowers! Where did Bassy get her ideas?

"I would wish for a magic tin of pears, a tin which never emptied!" laughed Lady Windermere, rather enjoying the game of wishing for Christmas without really meaning it for real.

"I wish the little Sand Lizard would just sit still for a few minutes, and we would be able to have a really good look at it, and perhaps Lady Windermere could paint a superb likeness of it." Said Bessy hopefully.

"I would wish for a Golden Eagle to land in our midst here and now" said Cransmere. "It isn't fair, looking at a Sand Lizard isn't nearly as exciting as looking at a Golden Eagle, or rather, that is what I think..." said Cransmere, hoping the Sand Lizard wouldn't understand his words.

Old Man Coniston looked at Cransmere. Poor Cransmere. He smiled, then said rather kindly, or so thought the Lizard, "Turn and look at the Lizard - for don't you know he is fighting for his very existence!"

"But it isn't what I want to see" said Cransmere, still wishing to see a Golden Eagle hovering over the beach.

"But Cransmere, when you can't have what you REALLY want - look for the next best thing - something which IS available..." explained Lady Windermere, as she began sketching the Sand Lizard.

"Is that nearly extinct Lizard the next best thing to a Golden Eagle?" asked Bessy in amazement.

Old Man Coniston thought for a moment or two. Then said "Yes, indeed, I would say it is the very best next best thing to a Golden Eagle at this moment in time, because it is available. It is HERE to see NOW!"

He polished his monocle, then replaced it.

So the little next best thing to a Golden Eagle sat on the beach - in a hollow - surrounded by marram grass, while all five Verdi Bears looked at him through their green binoculars, he not knowing for one second he was NEXT BEST to a Golden Eagle, for indeed, he thought he was the best creature in the world, and what is more, he loved tomato sandwiches, the red tomato sandwiches and not the yellow tomato sandwiches, a fact which pleased Bessy immensely.

"Goodbye next best thing," said Bessy sadly

as the lizard ran away, having now had enough to eat.

"Will it be here next time we come?" she asked.

"Yes, but you won't always see it" said Lady

Windermere. "In fact, many human beings will NEVER see a lizard in a lifetime. But here we are - five Verdi Bears, and all five of us have seen it. Hasn't that been wonderful?"

Even Grammore, after thinking deeply a bout sand lizards for all of one minute, had to admit, that yes indeed, one was indeed lucky to see a sand lizard.

Bessy now looked out to see through her green binoculars, and remarked. "I can see sea birds resting on the waves."

Five pairs of binoculars were now trained on the sea, and there were indeed birds resting on the waves, and were bobbing about on the surface of the sea, watching the coast, or so it seemed.

The slowly incoming tide seemed to be bringing them in to shoreward, slowly, ever so slowly, along with sea weed and driftwood.

"I wish I could measure the speed of ships," said Buttermore, as he watched a ship on the horizon.

"I wish I could measure how high the clouds are up above us" said Grasmere, still looking for a Golden Eagle.

"I only like what we have now" said Bessy.

"Ships and clouds are not here around us.

She looked around her, and to where the narrow grass grew. She looked towards the shingle, where the best shells could be found, and she could see through her binoculars a sandcastle which they had built earlier in the day, but of course, which would wash away when the incoming tide reached it later in the day.

"I like grass, and seaweed, and shells, and sand castles, and driftwood and ice cream, and shrimps in a paper bag, and sparrows and brown hens" she said.

"She's right, you know" said Grasmere, realising he wasn't going to catch a glimpse of a Golden Eagle, well, not that afternoon. Perhaps later, somewhere else.

"Yes, let's all look at what is around us"

~~she~~  
said Grasmere.

Old Man Coniston looked at his wrist watch, firmly trapped around his wrist.

"Well," he said, "time to go, I'm afraid, for we have chores. If we are to return here later today we will have to say farewell to the sea birds, and leave them there, either watching us or sleeping."

"I wish time could stand still sometimes" said Lady Windermere, as they walked towards the end of the beach and in the direction of the town centre.

"Or even ask the sun to stand still" said Crasmere.

"Silly making pretend wishes for Christmas of course" said Lady Windermere. "But another silly wish would be for an Ever-Ever chocolate cake. Just think of all the time I would save, never having to make another chocolate cake!"

"I think Old Man Coniston should wish for an ever-ever chocolate cake for Christmas, when the time to make wishes for Christmas comes," said Bassy, sounding very sure indeed. "I for one think he deserves to have his wish come true, because he has been so clever about sea-sidey sort of things."

They were by this time walking along the road which would take them to their sea-side holiday place, ~~xxxx~~, where they were now to make tea, pack their belongings, and take their last walk on the beach from.

"Perhaps that would be a good idea, an everlasting Christmas present of chocolate cake, and I will need a good big box of chocolate cake mix to tie onto the Christmas tree as by way of a reminder for Santa Claus!" laughed Old Man Coniston, hopefully.

"Just perhaps time a Magic Wooden Spoon on the Christmas tree instead, to remind Santa" laughed Bassy.

"Oh dear" sighed Crasmere. "I think I could make another story....and here it is."

They opened the gate, and as they waited for Old Man Coniston to unlock the door, ~~xxxx~~ he his story words .. "An orange tree could have a branch shaped like a wooden cake-making spoon, and when broken off and used, it makes cakes taste orangey - even Yorkshire Pudding with sausages cooked in it.."

And even Ariadne, roosting on the rooftop of

the house in which they were spending their seaside holiday, laughed.

"An orangey tasting wooden spoon! hm. Whatever next!" she thought as she smiled a sort of pigeon smile.

She settled herself near the chimney pots now. She must rest, and rest, for a while, in preparation for her journey home.

No time for last walks on the beach for her!

She had to fly all the way home!

The donkeys walked on the beach on this last evening of the holiday, a fact which pleased the young Verdi Bears greatly, especially Bessy.

They arrived on the beach at about the same time as did the Verdi Bears, at the beginning of the beach just as one left the town, and of course, Bessy fed carrots to the donkeys.

The donkeys were now led to the edge of the sea, and it was here they walked, washing their feet in the shallow frothy edge of the water as they walked.

Bessy, however, decided to walk on the firm sand, a little higher up the beach, but within a few feet of the donkeys.

Old Man Coniston walked with her too, rather enjoying this cool walk on the firm sand. He was using his walking stick too, the stick with the sheep carved on the handle.

"There is still a lot of driftwood and seaweed floating on the sea, but the sea birds have all gone"

she said, as she tried to keep the same walking time as the donkeys, not wanting them to walk away from her, or to let them lag behind her, for it was so interesting walking beside donkeys who seemed to like the feel of sea water on their small feet.

On they splashed, and the bells on their leather harness made a tinkling sound, a jangling sound.

It was so interesting. What a pity the other Verdi Bears weren't walking beside Old Man Coniston and herself, it was fun, but Lady Windermere wanted to look at the changing skies. Grassmere was writing a story about a Magic Brown Paper Bag which wouldn't stay full, or was it empty.

Buttermere seemed to be collecting driftwood, as if he already didn't have enough. How boring, when they could have been looking at the donkeys and hearing the music of the small brass bells. Or were they made of gold perhaps?

"The sea birds will have gone to roost somewhere ~~xxxxx~~, Bessy" said Old Man Coniston, as he too enjoyed the music of the small bells.

There was something so nice, seeing donkeys walking on sand, and listening to the bells. What a good idea this had been, taking an evening stroll on the beach.

"Going home, you see, for they live hereabouts" he went on. "Same as the donkeys, for they too live hereabouts. In fact, they live in a field near these dunes, and this in a short cut, keeps them off the hard roads, and gives them a chance to cool their feet."

The damp firm sand, newly washed by the sea, felt cool, and of course, as Bessy walked she left her pawprints, as did Old Man Coniston.

The walking stick, the one with sheep carved on the handle, also left small holes where it had been placed as Old Man Coniston walked forward step after step, in pace with the donkeys and Bessy.

"No use planting acorns or beech nuts or chestnuts on the beach, Old Man Coniston" she said, as she saw the indentations being made time after time as they walked.

Old Man Coniston looked at the impressions they were leaving on the wet cool sand, and smiled.

"Not like at home, when one can plant a conker anywhere one has a mind" said Bessy.

Yes, he would be glad to be home this evening, for sure, but what a wonderful holiday this had been.

"The tide, Bessy, would wash beech nuts and the like, out of the sand in a moment" he said.

"And even if trees grew, it would be a fossil forest beach before one knew it, even before the trees were knee high!" she said, not really caring.

The sea water was about knee high on the donkeys now, and the small animals were looking very happy indeed.

"I enjoyed learning about pools, but isn't the sea side a strange sort of place, for the pools go away when the tide comes in. Really, I would rather look at a muddy pond, for a muddy pond stays there all the time!" she said.

She now began walking backwards, watching her paw prints and the long row of prints made by Old Man Coniston, and the walkings tack.

"Did you know" began Old Man Coniston...and at hearing this tone in his voice, Bassy turned to face in the direction they were walking, because that tone of voice from Old Man Coniston sounded interesting.

"Did you know, Bassy, that I myself think muddy ponds are wonderful, and mud itself has a wonderful story to tell...."

The evening sky was becoming darker now, and there was a cooling of the air.

Bassy and Old Man Coniston stood still now, and let the donkeys walk away into the distance.

After all, neither Bassy or Old Man Coniston wanted to walk too far from Lady Windermere, who seemed to be busily sketching. Or from Buttermore, who seemed to be standing on his tree trunk and thinking wonderful thoughts...and Gasmere, who was walking along shingle, and collecting various pieces of this that and the other which took his interest, which made a change from his gazing up into the sky looking for Golden Eagles.

As Bassy and Old Man Coniston left the shore-line or where the sea bubbled over the edge of ~~the beach~~ the beach, they continued talking.

"Mud covered the land, millions and millions and millions of years ago. Grit settled, mud settled, and formed slate and shale of grey, and formed the fella-

Light grey, blue grey...."

"Light grey...blue grey" said Lady Windermere as she worked..... and heard one or two words drift along as she worked.

Lady Windermere was in a hurry as she used light grey and blue grey crayons...for the time was ticking away...and it would soon be time to leave the beach, and leave the small sea side town of Three Beaches and return to their village.

Shame the holiday was over, really, but if a holiday lasted for ever, well then, it couldn't really be a holiday, could it, she thought to herself.

My word, but this end of the holiday visit to Left Beach had been a treat, and her last opportunity to make very quick sketches, well, perhaps not sketches, more streaks of colour on paper, as the sky changed from minute to minute.

She noted the time of the change of colour too, because she wanted to remember this holiday, and this evening.

She could hear Cressmere nearby, crunching his way along the shingle.

She could see Buttermore standing on his tree trunk, a beautiful tree trunk, really.

And she could hear snatches of the conversation between Bessy and Old Man Coniston, as it drew steadily nearer and nearer as they walked in her direction.

She was interested in this conversation, too, for it was about slate, hills, lakes, mud, rocks, and not

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about the sea side, and that was a sure sign that Old Man Coniston was thinking about the village, the nearby lake, and the hills, and home.

Hone, how nice, and how nice to live in a village which was little more than a hop, skip and a jump away from the shores of a lake.

Not like the seaside, for the sea side needed some sort of transport, even a mini bus, and wasn't it kind of Museum Sandy to provide the mini bus for their just a mile or two journey home.

"Ahem" said Old Man Coniston.... "and there are, ahem, about four kinds of rock in our Lake District. Volcanics.... Silurian..." but Lady Windermere didn't hear all of the words.

She did hear Bassy's words, which seemed to drift along towards her quite distinctly..."I like the other kind of rock best, like pink peppermint rock, pineapple rock, raspberry rock, and lime rock."

Grasmere was crunching his way along the shingle and fast approaching Old Man Coniston and Bassy who were walking up the beach, and it looked as though they would all meet and then walk up to the dunes and Lady Windermere, or so the watching sand lizard thought.

He liked to listen to the Verdi Bears, although it was way past his bed time, and just rather cold for a small sand lizard to be out of his bed. Errr!

Grasmere laughed aloud when he heard Bassy speak words about sea side rock, the catable sort of

rock. Yes, he too was rather fond of eating sea side rock.

But he was luckier than Bessy, really, or so he thought, for he was also fond of collectable sea side rock, in pebble form, and he had been having a wonderful time this evening, for he had found all sorts of pebbles on his last look at the beach before time to go home.

He had found pebbles which seemed to have veins of other colours running through them, and pebbles which seemed to glisten as though they were a sort of glass...and he had now quite let his mind wander from the thought of Golden Eagles as he added yet another pebble to his paper bag almost full of pebbles held in a paw!

Ah, good, here were Old Man Coniston and Bessy walking up the beach towards him now that their walk along the beach in step with the donkeys was over, and here they met on the beach.

"Lots of blue and mauve and sandy pink sort of pebbles hereabouts at the moment" said Grasmere, as he allowed Old Man Coniston and Bessy to look at his pebble collection, newly gathered, and still rather damp.

He held the bag carefully, it being rather damp, and not wanting to lose any.

"I borrowed this paper bag from Lady Windermere. It is rather wonderful what she finds in her handbag, for she found a bag of chalky pastelly crayons in her handbag, in this bag here, and she thought it was caramels!"

he said.

"There seems to be a cricket's core on the bag I see" said Old Man Coniston, adjusting his monocle so that he may take a closer look.

"Cricket on the beach's core, I can tell by the runs we made" said Bessy, who seemed to know all about the score that day.

"Lady Windermere said that as time was a-fleeing, or something like that, she would use the crayons to crayon the colours of the sky dry, and dispense with the water in the saucers, or something...and that's how she decided to let me borrow the paper bag," said Grasmere. "She is making the most wonderful colours on her painting papers with the chalky crayons..."

Grasmere, Bessy, and Old Man Coniston, now began walking towards Lady Windermere, who seemed to be working extremely quickly, and glancing at her watch from time to time.

And now, they had arrived at the place where Lady Windermere was sitting painting.

"Lots of blue and mauve colours in the sky now" she said to them, as they stood near her and watched her working.

And now there were streaks of pink and gold in the sky too.

"All these blue and mauve and pink and gold colours remind me of lupins in the garden!" said Bessy.

"I like the pink colours in the sky best of all!"

"I have lots of pink shells in this paper bag, Bessy, and I will make a necklace for you one day" said Grasmere,

sounding as though he really meant it.

He held the bag of pebbles in two paws now, worried that his precious pebbles would drop through the damp paper.

Lady Windermere handed him a plastic bag, which had been neatly folded in her handbag, and which had once held a damp flannel.

"I could start a very interesting story about this damp bag, and these heavy pebbles" laughed Grasmere..... "it would read..... once upon a time there was a magic paper bag which would not stay full....."

And handing him another brown paper bag, and a felt tip pen, Lady Windermere said "Just write the lines on here before you forget them, just don't spoil the cricket scores on the other side.."

"It would be a shame not to start an interesting story, wouldn't it, Old ManConiston" said Grasmere, always eager to start a story with a good opening line.

One of the pebbles had dropped at Old Man Coniston's feet, so he picked it up, and handed it to Bessy, for safe keeping. "New Red Sandstone is very interesting" he said, nodding in the direction of the pebble as it lay on her small flat of the paw.

"Oh dear" sighed Bessy. "You aren't going to talk about millions of years ago mud are you, Old Man Coniston?"

"Ahem" said Old Man Coniston, as he adjusted his monocle, and began to speak once more.

But Bessy had more to say. "I don't like petrified fossil objects, I like nowadays, and young trees sprouting out of beech nuts and chestnuts, and I don't really like to hear about our clean lakes being old, and our hills just old stones made of pushed up hot lava gone cold and covered with grass! Of course, I like grass, and daisies."

She picked up a green chalky crayon, and handed it to Lady Windermere.

"Put me some bright green grass on a drawing, for I don't like evening colours, actually, I like mornings and morning colours, and I would like one day to see the morning become coloured perhaps from under a tent if we camped..." and here she yawned.

Old Man Coniston began to wonder if perhaps he had allowed the young Verdi Bears to stay out of doors too long, and this talk of camping would have to be stopped now, for if there was anything he just couldn't tolerate, it was camping! No Sires, he wasn't one to think of going camping!

But Bessy had still more to ask, "Do Golden Eagles sing, Old Man Coniston. Poor Grammere, he hasn't seen a golden eagle here at the sea side, and we are going home in a few minutes..."

Everyone turned to look now at Grammere, who was looking at his pebbles through the side of the plastic bag.

"While I was looking for golden eagles, I looked down and saw that if one faces the sun when one

looks for pebbles, the pebbles gleam as the sun shines on them and through the glassy ones as they lie along the shingle. I didn't see a golden eagle of course, but I have enjoyed myself, truly I have, even without seeing a golden eagle."

Greasmere had said all he wanted to say about golden eagles, and pebbles, and began pointing out just how many pinky pebbles there were.

"The New Red Sandstone was produced hereabouts by hot conditions which followed..." began Old Man Coniston, but Bessy lost interest, as did Lady Windermere.

So as Bessy walked away just a very short distance, Lady Windermere began chalking a green beach, just to make a change....while she kept an eye on Bessy from time to time.

Lady Windermere felt rather cold now, for the evening was progressing quickly towards bed time.

She knew just what Bessy was about to do, and smiled, and watched, and waited for Bessy's words which were about to be said, just loud enough for them all to hear.

"See, the lizard didn't like the cabbage yogurt either" she laughed, as she scraped out today's cabbage yogurt out of the carton. "Here is the other one I scraped out for the lizard the other day", and then she said "even seagulls don't seem to like it either!"

Sure enough, the other day's cabbage yogurt seemed

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to be untouched.

Bassy was so right not to like cabbage yogurt, thought the watching sand lizard. He himself certainly did not like cabbage yogurt, neither did the seagulls!

He watched Bassy now place an apple on the sand, and a sandwich. Were they for himself? Was she still trying to be kind to him?

He liked these Verdi Bears, that was for sure, and the thought of this being the last time he would see them this week made him just a little sad.

It would be nice to live near the Verdi Bears, perhaps even at this Calf Country Farm they often spoke of, but this was his territory, his appointed place. This was where he lived.

So, from the top of the sand dune, the brave little lizard blinked back a lizardy tear. One had to be brave when was a little sand lizard, and no mistake, he thought.

"This apple is for the little sand lizard, or if he doesn't like apples, then perhaps the apple could be for a Blue Whale called Lucy who might just be stranded on the beach one day, and this sandwich is for the little lizard, or perhaps for a mermaid or a seagull..." said Bassy with a yawn.

But she still had one more task, so it seemed, for she now scooped up some sand with the empty cabbage yogurt carton, and said, as she returned to where Lady Windermere was sitting chalking green grass, or crayoning green grass, under a mauve sky.

There was still a lot of blue and mauve to paint, or crayon, or chalk, and there were still some beautiful clouds, which had all been just a few minutes earlier a beautiful peach colour floating in a sort of hedgesparrow blue sky.

Wonderful to see colours change, thought Lady Windermere.

The small, tired, sand lizard, watching Lady Windermere sitting quietly looking into the far horizon, couldn't help thinking that probably not since the beginning of time, when a master hand had created the world, had such skill been seen, when the world one big empty canvas had been been, and colour and shapes had to be created, for a sand lizard seldom if ever saw a painter, and therefore sometimes could be quite amazed at how clever painters could be.

Same with writing sort of people, for the start of Grasmere's story had sounded rather interesting. The story about paper bags....and now he yawned.

My word, but he was tired!

As Lady Windermere packed away her chalks and pencils into her handbag, Bessy held the sand-filled yogurt carton up to Grasmere and Old Man Coniston, and said, "I heard some of your words about sandstone, and I thought I might be able to make an experiment if I left this sand on the fender to warm when we get home..."

Grasmere touched the cold sand which filled the yogurt carton. "The sand is cold, it might be a good experiment, worth trying, what do you say Old Man Coniston, perhaps we can learn about sand one day?"

Old Man Coniston was looking around him, it had been a wonderful holiday, and no mistake.

The beach seemed cool, damp, smooth, and a very cold sort of breeze blew, and one could hear it, rather like a summer breeze over a corn field.

He smiled, "yes, a good experiment Oresmere, when we get home."

There seemed to be a fine sand being carried along in the breeze, about knee high. Interesting how sand drifted, thought Old Man Coniston.

Of course, lessons about the sea side could be continued perhaps when one was snowed in. It would make a change from painting in the Wild Flower Picture Gallery.

As Lady Windermere packed more papers into her portfolio and handbag, she smiled as she listened to some of the words being spoken by Old Man Coniston, to the two young Verdi Bears who were now yawning.

She rather suspected that Old Man Coniston made an error or two, now and again, but she couldn't prove it. One day, of course, Oresmere might be able to spot the errors, if there were any of course!

"Silurian rock of course, gives us rock suitable for dry stone walling, which we see near our village" said Old Man Coniston happily.

Was he sure about that, for walls were walls, thought Lady Windermere. She herself didn't know what dry stone walling consisted of. Oh dear.

Trouble was, how did one know for sure, after all, geology wasn't something which interested her greatly. Perhaps one day she might take more interest, try to keep up with the young ones! They were fast learners becoming quite knowledgeable!

There was so much to know about the Lake District, some human beings seemed to know some of the facts, others knew different facts.

Perhaps Verdi Bears knew different facts.

And now Lady Windermere yawned.

But Old Man Coniston seemed to be wide awake; indeed, he began talking about fossils...

"Carboniferous was the time when we were once more submerged under the sea, and the limestone rock formed from the silt on the sea-bed left behind numerous fossils..."

"Like some of the shells we are taking home?" asked Bessy. "If we take all of our shells and seaweed and pebbles home, do you think someone might think it a sort of miracle to see all of those in our garden and garden shed one day?"

"Bessy," said Old Man Coniston. "If a Martian landed in my back garden and saw inside my garden shed after we unload all of our treasures tonight, they will think it miraculous. Indeed, I would go as far as to say that if we get all of our driftwood pebbles luggage and <sup>sea-</sup>shells into the mini bus at all, that indeed will be the miracle!"

And here they all laughed.

"Buttermere won't be able to take his tree trunk home!" laughed Lady Windermere, feeling rather sorry for him.

And now they all looked towards Buttermere, who was standing on his tree trunk, which in this evening light was taking on the shape of a crocodile, or so thought Bessy.

Butternore stood on the tree trunk, and faced the sea, and began thinking...

Somewhere out there was Australia - the upside down country - where Boomerangs grew on boomerang trees - his arms outstretched, one at either side.

Standing thus, he could keep balanced - he could keep standing straight... Boomerangs turned around... so he turned around... and faced the distant hills.

But it was evening now, the colours weren't so clear to see, everything seemed to be blue grey. But his village would still be there in that direction, of that he was sure.

The colours would be there in the village in the morning, and there would be dew on the hedges, and the hens would be laying eggs again, and he would be so glad to be home.

He stepped down from his tree trunk, which seemed to look like a prehistoric sort of creature when the sun wasn't shining brightly on it.

He ran to Lady Windermere and the others, but before he could ask if the village would still be there and could they please go home now... Bessy said "time to go home, and I for one am very pleased."

Bessy looked very happy, and added, "You see, I think birds tell us about bygone days, and the seagulls in particular tell us of the wonders of the deep... but they can't sing. For certain sure, sea birds

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can't sing...and that is why I am glad this holiday is over, for I seem to need blackbirds singing all around me and all over the place..."

And now the Verdi Bears began walking along the beach...they were going home.

From the top of a sand dune, the brave little lizard watched them, and now they were almost out of sight.

But then a strange thing happened, for he could see Bassy turn and look along the beach, and he was sure he could hear her voice, or was it all his imagination? Did he hear her voice call "The beach is all yours again, we are all going home!"

Yes, indeed, Bassy was sending him a message, she was calling to him from the far end of the beach.

Errrr...it was cold now, and becoming darker by the second, and it was well past his bed time.

"Goodbye Verdi Bears" said the little Sand Lizard, but then a strange thing happened, for Bassy said to the others "I am sure I heard the little Sand Lizard say goodbye to us".

So the Verdi Bears ended their holiday at the Golden Sea Side by saying goodnight to the lizard as they left the beach, saying it quietly of course, in case he was by this time asleep.

Shortly after this, the Verdi Bears all returned happily home, holidays of course, wouldn't be holidays, if they lasted for ever.

Absolutely everyone knows that!

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A RESTING SEA BIRD

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Rest on waves, Sea Bird,  
Mid Driftwood  
And Seaweed  
And watch our coast.

See us picking up shells and pebbles  
On the shingle,  
And looking into Rock Pools  
Searching for Mermaids.

Or just sleep...sleep...sleep

Ahoy there!  
Waken up, Sea Bird,  
The beach is your own again,  
We are all going home!

Yes...the beach is all yours again...  
we are all going home...home...home!

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