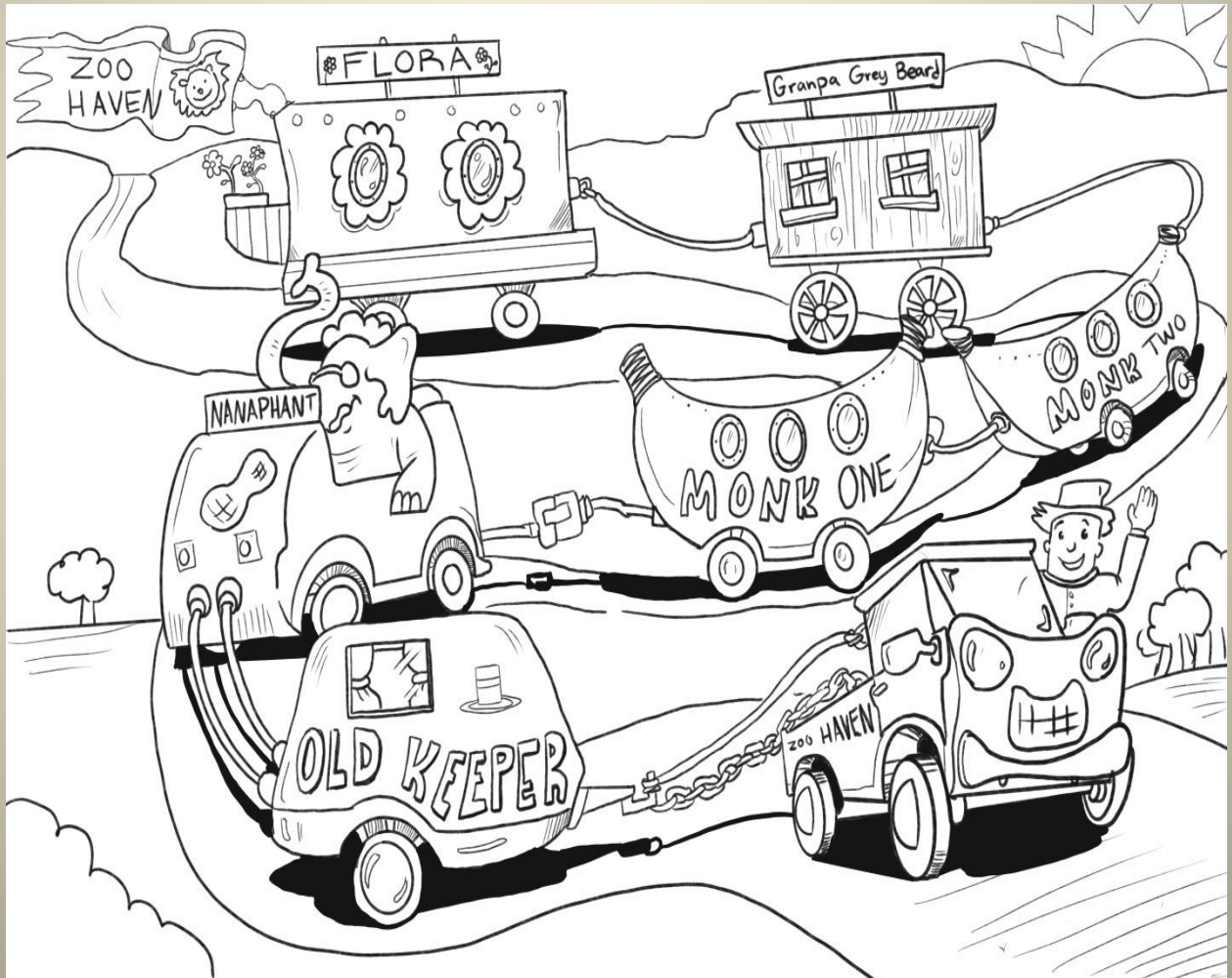


OSTRICHES RUN IN OUR FAMILY

Story by Kaylah Fassbender and
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Chapter 1

In which we meet Flora the ostrich

Once upon a time there was a cozy little town snuggled amid vast fields where everyone knew everyone else, but strangers were always welcome. Indeed, the people there were so friendly it was no surprise they named their town Friendly.

The Friendly folk even put up a big sign on the road into town that said:

Town of Friendly

Population 502

New Citizens Welcome

Every summer Friendly held a fair, and the animals of Zoo Haven came to the fair to entertain the Friendly children and their parents. Zoo Haven was the name of the caravan that was home to the Old Keeper and the five animals he cared for—Nanaphant, Grampa Greybeard, the two Uncle Monks and Flora.

Nanaphant was a gentle old elephant. She was lame and could not walk far, but she loved to dip the end of her long trunk into the Friendly River to draw water to sprinkle on the children when they came to the fair on those hot summer days. The children loved Nanaphant's Sprinkler Party.

Grampa Greybeard was a kindly old lion. He had lost his teeth many years ago, and his claws were no longer sharp. The children loved to climb on Grampa Greybeard and snuggle in his paws while the littlest ones tugged on his fluffy grey beard to see if it was real.

The Uncle Monks were two old monkeys who were no longer nimble enough to climb trees but who loved to perform magic tricks dressed in monkey-sized capes that swirled whenever they moved. They did not have a white rabbit to pull out of a magician's hat so the Uncle Monks took turns pulling each other out of big black top hat with a false bottom. It was

everyone's favorite magic trick. The old Uncle Monks performed the trick so well that the children were always amazed when one of the Uncle Monks popped out of the hat. The Uncle Monks also solved puzzles very quickly and played card tricks with the older children. The Uncle Monks always let the children win.

Flora was a quiet young ostrich who did not perform tricks. Flora simply stood still in front of a sign that said Flora, The World's Biggest Bird. Flora felt sad because she had no tricks to offer the children.

Each animal had their own wagon in the caravan, and each wagon was furnished with a comfy bed made to order and stylish curtains. The children of Friendly always gathered to wave to the Zoo Haven caravan as it slowly bumped its way down Friendly's Main Street to the Friendly fairgrounds. And of course Nanaphant, Grampa Greybeard, the Uncle Monks and Flora and the Old Keeper always waved back. They loved children, especially the children who lived in Friendly.

The animals of Zoo Haven had lived together for quite a long time, but they hadn't always lived with the Old Keeper. They had once belonged to a cruel circus trainer who locked them into a tiny cage in the middle of a dark forest every night. By day, the cruel trainer forced the poor animals to work long hours entertaining people with circus tricks in big noisy cities. The cruel trainer treated the animals badly. She yelled at them when they were too tired to perform their tricks and fed them rotten old food and dirty green water.

One day the Old Keeper came to see the poor animals perform. He was sad to see how badly they were treated and he knew he must save them from their cruel trainer. So the Old Keeper gave all of his money to the cruel trainer in exchange for setting the animals free. Now thanks to the Old Keeper the animals got the best care. The Old Keeper made sure they had enough good food to eat and clean water to drink. The Old Keeper treated the animals like dear

friends, and in turn they thought of him as a dear friend too.

Well, life went on as usual for the Zoo Haven animals and the Old Keeper until one hot summer day Flora the ostrich made a decision that would change their lives forever.

Chapter 2

In which Flora begins her new life

On that day, when it was time for the Old Keeper and the animals of Zoo Haven to leave Friendly for the next town, Flora decided not to go with them. She had grown restless watching the other animals entertain the children while she herself did nothing.

"I am tired of just being the World's Biggest Bird," Flora told herself. "I want to find out what else I can be."

"We won't stand in your way," said the Old Keeper when he heard Flora's plan. "You're young, and the rest of your life lies ahead of you. But please, don't forget us."

And so, young Flora hugged old Nanaphant, Grampa Greybeard, the Uncle Monks and the Old Keeper as big ostrich tears fell upon her golden feathered cheeks.

Yes, it was true that Flora was sad to say goodbye to her old friends, but it was also true that she had made up her mind to see where the future would lead her. As she gave each friend a last kiss she told herself with great certainty, "It is time for me to see what else I can be, but I will never forget my old friends."

She waved as the Zoo Haven caravan moved slowly up Main Street on its way to the next town.

For the first time in her life, young Flora was homeless. Of course, she was a little sad, but she was also a little excited to find out what would happen next.

Chapter 3

In which Flora receives an invitation

Flora was not homeless for long. Every summer when Zoo Haven came to Friendly, Kaylah and her brothers and sisters—Austin, Will, the Triplets and the Twins—came especially to see Flora. They loved all the animals, but they loved Flora the best. They loved her because she was so tall and had such pretty golden brown feathers and long fluttery eyelashes and because she was so gentle. Kaylah had been watching the tears falling onto Flora’s feathery cheeks as the young ostrich waved goodbye to her Zoo Haven friends.

Kaylah turned to her brothers and sisters. “Let’s invite Flora to live with us,” she said.

The Triplets and the Twins were so excited they bounced up and down like basketballs on a court. “Yes please, an ostrich,” they screamed at once. “We want an ostrich in our family!” Austin and Will agreed that an ostrich would be most welcome to join them at home on Malcolm Street.

And so it was decided that Kaylah would introduce herself to Flora. “Hi Flora, I’m Kaylah. And this is Austin and Will, and these are the Triplets and here are the Twins. We noticed your home has gone and left you behind. Would you like to live with us? We think you would fit in well with our family.”

Flora did not say a word as she carefully considered what she should do. All at once she knew that something interesting was bound to happen if she accepted Kaylah’s kind invitation. And so Flora bobbed her feathery head “yes” and followed her new friends to her new home.

Chapter 4

In which Flora meets Lucky

Kaylah and her brothers and sisters lived in a big old house on Malcolm Street. In the small backyard coop, lived Lucky and the Girls. The Girls were two

large hens with long yellow legs and glossy black feathers who followed Lucky everywhere. Lucky was a small brown hen with a tilted comb that was torn in places and had faded over the years from bright crimson to a dull rusty orange. When Lucky was younger, she had chased away raccoons and foxes and even now defended the Girls against all intruders. Everyone knew that Lucky was the boss of the backyard coop.

Lucky was therefore not happy that such a remarkably big bird as Flora had come to stay. And so she scowled, "That bird is way too big. She won't fit into the coop."

Flora remained as quiet as ever, but Will could see her feelings were hurt. "Don't worry," he told her. "I will build you a nice big ostrich house."

Will made some initial calculations and then he and Austin invited Flora to ride with them in the van to the Friendly hardware store to meet Fred. Fred worked in the building supply section.

As it turned out, Flora preferred to race alongside the van instead of riding inside. There were two reasons for this. First, she was too big to fit comfortably into the van, and second she wanted to find out how fast she could run.

"You were running at just over 55 kilometres an hour," Austin told Flora, as he pulled into the parking lot of the hardware store. "The speed limit around here is 50."

Flora's swiftness had attracted a fair amount of attention. A crowd was forming, and Friendly folk were staring at her.

Will and Austin held the door open for Flora and led her to the back of the store where they found Fred sitting on a stool eating a peanut butter sandwich. She was on her lunch break.

"Fred, we need your help," said Will. Fred stopped eating as soon as she saw Flora.

"What kind of help?" asked Fred.

"This is Flora," explained Will. "We are building her an ostrich house because she's too big for the chicken coop."

Fred nodded. She jammed the rest of the sandwich into her mouth and hopped down from the stool. She looked up at Flora. "We will need to measure you, Flora, because you're going to need a very big house," said Fred. She rummaged around in a drawer and pulled out a measuring tape. She moved the stool closer to Flora and climbed on top. She held one end of the measuring tape against the top of Flora's head and let the rest of the tape dangle to the floor.

"Nine feet tall," said Will. He was looking at the numbers on the tape. Then Fred led Flora to the aisle where they kept the scales. She pulled out a set of jumbo scales. "Climb on," she told Flora.

"350 pounds," said Will. He was reading the dial on the scale.

"You'll need the strongest material and lots of it," said Fred.

Fred gathered everything they would need and helped Austin and Will load up the van. Racing back to Malcolm Street, Flora made sure she stayed under the speed limit.

That afternoon, Lucky and the Girls and Flora watched everyone build Flora's new house.

When it was done, Flora bobbed her head vigorously and fluttered her lovely long lashes. She was clearly happy.

But Lucky was not. The small brown hen turned to the Girls and hissed, "That house is way bigger and way nicer than ours."

Lucky's yellow eyes had narrowed to slits, like a snake's eyes before it strikes.

Chapter 5

In which Flora discovers a hidden talent

Lucky looked up at Flora. "You may have a big fancy house but I bet you can't fly as well as I can," she cackled.

Lucky flapped and fluttered her wings. Then she took off in a wobbly line toward the fence. She was aloft for a few moments before she lost her balance and tumbled onto the compost pile.

She quickly stood up. "I bet you can't fly like that." Lucky brushed bits of carrot peel and old toast crumbs from her feathers. She seemed quite pleased with herself.

Flora had never had a reason to fly before, but she was determined to try now.

So she crouched down and sprang up as high as she could, then she flapped and fluttered her large wings as she had seen Lucky do.

Alas, no matter how hard Flora flapped her wings, it was no use. She could not take flight, although it was clear she could jump remarkably high. And so, after leaping to a great height, she plopped down onto the compost pile beside Lucky.

Flora sighed. "I guess ostriches don't fly."

"I guess they don't," cackled Lucky. She didn't comment on Flora's amazing leap. Lucky waddled off. It was time for her afternoon dust bath with the Girls. She did not invite Flora to join them.

So Flora continued to sit slumped in the compost pile by herself staring at her beautiful new ostrich house. She was feeling frustrated for a number of reasons. First, it seemed certain that she could not fly, and although she could leap she was not sure how useful leaping would be. And second, she hadn't any idea how to encourage Lucky to be her friend. She sat staring at her new house for a few more moments until she thought of something. She stood up, shook herself off and wandered over to Lucky and the Girls. They were stretched out sunning their scaly yellow

legs. The three hens were barely recognizable because they had coated their feathers in a fine film of grey dust.

Flora pointed to the ostrich house. "I would like to share my new house with all of you."

Lucky turned to the Girls and nodded.

"Great," cackled Lucky. "We will move right in. You can sleep outside."

Flora sighed. She was deeply discouraged. This was not what she had planned.

"Will Lucky ever be my friend?" Flora wondered.

Chapter 6

In which Flora disappears

The next morning when the Triplets came out to collect eggs from Lucky and the Girls, they found the chicken coop empty.

The Triplets found Lucky and the Girls and their eggs inside the ostrich house.

Then they discovered Flora sleeping on the ground beside the ostrich house.

"The chickens are living in the ostrich house, and Flora is sleeping outside on the ground," the Triplets told Kaylah as they handed her the basket of eggs. Kaylah was busy buttering toast for breakfast.

Kaylah stopped buttering toast and went out to the coop to find that indeed it was empty and Lucky and the Girls were inside the ostrich house and Flora was sleeping outside on the ground.

"Thank you for your eggs," Kaylah said to Lucky and the Girls. "But I am not happy that you have moved into Flora's new house while Flora sleeps outside."

Kaylah stood looking at the hens for a few moments with her arms crossed and a serious expression on her face. She was thinking of what she might do to help Flora. After much thought, Kaylah decided to let

Flora work things out for herself and she went back into the kitchen.

Lucky turned to Flora.

"We hens are special because we lay eggs every day," Lucky cackled. "So far this morning you have not laid a single egg. You don't fly, and you don't lay eggs. What kind of bird are you?"

And so it was that on the following mornings the Triplets gathered eggs from Lucky and the Girls, bringing them to Kaylah to scramble up for breakfast, while Flora herself with her large lashy eyes downcast looked increasingly ashamed. Morning after morning, no matter how hard Flora pushed, or how long she sat, no egg appeared to reward her effort and patience.

Until one morning something happened. On that morning the Triplets came out to collect the eggs, but they found that Flora was missing.

Chapter 7

In which Flora accidentally starts a party

Everyone looked everywhere for Flora.

At last, the Twins found her. They squealed. Then they pointed.

Flora was sitting on a bed of straw behind the old shed opposite the compost pile.

When Flora stood up, she revealed her surprise.

It was a giant egg.

Judging by the rapid fluttering of her lashes, Flora was pleased with herself.

At last, she had laid an egg. Flora hoped that now Lucky would see she was a real bird.

When everyone saw the magnificent egg they hooted and hollered.

"Whoa, Flora!"

"Wow!"

“Amazing!”

“Flora, you have laid the biggest egg in the world!” shouted Kaylah.

And indeed Flora had laid a remarkable egg.

“We can’t carry this giant egg into the kitchen by ourselves,” said Austin. “It’s way too big.”

“And eggs are delicate so we can’t roll it,” said Will.

“We need something to carry it into the kitchen.”

So everyone went to look for something to help bring the giant egg into the kitchen.

Will and Austin came back pushing the Twins in their old baby buggy.

“We can use this to carry Flora’s giant egg into the kitchen,” said Austin.

Then everyone noticed Flora. She was staring mournfully at her precious egg.

Yellow yolk was dribbling out of the egg.

Something had poked holes all over the thick shell.

“Flora, what happened to your egg?” Kaylah shrieked.

Will turned to Lucky. The small brown hen was slowly backing away.

“Look,” he said, pointing at Lucky. Yellow yolk was dripping from Lucky’s beak.

It was immediately clear what had happened.

“I’m sorry that Lucky poked holes in your egg, Flora,” said Kaylah. “That was a mean thing to do. She’s jealous of your beautiful egg. But now we must do something before all the yolk leaks onto the ground.”

Kaylah rushed into the kitchen and came back with a big pan. Austin and Will slipped the pan under the giant egg.

Then they lifted the egg into the buggy and everyone helped push it into the kitchen.

The contents of the giant egg filled four big bowls.

"There will be way too much scrambled egg for us to eat by ourselves," said Kaylah.

"We should share it," said Will.

"Let's have a big scrambled egg party and invite the whole town," said Austin.

"Hurray," everyone shouted. And they all set to work getting ready for the Big Scrambled Egg Party.

Chapter 8

In which a party ends with an unfortunate development

"Triplets, you can make the invitations," said Kaylah. The Triplets immediately brought out the basket of crayons they shared and some fancy paper while Kaylah dictated the following words: ***Please come to the Big Scrambled Egg Party on Malcolm Street.***

"Flora can carry the Twins around town to deliver the invitations," said Will. "I will go with them." Everyone was getting excited about the party.

Will constructed ostrich seats so the Twins could ride on Flora's back, and Kaylah sewed a giant purse to hang around Flora's neck to hold the invitations.

When everything was ready, Will strapped the Twins into their ostrich seats and hopped on behind. Everyone wore crash helmets and flight goggles, and when Flora momentarily reached 55 kilometres an hour, which was above the legal speed limit, they giggled and hooted for joy as their shirts streamed behind them in the wind of their flight. Along the way they hopped down to hand out invitations to all the neighbours, to the Friendly firefighters at the Fire Station, to Mayor Chrysta at the Friendly Town Hall, to Fred and everyone else at the Friendly hardware store, and to all the students and teachers at the Friendly High School.

All the Friendly folk came to the Big Scrambled Egg Party on Malcolm Street. And everyone agreed that

ostrich eggs were very sweet and fluffy, and they thanked Flora for her wonderful giant egg.

The Party went on all day and into the evening. As the darkening sky slowly sprinkled itself with stars, the laughter of the Friendly folk floated on the warm summer air across the green fields and into neighbouring towns and villages.

When everyone had gone home full of scrambled egg and laughter, and only the moon and the stars lit the night, Kaylah told everyone a bedtime story she had made up herself.

Then the sleepy Twins and the Triplets kissed Flora and Lucky and the Girls goodnight and everyone climbed into bed and fell dreaming of the wonderful party.

But the events of the day would not end there.

Someone at the Big Scrambled Egg Party had accidentally dropped a small white object, as small as your baby finger, onto the sun-dried grass in front of the house on Malcolm Street. And that small white object lay there still while coils of white smoke climbed from its glowing red end into the sparkly sky.

Chapter 9

In which Flora and Lucky work together to save the day

Suddenly Flora woke up.

She smelled something terrible.

Smoke was creeping toward her.

It was coming from the front yard.

Flora raced to the front of the house.

Fire!

She looked up to see the Twins and the Triplets and Austin and Will and Kaylah gathered at an upstairs bedroom window, their frightened faces staring down

at her. Austin and Will took turns trying to open the window but it wouldn't budge. They were trapped.

Flora knew what to do. She crouched down then leapt up with as much force as she could muster.

After several attempts, she was able to leap high enough to reach the bedroom window. She used her beak to poke the window pane as hard as she could.

But the glass would not break. It was too strong.

Flora knew she needed help.

She raced to the ostrich house where Lucky and the Girls were sleeping. Flora didn't say a word. Lucky saw right away how she could help.

Flora bent down.

Lucky fluttered onto Flora's head and held tight.

Then Flora leapt up to the bedroom window while Lucky pecked at the glass with her sharp little beak.

The two birds worked together, Flora leaping and Lucky pecking, until at last Lucky shattered the window. She fluttered down as everyone in turn climbed out the window, grabbed hold of Flora's long soft neck and slid to the ground.

When everyone was safe, Kaylah said to Flora and Lucky, "Thank you for saving us!"

"Now we must save the house," said Austin. "We need a neighbour's phone to call the firefighters."

"We can't wait," said Will. "We need help now. Flora, let's go straight to the Fire Station!" The Twins wanted to come too so Will strapped them into their ostrich seats and climbed onto Flora's back.

"Hurry Flora!" said Will.

Flora raced down Malcolm Street and around the corner to the Fire Station.

Would they get there in time?

Chapter 10

In which Flora and Lucky surprise everyone

“Please come quickly!” shouted Will to the Friendly firefighters. “Our house on Malcolm Street is burning!”

The firefighters hopped into their suits and right away started up the Friendly fire truck. Will and the Twins got to ride up front.

“Follow Flora!” shouted Will. Flora raced back to the burning house at top speed.

Everyone in Friendly gathered to watch the firefighters put out the fire and save the house on Malcolm Street. When every burning ember had been quenched, the Friendly folk shouted “Hurray!”

Kaylah told everyone how Flora had saved them from the fire.

“Show them how you did it, Flora,” said Kaylah.

Flora fluttered her lashes and shyly looked down at her feet. She turned to Lucky. It seemed to everyone that the two birds were smiling at each other.

Flora lowered her head to let Lucky flutter on top.

Then Flora crouched down and sprang up to the broken bedroom window. Lucky tapped her beak against the jagged pane to show how she had broken the glass.

“Amazing,” said Mayor Chrysta who had joined the crowd. “Flora and Lucky, that was great team work!”

The basketball coach from the Friendly high school was also amazed.

“Flora, your leaps are incredible! I hope you’ll join our team,” said the coach.

That night, everyone helped set up the big camping tent beside the damaged house. Kaylah continued her bedtime story and then everyone fell asleep dreaming of tomorrow.

Chapter 11

In which Flora and Lucky surprise everyone again

The following morning, Will got out his measuring tape and a pad of paper and a pencil. He needed to figure out what to buy at the hardware store to repair the damaged house.

Everyone in Friendly helped, including Lucky who hammered nails with her sharp little beak. She carried the nails in a tiny carpenter's pouch that Kaylah hung from her neck.

Finally the house on Malcolm Street looked as good as ever.

That night, the stars popped out of the sky one by one, and the moon shone bright as a lantern. It was the end of another long and exciting day.

Everyone gathered outside the ostrich house to hear Kaylah's bedtime story.

Then Lucky turned to Flora.

She pointed to the ostrich house. "There's plenty of room inside for you," Lucky murmured so quietly that no one but Flora could hear.

Flora smiled. At last, Lucky was her friend!

Chapter 12

In which Flora teaches everyone about team spirit

A few days later, the basketball coach from the Friendly high school knocked on the door of the ostrich house. Flora stepped outside.

"Tomorrow is the day of the big basketball game. Please come and join our team, Flora," said the coach. "I've seen how high you can jump. Our team needs you!"

Flora was happy to join the Friendly basketball team for two reasons. First, she loved leaping high, and second, she loved running fast. She knew that

basketball involved a lot of leaping and a lot of running.

The day of the big game, people came from neighbouring towns to see something they had never seen before: an ostrich playing basketball.

Every time Flora caught the basketball and leapt up to toss it into the net the Friendly crowd roared "Yay Flora".

Flora scored so many baskets in the first half of the game that the Friendly team and their coach were very happy. But the coach and the players from the other team were not happy.

"It's not fair," said the other coach to the Friendly coach. "You have an ostrich, and we don't."

So Flora came up with an idea that made everyone happy.

For the second half of the game, Flora took off her Friendly basketball jersey and played for the other team. Then everyone cheered. This was because Flora scored exactly as many baskets for the other team in the second half of the game as she scored for the Friendly team in the first half. The game ended in a tie! The two coaches shook hands and everybody got a ribbon with the words "We Tied".

"You're an amazing team player," the two coaches told Flora. Flora fluttered her lashes and shyly looked down at her feet.

But Flora's team work would not stop there.

Chapter 13

In which Flora misses her old friends

The days soon grew colder, and the leaves turned red and orange and yellow. At last, they let go of the trees and fell shivering to the ground where they made for themselves a colourful blanket.

As winter neared, Flora thought more and more of the happy times she had spent with the Old Keeper, Nanaphant, Grampa Greybeard and the Uncle Monks.

She loved her new friends, but she had promised the Old Keeper that she would never forget her old friends. She knew in her heart that she missed them.

Kaylah guessed that Flora was remembering her old friends. It didn't take Kaylah long to think of a way to cheer up her ostrich friend.

"Halloween is coming," said Kaylah. "Let's all go trick or treating dressed up as your Zoo Haven friends!"

This made Flora so happy that the young ostrich wrapped her gigantic wings around Kaylah and hugged her hard.

"Great idea," said Will. "We can build the caravan wagons, and Kaylah, you can sew the animal costumes."

While Will and Austin and Flora and Lucky and the Girls were busy hammering together the Halloween Zoo Haven caravan, Kaylah gathered the material she would need to sew the costumes.

They all worked so hard that by the time Halloween arrived everything was ready for the big night.

Flora was dressed up as the Old Keeper. Austin and Will were dressed as Grampa Greybeards, and Lucky and the Girls were dressed up as ostriches. The Twins had begged to dress up as the two Uncle Monks, and the Triplets and Kaylah were dressed up as Nanaphants.

Flora pulled the Halloween Zoo Haven caravan up and down every street in Friendly.

They stopped at the Fire Station, the hardware store, the high school and the Town Hall where Mayor Chrysta was handing out treats.

Mayor Chrysta said to Flora, "I wish your old friends at Zoo Haven would come back to Friendly and stay forever."

That night everyone wore their Zoo Haven costumes to bed, and they all fell asleep dreaming the same dream and wishing the same wish as Mayor Chrysta.

Would that wish come true? Would Zoo Haven come back forever?

Chapter 14

In which everyone gets ready for an extra special surprise

Well, the days grew even colder, and the nights grew longer and darker. Snow shook itself from the sky in sticky flakes that covered the ground and wrapped Malcolm Street in a cosy white blanket. Soon it would be time for holidays.

One bright day, Mayor Chrysta came to visit. Flora was outside helping Austin and Will hang coloured lights onto the highest branches of the tall spruce tree by the front door.

The Triplets were helping the Twins make snowmen. Lucky and the Girls were gathering small pebbles for the teeth and the eyes of the snowmen. Kaylah was inside baking cookies for everyone.

"I'd like you all to be part of the holiday festival," said Mayor Chrysta. "Kaylah can make the costumes. Austin and Will can build the stable for the nativity scene. The firefighters can use their ladder to lift Kaylah so she can place the star at the top of the holiday tree in the town square. Everyone in town can bring homemade presents to share. And this year I am planning an extra special surprise."

This was exciting news! Everyone got to work.

The day before the festival, Kaylah was putting the finishing touches on the costumes for the Triplets and the Twins, while outside Lucky and the Girls and Flora helped Will and Austin put together the final pieces of the stable and the manger for the nativity scene.

Kaylah's holiday cookies lay cooling in the kitchen, and their fragrance made everyone smile.

At last, the day of the Friendly holiday festival arrived.

The townsfolk brought their homemade presents to share. Some brought cookies and cakes and raspberry jam, while others brought train sets and wagons and wooden puppets and building blocks and

puzzles and doll furniture and pictures they had drawn and games they had invented and stories they had written.

They piled their gifts beneath the giant tree that rose like a colourful tower in the centre of the town square.

Everyone marvelled at the nativity scene that Will and Austin and Lucky and the Girls and Flora had built, and they loved to see the characters dressed up in Kaylah's costumes.

Flora was dressed up as an angel.

She carefully lifted the hem of her costume to reveal her special gift.

It was the biggest and most beautiful egg in the world! Flora had laid the egg that morning.

The Triplets and the Twins had decorated the huge egg with sprinkles and sequins and sparkles and colourful crayon drawings.

"Thank you everyone for coming to the festival and for sharing your wonderful gifts," said Mayor Chrysta. "Now I have a surprise."

She took out a bright green medal attached to a long red ribbon. She hung the ribbon around Flora's neck.

"This medal is for you, Flora," said Mayor Chrysta. "We are happy you have come to live in our town."

On the medal in shiny black letters were the words *Flora, Friendly Citizen*. As was her custom when receiving a compliment, Flora fluttered her lashes and shyly looked down at her feet.

Then it was time for Kaylah to climb onto the fire truck ladder that would lift her to the top of the holiday tree.

When Kaylah attached the sparkling star to the tip of the tree top, everyone cheered.

Then Kaylah noticed something.

"Look everyone!" she said. She pointed at something coming down Main Street.

The something was familiar.

The something made everyone cheer. "Hurray!"

Chapter 15

In which everyone's wish comes true

Indeed coming slowly down Main Street was the Zoo Haven caravan with the Old Keeper and all of the animals!

Flora could not believe what she was seeing.

She spread her wings wide and hugged the Old Keeper, Nanaphant, Grampa Greybeard and the Uncle Monks, and they hugged her back.

Then Mayor Chrysta stepped forward to make an announcement.

"On behalf of everyone in Friendly, I have invited the Old Keeper and the rest of the Zoo Haven troupe to live in our town forever. I have picked the perfect spot for them at the Friendly fairgrounds."

Once again, the Friendly folk screamed, "Hurray!" The Old Keeper and the animals were happy to accept.

They were tired of travelling.

They wanted to live close to Flora.

But that was not all.

"Look," shouted a small Friendly child, pointing.

"Another big bird! This big bird is black!" A strange bird stepped down from the Zoo Haven caravan. The bird was as big as Flora!

"And that is my last surprise," said Mayor Chrysta. "Please welcome the newest citizen of Friendly."

The big black bird trotted over to Flora.

"Everyone, say hello to Jack," said the Old Keeper. "He is a special new friend for Flora."

"Hello Jack!" said everyone.

Flora and Jack fluttered their long lashes and looked shyly down at their feet.

Then Jack and everyone else in Zoo Haven helped the Friendly folk build snow monkeys and snow ostriches and snow chickens and snow elephants and snow lions. Soon the Friendly town square was filled with snow creatures that glittered like star dust.

The snow creatures would melt many months later under the warm spring sun, but the animals of Zoo Haven would stay forever.



THE END

Super-fast ostrich facts

Ostriches can grow up to 9 feet (2.7 metres) tall and can weigh up to 320 lbs. (145 kilograms), according to the African Wildlife Foundation.

While the huge ostrich is a bird, it does not fly. Instead it runs. One stride can cover up to 16 feet (4.9 metres)—about the length of a mid-size family car!

The bird is speedy, too. It can run just over 40 miles (64 kilometres) an hour for a short distance, and can keep up a speed of more than 30 miles (48 kilometres) an hour over longer distances. The ostrich uses its short wings for balance, holding them outstretched when it runs. Strong legs can also be used for self-defence.

Ostrich eggs are the largest in the world. Each egg is 15 cm (6 inches) long, weighs 1.5 kg (3 lb.) and its shell is an eighth of an inch thick.