

Secrets Are Hard to Keep

by Saviour Pirotta

1 One day, as Niel was strolling down the road, he spotted a snake trapped between two rocks. Niel hated seeing a creature in trouble. He pulled apart the rocks carefully so that the snake could slither away.

2 “I owe you a reward,” said the snake. “Hold out your hand.” And the snake dropped a snake tooth into his palm.

3 “Wear it around your neck,” he whispered, “and you’ll understand everything that animals say. But if you reveal your secret, the charm won’t work anymore.”

4 “I won’t tell anyone,” Niel assured him.

5 The snake flicked out his tongue. “Beware! Secrets are hard to keep, my friend.”

6 That night, lying on the cot next to his wife, Niel heard mice scurrying across the floor.

7 “Will we find any injera bread in this hut, I wonder?” one mouse squeaked at another.

injera bread = a type of flatbread

8 Niel sat up in surprise, clasping his charm. He could understand the mouse’s squeaking.

9 “The people in this house never put food away correctly,” replied the second mouse. “We are going to feast like emperors.”

10 Niel couldn’t help laughing. The poor mice would be disappointed. He and his wife had eaten everything.

11 “Why are you laughing, Niel?” asked his wife.

12 “I can’t tell you,” replied Niel, remembering the snake’s warning.

13 In the morning, a milk seller knocked on the door of the hut.

14 “I hope that these people aren’t foolish enough to part with their money,”
Niel heard one cat say to another. “The master has watered down the milk.”

15 Niel laughed out loud again. Being able to understand animals seemed to
have a lot of benefits.

16 “What’s the big joke?” asked his wife. “Why can’t you tell me?”

17 “I have my reasons,” answered Niel. And he refused to say anything else.

18 Later that afternoon, Niel’s old aunt came to visit, riding on her big cow.

19 “It’s not fair, that woman riding on me in this heat,” the cow complained
to a stray cat. “She’s heavier than a cartload of mangoes.”

20 Niel tried hard not to giggle. Aunt Sora would be furious if she found out
what the big cow was saying about her!

21 “I’ve had enough!” fumed his wife. “If you don’t tell me what’s making
you laugh, I’m going home to my parents.”

22 Niel didn’t want to lose his wife—he loved her too much. He told her his
secret immediately, but his wife didn’t believe him.

23 Niel gave her the charm. “Here, you try it.”

24 But the charm had stopped working. Niel’s wife couldn’t understand what
the animals were saying, and when he put the charm around his neck again,
neither could Niel. The fun was over!

25 A few days later, Niel was resting under the mango tree when the snake
slithered past.

26 “I see that you have revealed your secret, my friend.”

27 “I did it for my wife,” said Niel ruefully.

28 “True love should be rewarded,” said the snake. “Put out your hand
again.”

29 The snake gave Niel a feather. “Wear it around your neck,” he said, “and
you will be able to understand everything that the birds say. But do not
reveal the secret to anyone, or the charm will stop working.”

30 “I’ve learned my lesson,” said Niel. “Nothing on this earth will make me
tell again.”

31 The snake rattled his tail and laughed. “I told you that secrets are hard to
keep, my friend. We’ll see how long you last this time.”

1

Read paragraphs 3 and 4 from the story.

“Wear it around your neck,” he whispered, “and you’ll understand everything that animals say. But if you reveal your secret, the charm won’t work anymore.”

“I won’t tell anyone,” Niel assured him.

Which word from paragraph 3 or 4 **best** helps the reader understand the meaning of the word “reveal”?

- A** whispered
- B** understand
- C** tell
- D** assured

2

Why does Niel clasp his charm in paragraph 8?

- A** He was afraid he would lose the charm.
- B** He could understand what the mouse was saying.
- C** He wanted to make sure the charm was still working.
- D** He could understand how the snake felt about secrets.

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3

How does Niel add to the problem in this story?

- A** He invites his aunt to come visit.
- B** He laughs at what the animals say.
- C** He gives the snake tooth to his wife.
- D** He helps eat all the food in the house.

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4

Which paragraph **best** explains the powers the charm has?

- A** paragraph 3
- B** paragraph 5
- C** paragraph 28
- D** paragraph 30

5

Read paragraph 31 from the story.

The snake rattled his tail and laughed. “I told you that secrets are hard to keep, my friend. We’ll see how long you last this time.”

Why does the snake say this to Niel?

- A** The snake thinks the secret is funny.
- B** The snake thinks Niel will tell someone the secret.
- C** The snake thinks the wife will figure out the secret.
- D** The snake thinks his friendship with Niel is more valuable than secrets.

6

Which statement **best** describes a lesson learned from this story?

- A** Secrets can often be entertaining.
- B** Secrets are not very useful.
- C** Rewards should not be taken for granted.
- D** Rewards can be more trouble than they are worth.

While on vacation with his parents and digging for dinosaur fossils, Benny makes a surprising discovery—young boys are not the only creatures who lose teeth.

Digging for Dinos

by Charnan Simon

- 1 Digging for dinosaurs was hot work. Benny sat back on his heels and took a long drink from his water bottle. At first, when Mom and Dad had told him they were going on a dinosaur dig for vacation, he'd been excited. He'd bragged to his friends that he'd find the skeleton of a never-before-discovered dinosaur. The *Benosaurus*, they'd probably name it.
- 2 But the real dig wasn't at all what he'd expected. For starters, he wasn't even digging. "No shovels," Dave, the paleontologist in charge, told them. "Any dinosaur bones buried here should be within a couple of feet of the surface. We don't want to risk clunking around and breaking them." Then he'd handed out ice picks and paint brushes and showed everyone how to chip and brush away sand and dirt, slowly and carefully, a little bit at a time.
- 3 "The most important thing is knowing where to look," Dave said. "Some rocks aren't old enough to have dinosaur bones. Other rocks are too old. We've studied this area before and found lots of fossils, so I'm hopeful you'll find some too!"
- 4 Well, that had been two days ago, and so far the most exciting thing Benny had found was that his front tooth was loose. He wiggled it now. If he couldn't find any dinosaur bones, at least he could show his friends back home that he'd lost another tooth.
- 5 Dave crouched beside Benny. "How's it going?" he asked.
- 6 "OK," Benny said. It didn't seem very nice to say that he was bored. "This is pretty slow."
- 7 Dave nodded. "Yep," he agreed. "It's hard work. Sometimes paleontologists and fossil hunters look for weeks without finding anything. And we hardly ever find a whole skeleton." He added, "You know, Ben, if you're tired of searching, you can always help someone else on the crew."

- 8 Benny looked around the dry, rocky hillside. Dave's assistants were busy taking photographs and drawing pictures and making charts. Some were using GPS devices to make maps of the area. Some were writing in notebooks. Dave said it was important to take good field notes, to record exactly what you did and where you were when you looked for fossils.
- 9 Benny thought holding the GPS tool might be fun, but he wasn't giving up. "I'll keep looking," he said. "But," he added, thinking out loud, "the pictures always show dinosaurs in swampy places. Did they live in deserts, too?"
- 10 "Ahh," said Dave. "Some probably did, but not around here. Millions of years ago, this wasn't desert. It was wet and green and lush. The Earth's changed a lot since the time of the dinosaurs." Dave slapped Benny on the back and got to his feet. "Keep up the good work, Ben," he said encouragingly. "I think today will be your lucky day!"
- 11 Pick, chip, brush, and sweep. Benny bent over his patch of rocky ground and carefully cleared away the sand and gravel. When he needed a break, he wiggled his loose tooth. The sun climbed higher and hotter into the sky. He was getting into the rhythm of things. Either that, or the heat was just making him drowsy.
- 12 And then it happened. "My tooth!" Benny said, surprised. He stared down at the dirt.
- 13 "MY TOOTH!" Benny whooped. "My dinosaur tooth! I found a real, live dinosaur tooth!"
- 14 Dave hurried over to look, careful not to disturb the ground in front of Benny's find. "Well, I'll be!" he said. "It's a tooth all right!"
- 15 "What kind is it?" Benny asked excitedly. "Is it *T. rex*? *Apatosaurus*? *Triceratops*?"
- 16 Dave laughed, but he kept studying the fossil in the ground. "Well, Ben," he finally said, "I've seen a lot of dinosaur teeth, but this one's different. I think you may have found one we haven't seen before. Good job!"

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7

Based on paragraphs 2 and 7, a “paleontologist” is a person who **mainly**

- A** digs deep in the ground
- B** studies ancient animal bones
- C** leads a big team
- D** finds complete animal skeletons

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8

Read this sentence from paragraph 7.

He added, “You know, Ben, if you’re tired of searching, you can always help someone else on the crew.”

What does this show about Dave?

- A** He is concerned that Ben may be feeling unhappy.
- B** He hopes that Ben will work harder than he has been.
- C** He needs Ben to work with some of the others in the group.
- D** He is worried that Ben will become careless with the tools.

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9

Paragraphs 9 through 11 show that Benny

- A** knows about changes that took place over time
- B** prefers working in cooler weather
- C** enjoys thinking out loud
- D** continues to work hard

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10

Which paragraph shows a change in Benny's feelings?

- A** paragraph 4
- B** paragraph 8
- C** paragraph 9
- D** paragraph 12

11

How is the dig different from what Benny thought it would be?

- A** Benny uses brushes rather than shovels.
- B** Benny did not expect the land to be so hilly.
- C** Benny did not expect to find so many workers.
- D** Benny has to help the assistants.

Animals need to play just like humans. Through play, both humans and animals can learn about the dangers in our world.

Why Do Animals Play?

by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld

- 1 Puppies love to run and tumble. They chase each other around the yard. They wrestle and nip each other gently. A kitten will pounce on a toy mouse or leap high for a piece of yarn.
- 2 Why do animals play? For the same reason YOU play—because it’s FUN! But there is more to animal play than just fun. For animals in the wild, play is important to their very survival. Young animals have to learn about their world. They have to exercise their muscles and practice all the skills they will need to be successful adults.
- 3 Sometimes a young deer will leap and frolic. With each twisting, twirling dance, the fawn’s legs are getting stronger. It is learning how to run fast and zigzag to confuse predators. That will keep it safe when it is time to leave its mother’s side.
- 4 While deer have to learn to escape from predators, young lion cubs must learn how to hunt. When a cub is little, it stalks its brother or sister. It will slink along on crouched legs. When the moment seems right, the cub pounces! The other cub bats back with its paws and wriggles free.
- 5 The cubs keep their claws in, though, and their bites are gentle. The cubs are not trying to hurt each other. They are playing at being great hunters. This is practice for the real thing.
- 6 Wolves live in family groups called packs. When the pups are grown up, they will hunt together and watch out for each other. So, they must learn to communicate.
- 7 A wolf pup signals another pup that she wants to play. She stretches out her front legs and bows. She wiggles and wags her tail. As they play, both pups hold their mouths slightly open. That’s how they tell each other “yes, we are still playing!”

- 8 Much like human children, young dolphins love to play with toys. Wild dolphins are very curious. They explore their world, looking for interesting items. A piece of seaweed might inspire a game. The frisky calves will chase one another, passing the seaweed from snout, to flipper, to tail.
- 9 When most young animals wrestle, race, or chase, it's not about winning. Each youngster is building its strength and skills. And they are learning to cooperate. If one youngster plays too rough, the others will let him know they are unhappy with his behavior.
- 10 Even when everyone cooperates, play can get dangerous. But animals play anyway! Young mountain goats live all their lives on steep slopes. The kids bump each other and butt heads in fun. If they're not careful, kids can fall and hurt their legs or even break their bones. When they play, the young animals learn to keep their footing no matter what might happen.
- 11 Groups of young vervet monkeys sometimes sneak away from the adults in their family. All wrapped up in their games, the little ones may not notice when danger is near. So an adult monkey will go looking for the straying youngsters. The adult will yell out a warning.
- 12 Watch out! Be careful! You've heard parents or teachers say these things when you play. Animals have to learn about the dangers in their world too. Playing helps them learn. Playing helps them get along. Playing makes them strong and confident.

vervet monkey = a monkey with a black face

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12

Based on the article, what do all the young animals have in common?

- A** They play in groups with other animals.
- B** They need to prepare for when they are older.
- C** They are able to locate items that interest them.
- D** They let other animals know that they want to play.

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13

Which definition matches the meaning of “frolic” as it is used in paragraph 3?

- A** to run around
- B** to find protection
- C** to learn by watching
- D** to walk next to its mother

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14

The word “stalks” in paragraph 4 shows that the lion cub

- A** follows silently
- B** moves quickly
- C** looks around
- D** bends down

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15

Paragraphs 3 through 5 support a main idea because they show

- A** how animals are different
- B** how animals escape trouble
- C** what animals need to learn
- D** that animals help each other

16

Before wolf pups can hunt together, they must first

- A** discover new games
- B** learn to use signals
- C** practice with toys
- D** know how to race

17

Read this sentence from paragraph 9.

If one youngster plays too rough, the others will let him know they are unhappy with his behavior.

What does this sentence show about the animals?

- A** The older animals introduce the games to the younger ones.
- B** The larger animals are prevented from wrestling with the smaller ones.
- C** The young animals enforce limits so that their games are safe for all.
- D** The adult animals are nearby to make sure that no one gets hurt.

18

Which sentence **best** states a main idea of the entire article?

- A** “For animals in the wild, play is important to their very survival.” (paragraph 2)
- B** “Much like human children, young dolphins love to play with toys.” (paragraph 8)
- C** “When they play, the young animals learn to keep their footing no matter what might happen.” (paragraph 10)
- D** “Playing makes them strong and confident.” (paragraph 12)

Directions

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Read this story. Then answer questions 38 and 39.

Ting has lived in China her whole life. A year ago, her parents moved to the United States to try to make a better life for the family. Ting stayed back in China with her grandparents. Now, it is finally time to be reunited with her parents. Her grandparents have prepared her as much as possible, and now, the big day has come. Ting will make the journey and, once again, be with her parents.

Excerpt from *Honeysuckle House*

by Andrea Cheng

- 1 When Ma Ma left Shanghai for America, I didn't know it would be so long before I saw her again that I forgot her smell. Not quite, but when I did finally see her, more than one year had passed and her smell had changed. There was no more of her soft perfume along with the anise that she put in the soup. Ma Ma had a sharp soap smell instead. It was so anise = a plant that is used as a spice or herb strange to me that I almost didn't recognize her.
- 2 The flight attendant brought me to her. I'd been asleep on the plane so my careful pigtaileds were all messed up. At first I wasn't even sure that it really was Ma Ma, and I held tightly to the hand of the lady. Grandma Po Po had asked her to deliver me safely to my mother. I wasn't scared. When Po Po told me to be brave on the long trip, I wondered why she said that. Sitting on a plane with a nice lady to watch over me wasn't scary. But now when I smelled the sharp soap, I knew what she meant.
- 3 "Ting, you have grown so tall," Ma Ma said, scooping me into her arms. The lady left and tears came out of my eyes. "Don't cry, Ting," Ma Ma said, wiping my face with her palm. "We'll go home and have some soup. Noodle soup to celebrate that you are in America." I listened to Ma Ma's words. Her voice was the same as I remembered it.
- 4 "Where is Ba Ba?" I asked.
- 5 "He had to go to Chicago. He'll come back to see you very soon." I tried to imagine how my father looked, but all I could remember was the smoky smell of his clothes. I held tightly to Ma Ma's hand as we went through the

airport. The voices around us were so flat. No up and down sounds. When I was in Shanghai, Uncle said I should learn English. He found an English teacher who came to our apartment every Wednesday and Friday after school. She had ten English books and I finished all of them. But at the airport, I didn't hear the words in my books.

6 I gripped Ma Ma's hand, so much smoother than Po Po's.

7 The noodle soup was almost the same but not quite. In my mouth it was fine, but the smell was not right. I had only a few spoonfuls.

8 "You don't like soup anymore? Now you like meat?"

9 I shook my head. The room was spinning. The kitchen stove was gigantic. It even had a door like a room.

10 "What's that?" I asked.

11 "Oven," Ma Ma said in English. She explained in Chinese. "It gets very hot inside." In Shanghai, we didn't have an oven. Po Po cooked everything on an electric hot plate on the landing. Soup, noodles, everything. Ma Ma showed me my bed. It had a blue plaid blanket on it. The room was like a closet with a small window at the end.

12 "Can I sleep with you?" I asked. In China I slept with my cousin Hong. She took all the covers and pushed me into a small space against the wall, but still I was not alone.

13 "In America you have your own room," Ma Ma said.

14 The bed was so fresh and new. My nightgown had the same soapy smell as the noodles. The air was too quiet.

19

Why does Po Po tell Ting she needs to be brave? Use **two** details from the story to support your response.

20

Why is the noodle soup important to the story (paragraphs 3 and 7)? Use **two** details from the story to support your response.

The Aurora Borealis

by Jane Sullivan

- 1 It's winter in Alaska—midnight—nine degrees above zero. And yet, there are people—grown-ups bundled against the cold; children are clothed in scarves, gloves, and fur-lined boots, outside, looking at the sky. Why? It is because the sky is putting on a show for them, a show we call the northern lights. Scientists call it the aurora borealis.
- 2 Sometimes the northern lights are soft clouds of white. Sometimes they dance across the sky in streaks of blue and green, yellow and red. What causes the northern lights? Why can they be seen only at night? And why do they change from night to night?
- 3 Scientists give us some answers. The Earth is a huge magnet, with two poles, the North Pole and the South Pole. The sun has storms that send out streams of tiny particles called electrons. Scientists call this stream the solar wind. It races off into space and is pulled toward our two poles by their magnetic force.
- 4 Reaching the Earth's atmosphere, the wind hits a stone wall, the magnetic field that surrounds the Earth, called the magnetosphere. Energy from the solar wind creates an electric charge. That is what makes the aurora borealis, or northern lights, near the North Pole; the aurora australis, or southern lights, are near the South Pole.
- 5 What makes the different colors? There is an easy answer for scientists. We've seen different-colored, neon signs. Imagine such huge lights hanging high in space—100 miles high. When electricity heats up gases, they turn colors. The electric charge in the magnetosphere goes through nitrogen in the air, and it glows with a blue light. Oxygen turns green or sometimes red. The stronger the solar wind, the stronger the electric charge and the more colorful the aurora are.
- 6 Because the southern aurora can be seen only in or near Antarctica, most people see the northern lights. To see them best, people look for them in

September or March. At that time, there are 12 hours of darkness, and the solar winds are usually stronger.

- 7 But why is this only at night? The auroras shine all day and all night, just as stars do. During daylight, the sun outshines them. The best time to see the northern lights is between midnight and 2:00 a.m. Is it worth staying up that late? You bet, especially when the solar wind is so strong that the lights are as colorful as they can be.
- 8 The northern lights take on different shapes: shimmering curtains, colored clouds twisting and turning, and arcs of colors covering the entire sky. They appear close to the North Pole. If you do not live in places like Alaska, Norway, or Canada, you probably won't see them. But you can see pictures of them on an aurora website.
- 9 Our world is filled with beautiful sights. A midnight sky filled with color in a cold, cold climate is one of the most beautiful.

21

Why does the author ask questions throughout “The Aurora Borealis”? Use **two** details from the article to support your response.

22

What is a main idea of “The Aurora Borealis”? Use **two** details from the article to support your response.

Eli Escapes

by Suzanne W. Paynter

1 “Mom, why do we always have to wait in line?” asked Eli. He slumped against the grocery cart.

2 “We’re waiting our turn,” said Mom.

3 Eli sighed and rolled his head back to stare at the ceiling. An escaped pirate balloon bobbed up and down against the flat white lights. One of the pirate’s eyes was covered with a coal-black patch, and the other winked down at Eli.

4 If I were a pirate, I wouldn’t have to wait in line, thought Eli. He flashed his jeweled saber and shouted to the trusty crew, “Aarr, maties! Clear the bloomin’ decks!”

5 A band of swashbuckling pirates dashed through the line of shoppers. They danced a feisty jig and tossed gold doubloons in the air. While shoppers chased the rolling coins, Eli and Mom rushed to the front of the checkout line. They escaped in a magnificent pirate ship and sailed the seven seas home. There, Eli searched for hidden treasure with his friend, Max, for the rest of the afternoon.

6 Pirates never had to wait in line at the grocery store.

7 “Let’s go, Eli,” said Mom as they left the checkout line. “We need to stop at the bank.”

8 “Will there be a line there, too?” asked Eli.

9 “Maybe,” said Mom.

10 “Aargh,” grumbled Eli.

11 The line at the bank looked even longer than the grocery store line.

12 Whoosh! What was that sound? Eli peered over the bank counter to the drive-through. Customers were placing plastic tubes in some sort of portal,

pressing a button, and swoosh—the tubes zoomed through the air to the bank teller inside. It looked like a starship launcher!

13 Starship commanders don't have to wait in line at the bank, thought Eli. He switched on his light laser and flipped open his star command communication device. "Command Control, come in! We've got a long line here at Galactic Bank. Please send backup!" he ordered.

14 A fleet of starships swooped down to the bank parking lot. The people in line rushed out the door to gape at the sleek, blinking starships. "Can we have a ride?" they begged. While the starship commanders took turns giving rides, Mom and Eli swept to the front of the line. Eli whisked out his tele-transporter gadget and beamed them home to watch back-to-back episodes of Star Guys Planet.

15 Starship commanders never had to wait in line at the bank.

16 "Eli," said Mom as they left the bank, "want to pick up dinner at Burger Barn on the way home?"

17 "Will we get to wait in line?" asked Eli.

18 "Possibly," said Mom.

19 Eli smiled.

20 They left the bank and zoomed over to Burger Barn, where the line was longer than a clippety-cloppin' mule train. But Eli didn't mind. Cowboy sheriffs never have to wait in line at Burger Barn!

21 "Please step aside, mister. Step aside, ma'am."

22 Sheriff Eli tipped his ten-gallon hat, gave his silver spurs a whirl, and swaggered to the front of the line. No one minded. Sheriff Eli was the hero of Goldtown.

23 "Have you caught any cattle rustlers today, Sheriff?" the pigtailed waitress asked.

24 "Only 'bout twenty or thirty. Got 'em all locked up so Goldtown is safe once more."

25 Everyone in Burger Barn whooped and hollered.

26 "All in a day's work," said Sheriff Eli. "Now my throat's full of trail dust, and my belly's growlin' somethin' fierce."

- 27 While he waited for his food he let the young ‘uns twirl his sparkling silver spurs and tie knots in his lasso.
- 28 “Thank ye kindly,” he said to the Burger Barn waitress. She piled on extra fries. Sheriff Eli tipped his hat and rode off into the sunset eating his Golden Chicken Nuggets, French fries, and milk.
- 29 “O.K., Eli, let’s go,” said Mom.
- 30 “Wh-what?” said Eli.
- 31 “We’re finished with our errands for today,” said Mom. “How about meeting Max at the park?”
- 32 “Max, me matey?” said Eli. “Bloomin’ great idea!”
- 33 “You might have to wait in line for the slide.”
- 34 “Star command check!”
- 35 “And maybe the swings, too.”
- 36 “Always glad to step aside until my turn, ma’am,” Eli drawled.
- 37 Mom laughed as Eli hoisted himself into the car and swashbuckled his seatbelt. She fired up their sleek galactic starship and they followed the winding, dusty trail to the park.

23

Why does the author use the word “swaggered” to describe Eli in paragraph 22? Use **two** details from the story to support your response.

24

Eli and his mother visit different places in the story. What places do they visit? Why are these places important to the story? Use details from the story to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- tell the places Eli and his mother visit in the story
- explain why these places are important
- use details from the story to support your response
