

Snow, Cow, Cloud Stories

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A Dream Comes True (Part 1)

(Story words: search, caught, heart)

One of Darlene's dreams had been to get a dog, but it never seemed to be the right time. Sometimes she had to travel for her job or stay late to finish a project. Because she lived alone, a dog would spend a lot of time just waiting for her to come home. Would a life like that be fair to a dog?

But a friend at work told her, "I think you would be a fine dog owner. You love hiking and being outside. I can see you taking the dog for long walks in the mornings and evenings. And lots of people who work have to find help to take care of their pets. In my case, there are kids on the block who love to walk dogs, and for ten dollars each day, they give my dogs an extra romp. My dogs love being with young kids. It's a win-win deal for everyone."

Darlene began to consider this. Maybe she did not have to wait until she retired from her job to get a dog. When she

added up the costs of dog walking, vet care, and kennel visits, she could see that she could afford a dog.

Darlene started to browse the internet sites for animals who needed homes. While the pups were very cute, Darlene narrowed her search to older dogs who would be more content to spend time alone. One dog, Snowball, caught her eye. Every time she searched, she would return to look at Snowball one more time. And, as luck would have it, Snowball was being kept at a shelter just two towns over.

When Darlene got to the shelter, her heart was beating fast. She asked if Snowball was still there and was thrilled to hear that she was. The kind man who took care of the animals at the shelter brought Darlene to Snowball's pen. Snowball came out of her crate and uttered a soft bark. The kind man had seen this before many times: it was love at first sight—Snowball would be leaving the shelter for good.

A Dream Comes True (Part 2)

At first, Darlene and Snowball got along fine. Snowball was well behaved in the house and did not make a mess. But Snowball did not like anyone getting too close to Darlene. When she was out on the block or at the park and a pal came to say hello, Snowball would go wild, barking and growling. She would even show her teeth. Darlene would say, "Stop, stop," and pull on Snowball's leash, but this had no effect. So far, Snowball had not growled at small children, but what if she started to do that?

Snowball was sweet and playful at home. One day, Darlene needed a repairman to fix her gas stove. Without thinking, Darlene let the man into her house before putting Snowball on the leash. Snowball ran to the man and snapped. Darlene grabbed her collar just in time. The repairman, Dave, had owned many dogs. He said, "Snowball just wants to protect you."

Darlene told Dave that she had rescued Snowball from a shelter, but that she was frustrated by the way she acted.

Dave gave Darlene a kind look and said, “You may have rescued Snowball, but you don’t understand what she needs. A dog who is not trained is confused and full of fear. She thinks her job is to protect her owner, but she needs an owner with the right skills to tell her what to do.” Now Snowball was sniffing Dave’s hand and pants. “Oh, you are a sweet dog, aren’t you, Snowball?”

Darlene knew Dave was right. The shelter had offered free training classes. Darlene should have made the time to go. Having a dog was a dream come true, and Darlene would give Snowball the training she deserved.

Gardening Know-How

This was the first year that Frank planted a garden. He was delighted by the results of his first year.

Frank made a bed in a part of the yard that got a lot of sun. He turned over his dirt. He planted carrots, garlic, turnips, beets, and radishes. He had started from seeds and he kept track with the calendar on his phone of the dates he had planted his seeds. The packets of seeds gave estimates of the time plants would need before it was time to harvest them.

Carrots need 50-60 days before it is time to dig them up. Turnips need 40-55 days. Frank had put chicken wire around his bed to prevent squirrels and other visitors from disturbing his garden.

The only plants that were not a triumph were the tomatoes. The tomato plants had done well and grown high. Frank was excited to see hard green tomatoes

growing from the plants. He waited and saw the small green tomatoes grow bigger and begin to look red and ripe.

But the birds had been waiting too. One morning he walked out to find all his tomatoes gone or half eaten.

Frank talked with Nan on the phone. Nan was an avid gardener. "That happened to me my first time too," she laughed. "Come over tomorrow and I'll show you how to make chicken wire tubes to protect your tomatoes. Next year, those birds are going to be out of luck!"

Bill Does the Braver Thing (Part 1)

(Story words: heights, rollercoaster)

Bill was a brave kid in most cases. He was relaxed when talking with kids and adults. He was not afraid of the dark. He even liked snakes.

But Bill hated heights. It may have started years ago when Bill and his friends were climbing trees. Bill had not realized how high he had climbed. When everyone else was climbing down, Bill looked at the ground below, which now seemed so far away, and felt overpowered with fear.

When Bill's friends saw that Bill was stuck, they ran to Bill's house and got his dad. His dad borrowed a tall ladder and got him down.

Last year, Bill and his older brother Steve went to Six Flags Amusement Park. Steve wanted to go on The Comet, a rollercoaster with a big drop. He said to Bill, "Once you go on it, you will see how fun it is!" Bill wanted

to get over his fear of heights and go on the ride with Steve. They waited in a long, long line.

As they got closer to the ride, Bill looked up at the people on the coaster. When the coaster got to the top of the ramp, many people put their hands in the air and let out a big scream or laugh. They did seem to be having fun, but who knows? Maybe there was someone on the ride who was suffering and regretting that he had gotten on.

At the last second, when they were almost next in line, Bill told Steve, "I'm not going," and stepped out of line. Steve was confused, not knowing if he was allowed to go on the ride alone, as everyone else seemed to be in pairs.

Steve got out of line too, and he was mad because he did not have time to wait in the line again. In the car ride home he said, "Bill is no fun at an amusement park. Next time we should just leave him at home."

Bill Does the Braver Thing (Part 2)

(Story words: scooting, rolled, honest)

When Marvin told Bill that he was inviting him to his birthday, Bill was thrilled. Marvin was a new friend that Bill had made this year, and he liked him a lot. Then Marvin told him where they were planning to go: Six Flags.

Bill knew that being at an amusement park with Marvin and others would be a disaster. He wished that he could summon the willpower to get on the rides and forget about his fears. But he remembered what happened with Steve.

He also thought about how he had felt just an hour ago when he was outside having lunch on the bleachers with Marvin and their other friends. When the bell rang, everyone ran down the bleachers without a care. Bill was slow going down the rows, scooting down the bleachers using both his hands and feet.

Bill thought that the best thing to do was to make an excuse. He could say that he had an important family event on that day.

But then, he did a braver thing. He said, “Marvin, I’d love to go to your birthday, but I am no fun at amusement parks. I’m too afraid to go on any of the rides.” He said this with a big smile and even rolled his eyes, as if he himself were amused by his own quirkiness.

Marvin said, “Come anyway. No one will care if you don’t go on the rides. There are other fun things there, and no one will push you. I promise.”

Bill could see that Marvin was being honest and wanted him to come. Bill was not going to miss his friend’s birthday bash, even if he kept his feet on the ground.

Facts About the Leaning Tower of Pisa

(Story words: Italy, foundation, build, builders, scientists, weight)

When people travel to Italy, they often want to visit the Leaning Tower of Pisa, a grand, old, stone tower that looks a bit like a slim wedding cake at risk of falling over.

The Tower of Pisa was constructed to be a freestanding bell tower for the cathedral of Pisa. The tower took hundreds of years to build. The builders broke ground in 1173, and the tower was not completed until 1372.

Work on the tower was stopped for about a hundred years because the town was involved in fighting other towns. This was good luck for the tower, because it allowed time for the soft ground to compress and become firmer.

Scientists have concluded that the tower leans because the ground was too soft and its foundation was too small. The surprising thing is that the problem of the tower tilting

was evident even when the builders were working on the second floor, and yet they added six more levels. You might wonder why they did not abandon the project and start over in a spot that was more solid.

The old builders did alter their plans in order to make the tower lean less. They made the walls on one side of each of the remaining levels taller than the other walls to compensate for the tilt.

Over time, the tilt of the tower increased; and, by 1990, the tower had to close to the public. Scientists came up with a plan to prop the tower up by removing dirt on one side and adding weight to the other. Scientists now say that the tower is safe for another three hundred years.

More people want to visit a leaning tower rather than a perfect one. They love to post comical photos of themselves which look as though they are holding the tower up.

Ms. Robinson Starts Her Unit on Clouds (Part 1)

(Story words: boil, boiled, pasta, Earth, causes)

Ms. Robinson walked to her car in the parking lot with a big smile. She knew that she now had come up with the best way to begin her unit on clouds. She was going to make a note of it so that she would remember to do it again next year for another first grade class.

Ms. Robinson had come up with this idea by luck. Last night when she was making dinner, she put a big pot of water on the stove to boil for pasta. Then, she got a phone call and forgot to put in the pasta. By the time she came back into the kitchen, the water had boiled down to nothing, so she had to fill up the pot again. This mishap gave her an idea that would make her lesson on clouds more vivid.

Ms. Robinson brought to class a small metal pot and a hot plate burner and put them on her desk. She put a few

inches of water in the pot and then turned on the hot plate. Soon the water boiled into almost nothing.

At the same time, she asked her students what they knew about how clouds were formed. Many did not know that clouds were made of water. Ms. Robinson explained that there is a lot of water on Earth, whether in the seas, rivers, lakes, or even on the ground. The heat of the sun causes a small amount of the Earth's water to evaporate into the air.

Ms. Robinson Starts Her Unit on Clouds (Part 2)
(Story words: boiling, amount, pointing, heavy)

The students could see that steam was rising from the boiling pot of water. She then showed them the pot which now had almost no water in it. Ms. Robinson said that the water had gone into the air and had turned into water vapor. Although it looks as though water is disappearing when it becomes vapor, the same amount of water is still there but just in a vapor or gas form that we cannot see.

Ms. Robinson explained that when water vapor meets with more water vapor up in the sky, the vapor condenses into small droplets of water. These small droplets floating in the air are the clouds we see.

Ms. Robinson then took her students outside to look at some real clouds. “The water from down here,” she said, pointing at the ground, “travels up into the sky as a vapor, and the vapor comes together and makes droplets. If the droplets are small and light, they can float. We are looking

at liquid in the air!” she said with wonder, pointing at a cloud. Her students were now squinting at clouds as if they had never seen clouds before.

“When too many small droplets come together, they become too heavy to stay up there. Then, they fall to the ground. Have you ever seen that happen?” she asked in a low whisper.

Students were shouting things all at once, such as “Yes, I have,” and “when it rains.”

Sayings About Farm Life (Part 1)

(Story words: language, hatch)

Today, it is a rare thing to live on a farm in the United States. Only about 1% of people in the U.S. live on farms. But over two hundred years ago, in 1800, it was common to live on farms. In fact, 90% of people in the U.S. lived on a farm then. Our language has many sayings that have to do with life on the farm because in the past details of farm life were vivid to most people.

Chickens do not seem wise or thoughtful at the best of times, but when something disturbs them, they scatter and run around the chicken yard in a disorganized and comical way. When people say, “He was running around like a chicken,” they are describing someone who is rushing and panicking with no time to think or plan.

Farmers use baskets to collect eggs. If a farmer were to trip, all the eggs he gathered would be broken. When people say, “Do not put all your eggs in one basket,” they

are saying it is good to divide your assets so that no matter what happens you will have some of them left. Farmers did not collect eggs in several baskets, but many of them did invest in several kinds of livestock or crops for the family to eat or sell, and thus did not depend on just one thing doing well.

Hens sit on eggs before those eggs hatch into chicks. Smart farmers knew that only some of the eggs would survive and grow into chickens to be sold. The saying, “Do not count your chickens before they are hatched,” expresses the idea that a wise person takes into account that many promising plans do not turn out the way we hope. If we are counting on everything going according to our hopes and dreams, we will be let down.

Sayings About Farm Life (Part 2)

(Story words: tool, dry)

Farmers plant seeds, and this is called sowing. Once plants grow and ripen, farmers harvest the crop, and this is called reaping. When people say, “You reap what you sow,” they mean people often deserve what happens to them later because of their past deeds. Let’s say that a person cheated others in past deals and now was being excluded from a new deal. Then, someone might say, “Well, you reap what you sow.” Today, people might say, “What goes around, comes around,” to express a similar idea.

Before planting seeds, farmers have to prepare the ground and turn over the dirt so that the ground is fit for new crops to grow. They will plant the seeds in neat rows so that it will be clear where the new plants are. They use a tool called a hoe which chops the hard ground with a blade. Some ground is much harder to chop than other ground. When people say, “That looks like a hard row to hoe,” they

are expressing the idea that a particular plan or effort will be tough to accomplish.

Farmers harvest hay when it is dry outside. If you gather hay that is damp or wet, the hay rots and becomes useless. The saying, “Make hay while the sun shines,” expresses the idea that people should be active and work hard when times are promising because these are the best times for making progress on goals.

For people who lived on farms, the farm was a thing of extreme value. Thus, when someone says, “You can bet the farm on that,” they are expressing complete faith in something. In contrast, if people say, “I would not bet the farm on that,” they are saying that they do not have that faith.

Sayings About Horses (Part 1)

(Story words: language, young, energy)

Today, people travel by plane, car, train, bus, metro, and bike. But before these were the ways of getting around, people depended on horses. For thousands of years, people have ridden horses and used them in their work. Thus, our language has many sayings that involve horses because so many people lived with horses and knew their quirks and ways.

Think about the following case. You are on a long hot ride trying to get somewhere far from home. You pass a stream, and you know that this is the last stream you will pass. You have many hot miles of trail left to travel. You dismount and walk over to the stream and get a big drink of water and fill up your canteen for later. Your horse, however, looks at the stream with no interest and does not drink. The saying, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink,” is something people say to mean

people will not always listen to wise counsel, no matter how much you insist.

You can tell how old a horse is by looking into his mouth and counting his teeth. An old horse has less life and work left in him than a young horse and thus has less value.

“Do not look a gift horse in the mouth” is a saying that expresses that it is rude to inspect a gift to see how much value it has. If you give someone a gift, and he asks whether the item was on sale or discounted, you could laugh and tell him to “stop looking a gift horse in the mouth.”

Most times horses graze on grass or are fed other grains, but sometimes they are given oats. Oats are known as a “hot” feed because they give horses a lot of energy that may make them wild or willful. We say that someone is “feeling his oats” if he is being self-important and bossing others around. Perhaps something good or stimulating has happened to this person. For the moment, it has made him overconfident and smug.

Sayings About Horses (Part 2)

(Story words: language, Egypt, front, reigns, switch)

You may have heard people say, “She has blinders on.” Blinders are used to narrow a horse’s sight to just what is in front of him. Without blinders on, horses can be distracted or scared by seeing other horses or other things around them. Blinders allowed people to use horses to pull them in coaches even on a town’s crowded streets.

The oldest blinders were found in Egypt and date from over three thousand years ago. While blinders allow horses to focus and keep going, people do not think it is good for people to be so focused on their goals that they are blind to everything else around them. Thus, if we say, “Frank has blinders on,” we mean that he is ignoring everything else around him.

When you think of a horse pulling a cart, you think of a horse in front pulling the cart. If you put the cart first with

the horse behind it, it would seem comical. Thus, the saying, “That’s putting the cart before the horse,” means that someone is putting things in the wrong order.

Riders steer their horses with reins. The reins connect to a metal bit which is in the horse’s mouth. When a horse is motivated to get moving, the horse may champ or chomp at his bit. Thus, people say, “She is chomping at the bit,” to describe someone who is keen to get started on something.

Crossing a stream on horseback can be difficult. A horse can get distracted or confused by the water. If you were stuck in mid-stream you might be tempted to jump off your horse and get on someone else’s. Doing this, however, may lead to more problems. When people say, “Do not switch horses in mid-stream,” they are expressing the idea that during a crisis it is best to stay with your old partners, teammates, and supports.