

PHILOMENA, A PLATYPUS OF BROKEN RIVER

For several years, Philomena, a pleasant duck-billed platypus took great pride in knowing that she has many friends made up of many kinds of creatures around Broken River, Queensland Australia. This river was her home.

Snakes, water rats, goannas, hawks, owls, crocodiles and eagles all set aside their differences to attend her dinner parties and enjoy a fine evening of food and dancing.

She always heard from her departing guests should she ever need anything at any time, please do not hesitate to ask.

Although she never did, she always knew that if she needed support it was always near at hand.

Today she needed real help. A group of eager zoologists came to study the egg-laying, duck-billed, beaver-tailed, otter-footed mammals in her river. And she was on their list.

Bang! Bang! Bang, she heard on the shores of Broken River. The scientists were coming and they were coming for her!

She desperately did not want to be studied, so she packed up her backpack and was off to find help from her friends and find a place to hide.

This was not a time to fret; this was a time to runaway. The men and women in their khakis frightened her. At the moment, they were her adversaries.

Her fear welled up in her. Fear gripped her; she stood perfectly still, petrified.

She felt defeated and knew she would get tagged like all the other platypuses in her neighborhood.

But she knew that her worst enemy at this moment was not the scientists who were chasing her with their tagging gun held tightly in their sweaty hands, it was fear.

No, she insisted, I will not get tagged. Not today, today she find help from her friends and hide from these people and their sciences and their tracking sheets.

Walking on her knuckles, as platypuses do when walking on land, she found her friend crocodile.

“Please,” she said, “could you ride me to the other end of the river, those zoologists are right behind me and they want to tag me and study me.”

But the crocodile said, “I’d love to, but I can’t right now. I am off to eat something gruesome. You might not like it.” Crocodile said licking his teeth.

“But if a few hours I could help, but that might be too late. Talk to eagle, I am sure he would be happy to help you get to safety.”

So she went to find eagle, but he too was busy. He had to finish building a nest for his newborn family of eaglets.

“I know what you should do, go ask koala. I know he is free this afternoon. And tell him that I said he would be happy to help you.” Eagle said with certainty.

But when Philomena found koala she said with great reluctance that he could not help either. He too was afraid of the scientists and ran into a eucalyptus tree.

Standing alone Philomena felt ready to cry. She picked up her phone and started to call her friends, the ones who so valiantly offered to help her.

No one would come to help or even offer any advice on how she could avoid being tagged. They all were afraid of the humans and the tags they placed in animal's ears.

It seems that the old adage was true: Platypuses that have too many friends have no real friends at all.

Then in a bright moment of glory she knew what to do, "Phooey! I don't need anyone! I'll save myself."

She would no longer let fear dictate how she would live. Her father had always told her to rely on her own self! If she was strong enough in her heart she could overcome anything.

And off she ran, pack on her back, she hiked her way to a far off riverbank where no zoologists or scientists could be seen.

Looking behind her with sorrow and a renewed sense of self, she bid goodbye to Broken River and began the long swim towards Tasmania, towards freedom.

In her new home she found a new river to build a nest. She made new friends and began to have dinner parties again. And of course, Philomena invited every animal she would meet.

Never again would she let fear be her enemy, she would rely on her own paws in the future should she ever need real help again.