



ILLUSTRATED BY
VIVIEN MONSZPÓRT

ESZTER CZERNÁK

SEGÍTHETEK,
MÉHEGSKE?

PANKA AND THE ANIMALS

Can I Help You,
Little Bee?



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ISBN 978-963-587-243-5

Megjelent a Pagony Kiadó gondozásában 2022-ben.
1114 Budapest, Bartók Béla út 15/a
www.pagony.hu

Szöveg © Czernák Eszter, 2022
Illusztráció © Monszport Vivien, 2022
Kiadás © Pagony Kiadó Kft., 2022

Felelős kiadó: Demény Eszter és Ürögdi András
Felelős szerkesztő: Kovács Eszter
Szerkesztő: Csobod Luca
Műszaki vezető: Pais Andrea
Tördelő: Gráf Dóra

Produkción munkák: Wunderlich Production Kft.
Produkción vezető: Mészáros Gabriella
Nyomás, kötés: Central Dabasi Nyomda Zrt.
Felelős vezető: Balizs Attila vezérigazgató
www.dabasinyomda.hu

WINTER



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Thirsty guests

Panka could hardly wait for Saturday. They were finally going to visit Grandma and Grandpa! Grandma had promised to bake something tasty, and Grandpa surely had some sort of DIY project planned. Grandpa was always tinkering with something. Maybe he'd let Panka help him this time!

"Grandpa, grandpa, where are you?" Panka calls out as she runs through the gate.

"Out here in the garden, sweetie!"

In the garden? But it's so cold! What is Grandpa up to out there?

"What are you doing?" Panka crinkles her forehead when she finds him.

Grandpa was balancing a wide, shallow dish full of water in his hands.

"I'm getting the birds some water. The cold has frozen all the puddles and they can't find anything to drink," he gestures around the garden.

Boy was he right! Each and every puddle had turned to ice. No wonder the birds are so thirsty!

“Can I help?” Panka asks hopefully.

“Well of course you can! We need to find a place where the birds can easily get the water, but where the cats can’t easily get the birds.

Panka scampers up and down and all around, carefully considering every nook and cranny.

Hmm. Maybe there in the corner? No, the birds won’t be safe there. How about there, beside the fence? No, that’s no good either. Maybe right in the middle of the lawn?

“What about on this stump?” Panka suggests, standing next to the stump of the poplar tree they’d had to cut down.

“That’ll do just perfectly,” Grandpa nods. “They’ll be able to see the cats coming from a mile away. But now we need to find some sort of stone or branch to put in the dish.”

Panka looks around the garden, bobbing about to and fro, peeping her head high and low. She even looks under the wet mushy leaves. What about this pretty little rock? No, that’s too small, the water will cover it. This one here, perhaps? No, that’s too big, it won’t fit in the dish. Got it! Here’s the perfect rock!



Panka carefully plunks the rock into the middle of the dish, and a blip of water splashes onto her hand.

“Hey, this water’s warm as a bath!”

“Well if it weren’t warm, it would freeze too quickly, and the birds would stay thirsty! This way we only need to change the water each morning,” Grandpa explains.

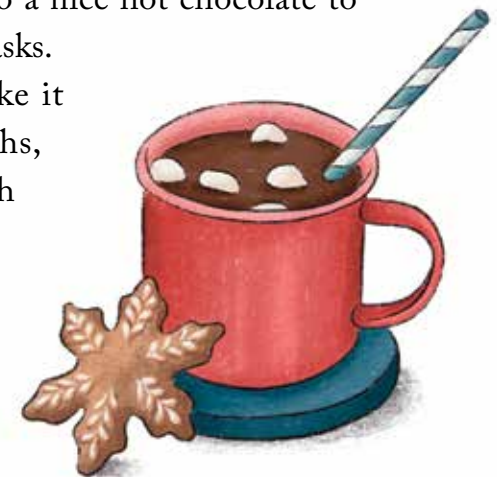
Panka admires their work proudly. But what did they need the stone for?

Well lookie here, a bird has fluttered right up to the fence. It chirps excitedly, surely looking for something to drink. Panka takes a step back to give the little birdie space to fly over to the water.

The bird looks around, head wiggling and wagging furtively. Nope, Panka doesn’t seem like a kitty cat, so it flits over to the dish and perches right on top of the stone. From there, it dips into the water for a drink. So that’s what the stone is for!

“And what would you say to a nice hot chocolate to warm up a smidge?” Grandpa asks.

“Ooo, yes please! Let’s make it warm as a bath!” Panka laughs, heading into the house with Grandpa.



Nighttime Prowlers

Late in the afternoon, Panka heads home from Grandma and Grandpa's. She plops down in the car behind Mom and Dad and lets out a huuuge yawn. What a tiring trip! She wishes they were already home so she could cuddle up in bed with her favorite stuffed elephant.

But my how slowly they're crawling along on the forest roads! It's already starting to get dark.

"Dad, speed up!"

"No, no, we have to go this slowly here. See that sign up ahead?"

Panka looks out the window, but all she can see are the shadows of the trees gliding past. Then, for just a moment, the car's headlights illuminate a sign along the side of the road: a white triangle, bordered in red, with a leaping deer in the center.

"Mhmm, it's a pretty drawing" she nods sleepily.

"That sign means we have to be careful because the animals that live in the forest prowl about at nighttime, and can jump out onto the road from behind a tree at any moment."



"But you're not allowed to run onto the road!"

"That's right, you're not. But the animals don't know that, so we have to watch out for them. In the winter it gets dark real early, and it's even more difficult to spot them. Most animals get frightened by a car's headlights and freeze in place. But if we go nice and slow, keep an eye on the sides of the road, and are careful, then we'll be able to stop in time, and they can run back into the forest."

Panka decides to help Dad keep an eye out. She rubs the sleep from her eyes and peers intently into the forest. Trees



black as coal stretch towards the sky, roots dense and dark spread out every which way beneath them. From time to time the moon peeps out from between the trees, but its rays are too weak to light up the forest.

“I don’t see anything!” Panka crinkles her forehead. “How am I supposed to see the animals?”

“Look for their eyes,” Mom tells her. “When the headlights wander over an animal, their eyes will shine in the dark.”

Well alright then. Panka searches and searches, but still doesn’t see a single deer. Not even a stray elephant! But wait, what’s that? There’s something gleaming in the bushes!

“There, there!” she points excitedly. But the something is too small to be a deer, and certainly too small to be an elephant. So what could it be?

Dad slows down, and the little critter stares out at the car for a moment. Its eyes flash, its ears perk up, its red fur almost glimmers in the headlights. Then with a leap and a bound it zips across the road, and in a flash its bushy tail has already disappeared.

“Well done, Panka!” Dad congratulates her. “You saved a little fox!”

“Be careful, little fox!” Panka shouts after it. “Don’t try to cross the road again, I can’t look after you all night!”

And with that, she leans back in the seat with a huuuge yawn and slowly closes her eyes.





Bird Doctors



Panka pulls on her rubber boots, the purple ones with the white sail boats. Today is a special day! She's going for a walk along the Danube River with Mom and Dad. The weather is so cold she has to wear two pairs of thick socks under her boots. Just to be safe.

The sun is shining when they arrive, and oh how the river is shimmering! They stroll leisurely along the riverside, and Panka is so excited she doesn't know where to look first. As they round a bend, they see a huuuuge tree which has fallen across the path. They have to climb over it! On a different tree, somebody had hung up a swing. It's so much fun! Then suddenly, Panka hears a strange sound. Now what could that be? It's coming from that bush over there. It sounds like a little something is cheeping. Panka steps closer and the cheeping stops. Hmm. Maybe there's nothing there after all. Alright then, let's keep going. But as she moves on, the cheeper pipes up again.

She inches back toward the bush, tippy-toeing quietly this time.

“Dad, Dad!” she waves for him to come over. “It’s a little bird!”

“A bird? Where?” Dad squats down beside her.

They gently move the branches aside, and staring up at them from beneath the bush is a frightened little yellow-bellied baby bird.

“I bet it can’t find its mommy. I’ll bring it home and take care of it” Panka decides.

“Well this little birdie isn’t so little, I don’t think it needs help from people,” Dad shakes his head. “Its feathers have already come in, and it looks healthy enough, so we’re not allowed to touch it. I’m sure its mommy is nearby and just waiting for us to leave. Besides, it’s the end of winter, so the little birds are already adults and can get on just fine by themselves.”

“But it’s cheeping so loud. There must be something wrong!”

Dad inspects the bird more closely.

“You’re right, Panka. There’s some wire tangled around its feet and wings. This little bird definitely needs help, but not from us. Let’s call the Bird Doctors.”

So Dad calls up the Bird Doctors. Luckily they just happen to be in the area and are able to show up quickly.

“The birdie’s hiding back there,” Panka points at the bush.

The two men lay down on their stomachs to see underneath the branches.

“Ah, yes, we’ve got a blue tit here,” the man in the blue hat whispers. “Poor little thing got tangled up in some wire someone threw away. It’s a lucky thing you found it.”

The bird doctor with the red hat pulls out a funny little box. It’s filled with something soft and fluffy, and its sides are full of holes.

“This way it can still breathe inside the box,” he explains, pulling on a thick pair of gloves. “Just in case he’s scared and tries to nip me,” he says when Panka looks questioningly at his gloves.

He carefully picks up the blue tit and places it in the box.

“What will happen to it now?” Panka asks worriedly.

“We’ll need to cut that wire off, and then a veterinarian will give it a full check-up to make sure everything’s okay. If there aren’t any problems, they’ll feed it till it’s nice and plump, then release it back into the forest in a few days. Would you like to say goodbye?” the bird doctor with the blue hat asks with a smile.

Panka bends closer over the frightened little bird.

“I’m sorry you got stuck in a bunch of wire. But hey, I tripped and fell just yesterday, and I was okay. Mom took me home and patched me right up. I hope you’ll be okay and can go home soon too.”

