

## A Season of Happiness Presents



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### Story Three – THE ROBBER OF BLUE THINGS

By Dave Hawkins

After what the Drumlins had done to save their homes from the loggers, The Valley folk were pleased that they would be staying for a while. Where they would actually be living shouldn't have been a problem; Wombat, however, in his grumpy wisdom decided to make it one. He had already stated clearly that he didn't want Purple in his hole because she bounced around too much and was likely to break things. "If you have Purple," said Wombat to his friend, "You may need Red to keep her in line, seeing as he's the leader of the Drumlins. Anyway," he added, "He's a grouch and he's always bellowing orders."

Pronto chuckled and said: "That sounds to me like the pot calling the kettle black."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Wombat demanded to know.

"Simple," Pronto explained, "You are blaming Red for being grouchy, yet most of the time you yourself are a grump. You are both as bad as one another."

"That's as maybe," grumbled Wombat, "But I don't want either of them living with me, and that's final."

It was eventually decided that, as well as Red and Purple, Pronto would look after Yellow who, Wombat claimed, was almost as bossy as Red and he didn't want her either. So, he agreed to take Blue, Green and Orange. Despite not being too happy at first, he soon realised he had made the best of choices, because all of his three Drumlins were quiet, didn't argue, and were particular about tidying up not only after themselves, but also after Wombat who tended to be very messy.

Pronto's house had become like an Army camp. Red was forever shouting out orders, and he had given Yellow the job of cook with Purple as her assistant. Surprisingly, the two of them worked well together, and between them they made some really tasty meals. Breakfast that day was only cereal which was fortunate. Yellow was putting the bowls on the table when there was

a knock at the door. "I'll get that," said Red, marching across the room, "You eat your breakfast, Pronto. A working man needs something inside him to start the day."

Although Red was outside and had closed the door, his raised voice could be heard by those in the house: "Silence, the lot of you!" he growled loudly; then said a little quieter, but not much: "Now, one at a time, if you please." Shortly after, he came back in. "I think you need to attend to this, Pronto," he said, "There are people here who want a policeman."

"Right you are," said Pronto, getting up from the table and walking over to his box of hats. Having found the one he was looking for, he put on his policeman's hat, stood up straight and saluted Red. "Constable Pronto, ready for duty." Then he went outside to see what the problem was.

It seemed there was more than one. Squirrel was complaining that his blue nut jar had gone missing; Bandicoot had lost his blue spectacles; and there were others who reported things that had suddenly disappeared. Then, to top it all, Wombat came limping over followed by his three Drumlins. "Will you look at this," he said, pointing down at his feet, "Someone's stolen one of my gum boots!"

Pronto was smiling at first, seeing Wombat wearing a single blue gum boot on one foot and just a pink sock on the other; then he realised that this was adding to the mystery. When Orange whispered: "And there were some lovely bluebells in the garden yesterday; but I went out to look at them this morning and they had gone."

"You'd better do something, Pronto," insisted Wombat, "As The Valley policeman it's your job. That's what you're paid for."

Actually, Pronto wasn't paid any money for being a policeman, but he did get to wear a special hat and he was sure it would help him to solve the missing-things mystery. "You keep an eye on the Drumlins," he said to Wombat, "I'm going to talk to Miss Owl. She's a teacher and she is very wise. She'll know what's going on."

Once he'd explained the problem to her, all Miss Owl would say was "Hoo-hoo."

"That's the trouble, Miss Owl," he said, "I don't know who."

Leaving Miss Owl to teach her class of young birds, Pronto set out to make enquiries. After a long time of walking around asking questions, he hadn't found any of the missing things. He sat down on a log to rest, and took off his hat to cool down. Ready to start again, he reached for the hat, but it wasn't where he had put it. It wasn't anywhere. "Well I never," he exclaimed, "Now my hat's gone! This is too much. I can see I need help."

Returning home, he asked Red if he could think of a way to solve the problem. "Drumlins are good at solving problems," Red assured Pronto, and he turned to shout: "Drumlins, shape up, front and centre!" Once the Drumlins were all lined up in Pronto's garden, he explained about the missing things and asked for ideas.

"What we need," said Green thoughtfully, "Is a complete list of everything that's gone missing."

“Yes” Purple chirped in excitedly, “A great big, enormous, mega-supreme list.”

“Just an ordinary list will do quite well, thank you,” said Yellow.

As Pronto mentioned all of the missing things that he could remember, Orange wrote them down on a piece of paper. As she did, she noticed something. “That’s really funny,” she whispered, “Everything that’s gone missing is the same colour – blue, just like our Drumlin Blue.”

They must have had the same thought at the same time because everyone looked around for Blue, just in case he had gone missing too. Luckily, he was still there. “Right, then,” declared Red, “We should conduct a search.”

“I was almost a conductor once,” said Purple, “For a really big band.”

“Dear, oh dear, you silly Drumlin,” droned Yellow, “It’s not that kind of conducting. Red means we should *make* a search.”

Once that was understood, Red had them all look at Blue so that they knew what colour they were searching for; then he marched them off. It seemed there was nothing blue to be found; so they asked some of The Valley folk to join in the search; and Red had Blue parade around again so that the new searchers knew which colour to look for. At one point Blue began falling behind the rest. He seemed troubled and Orange asked him why. “I’ve been, er, thinking,” he said, “And, er, wondering why someone would, er, only take blue things.”

“That’s it!” said Green, “I knew there was something I was missing.”

“Was it blue like my gum boot?” asked Wombat.

“No, no, nothing like that,” replied Green, “Not at all. It was a thought I had, and I’ve just remembered it. I heard once that bower birds collect blue things to put around their homes as a sign that they want to meet a lady-friend. Is there, by any chance, a bower bird in The Valley?”

Pronto said there was and added: “And I know exactly where he lives.”

Off they marched into the forest. When they arrived at his home, Bower Bird was there arranging his collection of blue things. “Stop that, please,” said Pronto, “These are not your things.”

Bower Bird looked at him. “Is that you, Pronto? I didn’t recognise you without your hat.”

“Which I would have been wearing if you hadn’t stolen it, Bower Bird. You mustn’t take things without asking. Now I have no choice but to arrest you for stealing.”

“Halt!” ordered Red, “That won’t do. Arresting people isn’t nice. Right, Drumlins - pick up all the blue things Bower Bird has only borrowed and take them back to the people they belong to. Then, Pronto, you will have no reason for arresting anyone. I am certain that will be alright with you, Bower Bird?”

A little reluctantly, Bower Bird agreed, but seeing the blue things he had collected disappearing from his home made him very sad. He was even sadder when they had all gone and his bower looked very bare. “I don’t know how I am going to get a lady-friend now,” he murmured.

“I do,” said Blue, “I’m very blue. I could, er, stay with you until you, er, find a lady-friend. How would that be?”

So after all the other Drumlins had left, Blue stayed behind to sit in Bower Bird’s home, waiting for a lady bower bird to come along. As it happened, that same afternoon a very pretty lady was passing by, and she thought that Bower Bird was really clever to have found such a magnificent, unusual blue thing to decorate his home. When it was explained to her that Blue wouldn’t be staying because he would be missed by the other Drumlins, she began to cry.

Seeing this, Blue took a handkerchief from his pocket and gave it to her. After she had wiped away the tears, she held it out for Blue to take back. “That’s alright,” he said, “You can, er, keep it as a reminder of me. It is, er, a really nice shade of blue, don’t you think?”

“Oh, thank you,” said Bower Bird’s new lady-friend, “You really are a very kind person.”

“Actually,” said Blue, “I am a Drumlin, and very proud of it.”

And when he returned home in time for tea, the other Drumlins gave him three cheers, because they were all proud of him too.