

Stefanie Heyden & Fabian Grolimund

Charlie, Are You Daydreaming Again?



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Illustrations by Marcus Wilke



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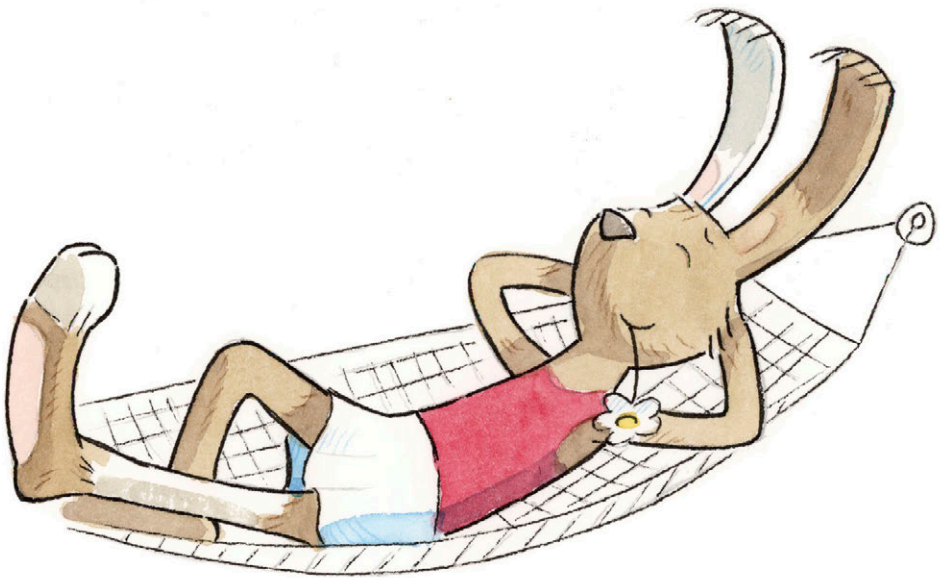
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For all girls, big or little:

It's ok to dream, discover, and invent.

It's ok to ask questions, make decisions, and speak your mind.

It's ok to dance. On a big stage or barefoot in the mud.

It's ok to grow and learn and reach your goals.

It's ok to fail.

It's ok to ask for help.

*You can be loud or quiet, brave or afraid, silly or smart,
rooted like a tree or free as a bird.*

You are unique and strong and wonderful.

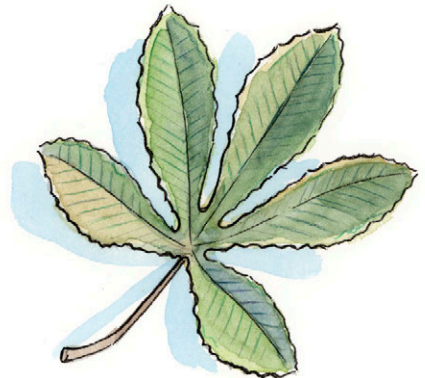
Life is offering you its hand.

- Stefanie Heyden -



For my seven-year-old son Gabriel, who has accompanied this story from the beginning. He motivated us while writing: "Are you still stuck?" He gave us compliments: "You've done a great job with the handyman!" And he gave us some very good feedback that led to important revisions: "Well, this part is totally boring, all they do is talk. You definitely have to improve that!"

- Fabian Grolimund -



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A Hectic Morning

“Charlie, hurry up! Wash your ears, brush your teeth, and then off to school with you!” calls Mama Rabbit from the kitchen.

Upstairs in the bathroom, a little bunny girl is leaning up against the sink, staring at the stream of water running out of the faucet. Funny how the stream splits in two when you stick a paw in it! “Glug!” “Splish!” How it gurgles and splashes. As Charlie stands there, she starts dreaming... of the sea!

Storm. Rain. A pirate ship on the high seas. Charlie clutches the helm with both paws and pulls it around using her full weight. “Hoist the jib!” she yells against the wind tugging hard at her leather cape. The sails of her ship, the **Anne Bonny**** , billow. The mast creaks as it strains against the wind. Massive waves swell and crash on the ship’s hull. The pirate ship is shooting through the water swift as an arrow.*

* Hoist the jib: raise the triangular foresail of a ship.

** Anne Bonny was one of the most famous female pirates of all time, and Charlie’s pirate ship is named after her. Anne Bonny was born in Ireland in 1698. Women were not allowed on pirate ships at that time, so she disguised herself as a man at first. She later teamed up with another famous pirate named Mary Read. From then on, the two sailed across the Caribbean and were notorious and feared plunderers.





Giant raindrops lash the faces of Charlie and her crew, Muriel the Duck and Frida the Bear. Suddenly, a bright bolt of lightning cracks over the sea. Look there! A shadow!

“Enemy in sight! Enemy in sight!” screeches Muriel the Duck, who is up on the lookout. “Frida, to the canons!”
Suddenly, Charlie feels a hand grip her shoulder.

“Char-lotte! Aren’t you finished yet? Hurry up! You’re not paying attention again!” Mama Rabbit sighs and looks at her wristwatch. “And you’ve got carrot juice on your face again. Quick, wash that out of your fur and brush your teeth. Else we’ll both be late!”

“What?” Charlie looks up at her mother with wide eyes. “You’ve got to ... oh come on, just let *me* do it. Mama Rabbit slides the toothbrush into Charlie’s mouth. “It’s always the same, every morning!” she complains, brushing her daughter’s teeth and wiping her face.

Charlie lets her ears droop. “Why can’t today be Saturday?” she thinks. “Then I could play all day and finish reading my pirate book about Anne Bonny.”

Suddenly Charlie feels drowsy and heavy.

“Did you put your school things in your backpack?”

Charlie winces. “Oh darn!” With her mouth still full of toothpaste foam, she shakes her head.

“How many times do I have to remind you to pack your backpack the night before school?” asks her mother as she dashes into Charlie’s bedroom.

“I’m so tired of this hassle,” she grumbles as she quickly gathers pencils from Charlie’s desk, picks up folders from the floor, and throws everything into the backpack.

Lost in thought, Charlie looks up at her. Her mother groans.

“Charlie, don’t just stand there. Here, take your backpack and go! Or you’ll be late for school again.”



Charlie is just about to say goodbye to her mother when the egg timer in the kitchen goes off. Mama Rabbit looks at her watch again.

“The cake, oh no! Ok, relax. On with the decoration and then off to work!”

She gives Charlie a quick kiss on the forehead.

A clearing with an old oak tree lies 633 paces away from the rabbits’ house. Its gnarled trunk juts crookedly out of the ground as if wanting to take a bow. And if you look closely, you can see a heart carved into the rough bark with the names Charlie, Frida, and Muriel.



Frida the Bear carved it on the tree last summer with her sharp, pink-painted claws.

This morning, Frida has found herself a comfortable spot on a big root. She leans her shaggy back against the old oak tree. Her friend Muriel is running in circles around her, fluttering her duck wings excitedly and quacking:

“We’ll be late, we’ll be late! Mrs. Lynx is going to get mad! We’ll be late!”

“Now stop running around like that. You’re making me nervous,” Frida grumbles, adjusting her pink bow.

Slowly, she stands up on her hind legs and straightens herself so high that her head bumps a branch.

“It’s all right. Charlie’s coming now!” she says, dropping to all fours with such force that the soft forest floor vibrates.

“Sorry, sorry! Thanks for waiting,” Charlie pants, holding her side.

“Well, you’re here now,” Frida says and starts moving. It’s still a long way to school.

As on every school day, the three friends walk through the forest side by side. Charlie inhales the cool, damp morning air and feels her heartbeat slow down. It smells of earth, moss, and damp wood. The first rays of sunlight fall through the canopy of leaves.

“So many different colors!” Charlie thinks and lets her gaze wander over the leaves shimmering in a thousand shades of green.



Suddenly Charlie's hind leg gets caught on a root and she stumbles. She manages to steady herself on a tree trunk just in time to keep

from lurching onto the ground. Her eyes fall on the forest floor. But ... what is THAT?

Charlie excitedly calls to her friends: "Look, what a strange paw print! It's huge."

Muriel has already run ahead and is nervously swaying from one webbed foot to the other.

"I'm sure it's Mr. Beaver's. Maybe he's cutting down a tree nearby. Let's keep moving, we're going to be late."

Frida sighs: "Muriel is right. I guess we'll have to look at the paw print on the way home."

Charlie forces herself to turn away and runs to catch up with her friends.

"That certainly wasn't Mr. Beaver! The print is much bigger. I've never seen one like it before."

"Yes, yes, we'll look later," Muriel chatters and waddles ahead.

Charlie shakes her head and walks silently beside Frida the Bear. They both love the silence of the forest, broken only by the babbling of the little brook and the call of a cuckoo.

And by Muriel shouting out to them: “Hey, which tree has hanging cones again? The spruce or the fir?”

“Huh, why?” asks Charlie, scrunching up her face.

“Well, because of the test. I’m sure Mrs. Lynx will ask that question!” says Muriel and waddles on ahead.

“What test?” says Charlie.

“The one about trees,” grumbles Frida the Bear.

“But that’s not until next week,” insists Charlie, furrowing her forehead even deeper.

“No, it’s today, it’s today!” exclaims Muriel, fluttering her duck wings up and down.

Charlie stops abruptly, her head heating up and her whole body tingling. She stares at her friends, “What?!”

Muriel shakes her head. “Did you forget to write it down again?”

The Test

Screeeech! Mrs. Lynx, the teacher, runs her claws down the blackboard and the classroom quiets down immediately.

No one dares make another sound.

“Good morning! Get out your English folders. We’re going over the homework.”

A loud rustling spreads through the class as everyone starts rummaging through their backpacks. In no time, Muriel, Frida, and the rest of the class all have their folders open. Only Charlie doesn’t.

“Where the heck is my homework? Oh no! Didn’t Mama put it in here?”

With trembling paws, Charlie searches through her backpack, but she can’t find her English folder. Her heart is pounding madly, blood rushing to her ears.

“If I’ve forgotten my homework again, I’ll definitely get detention!” she thinks. And she promised her mother she would stop forgetting so much.

“Come on, Charlotte. We’re always waiting for you,” says Mrs. Lynx in an irritated voice.

“I’ve got it,” Charlie blurts out, grabbing the math folder and building a little privacy screen with her pencil case. “Please, please don’t notice,” she begs Mrs. Lynx inwardly.



“Then you can give us your answer to question one now, Charlotte. What did you write down?”

Charlie freezes and feels her stomach contract. What to say? Then Muriel nudges her under the bench with her wing and turns her English folder in Charlie’s direction. Charlie rests her forehead on her paw so that nobody can see her peeking at Muriel’s notes.

“Um, the blackbird ... um ... is sitting on the branch. So ... um ... blackbird and branch are the nouns.”

Mrs. Lynx raises an eyebrow and approaches Charlie with quick steps.

“Good answer!”

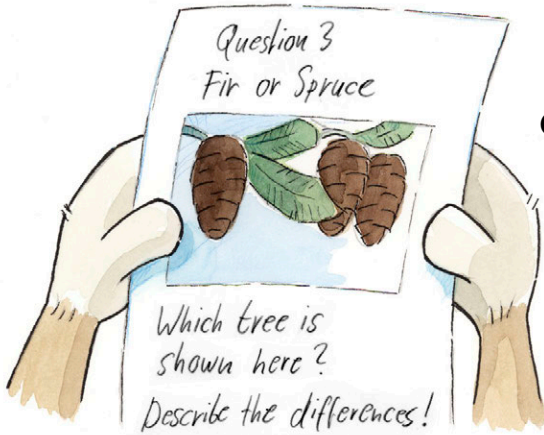
She clutches Charlie’s notebook and casts a critical glance at the math problems.

“Just not your own, unfortunately. You forgot your homework again, didn’t you? That means detention for you next Wednesday! And Muriel, this is the last time you let Charlotte look at your homework! Or you’ll get detention too!”

Charlie feels the eyes of the whole class on her and struggles to hold back tears. She doesn’t even notice that Mrs. Lynx has started calling on the other children.

“I’m so stupid! Why does this always happen to me? I did my homework! Now I won’t be able to play after school on Wednesday. Again! Mama will be so mad when she finds out!” she thinks.

The lesson goes on, but Charlie doesn’t pay any attention.



During the test on trees, Mrs. Lynx keeps a close eye on her. Copying from Muriel or Frida is impossible. Charlie tries hard to remember the lessons. “So, question three. Fir or spruce? Which tree is shown here?” she reads quietly and looks at the picture.

“Oh no, that’s exactly what Muriel wanted to know this morning,” Charlie remembers. “I have no idea ... I’ll write fir. Fingers crossed ... Differences? With firs, the cones hang down, and with spruces, they stand up? What else could I write? Uh ... fir trees are bigger and they’re used as Christmas trees.”

Just as Charlie is about to start on the fourth question, Mrs. Lynx claps her paws three times.

“Pencils down, time’s up. Charlotte, that goes for you too.”

“I still have to write down my name,” she stammers.

But Mrs. Lynx has already taken the test up from under her trembling paws.

After the school bell rings, Charlie takes a deep breath and loosens her shoulders. The weekend at last! Muriel, Frida, and Charlie pack up their school supplies and head home.