

My Favourite
Bedtime
Stories



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Too Cold for Adelie

At the edge of the Antarctic, where the land tails off into a sea of icebergs, there lived a penguin colony, home to a couple of thousand birds. In the southernmost part of the world it is so cold that the snow never melts, instead it becomes hard pack ice which slowly forms into mountains. It's so cold that there's no soil, and no trees, just rocks and ice, ice, and more ice. And the wild Polar Wind sweeps relentlessly over the never-ending plains.

In October, just as spring had finally come to the South Pole, a mother penguin laid an egg. She and the father penguin brooded over it patiently, keeping it warm under the thick, cosy feathers of their tummies. In summer, when it finally hatched, out came a little fluffy penguin girl!

"Hello! There you are, at last!" squawked the penguin parents with joy, and they named their baby, Adelie. The parents fed Adelie several times a day with little fish and crabs.

“Eat child, so that you’re big and strong by the time Winter comes,” said her mother.

“What is Winter?” asked Adelie, cuddling up against her mother’s warm tummy.

“Winter is a long, dark time of year, when the sun doesn’t shine and there isn’t much to eat. It’s when the wind howls so dreadfully, and snow falls continually from the sky.”

“That sounds horrible,” said Adelie. “I’m freezing cold already!”



“Penguins can’t freeze,” said her father, firmly. “Come on Adelie, it’s time for you to learn to swim. You’ll like it, it’s warmer in the water than out here!”

It was surprisingly pleasant in the water. Adelie learnt to dive and caught her first fish. But as soon as she came out the water and climbed back onto land, she started to feel terribly cold again.

Then, in March, the days started getting shorter again. Before long, the sun only came out for a few hours a day, and its rays were weak and unable to give out much warmth anymore. Snow started falling in big fat flakes and the wind howled.

Poor Adelie. Her beak shivered and shook, and she hopped from one flipper to the other.

“What’s wrong with the poor child?” her parents asked themselves.

All the other penguins in the colony started gossiping about her. “See that girl there, she’s freezing! What a disgrace!”

One day, as Adelie was standing on a cliff, looking sadly out to sea, she suddenly caught sight of something big and white coming towards her. It was all lit up, as if covered in lots of tiny little suns.

“Caw-caw!” A seagull landed near Adelie.

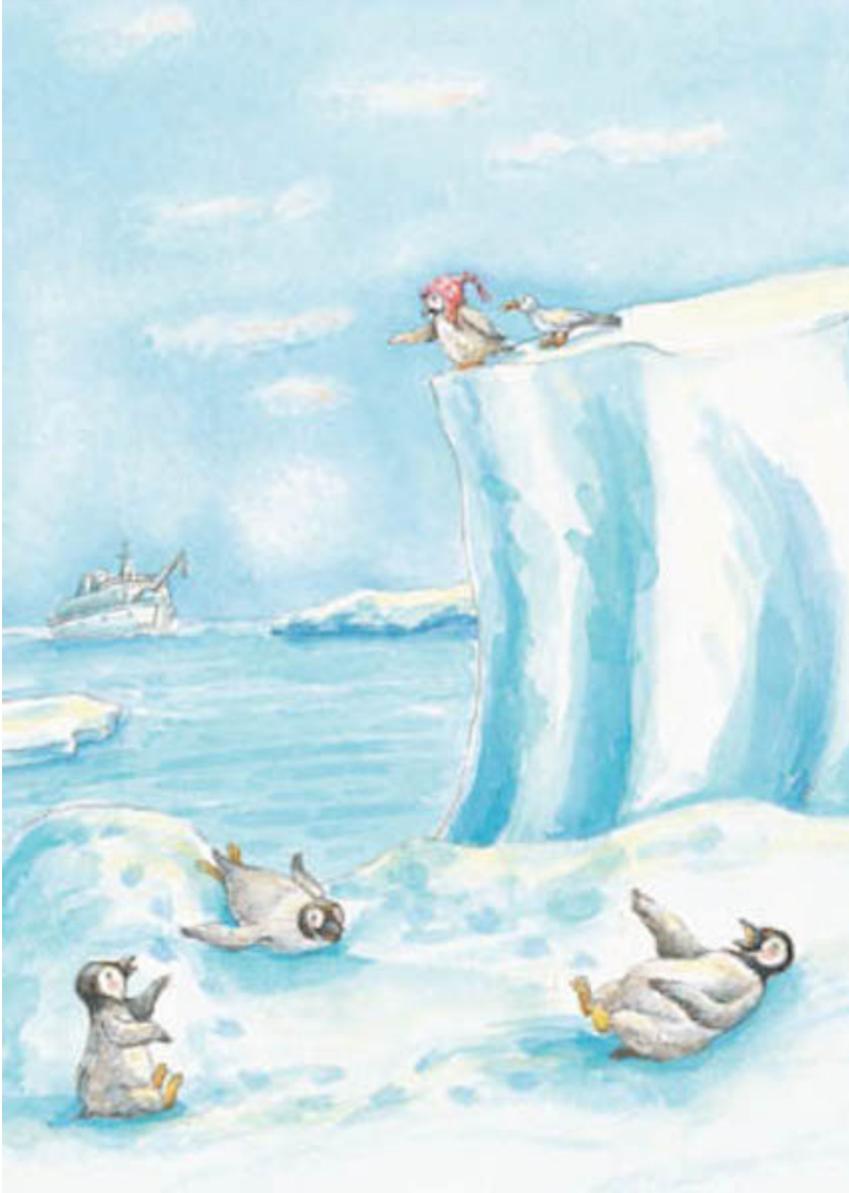
“What’s that thing?” Adelie asked the seagull.

“That’s a ship,” said the seagull. “With people on it. They have a colony on the other side of the mountain that they call a Research Station. Twice a year the ship arrives with new crates and people, and then it goes again, taking the old ones away with it.”

“Where do they go?”

“To their home, up in the North.”







“What’s it like there, in the North?”

“Awful, if you ask me! There’s no ice, it’s unbearably warm, and the fish taste weird!” Then the seagull flew off out over the sea, leaving Adelie all alone. A land in the North, where it’s always warm? No snow, no polar wind? It must be heavenly to live there!

She stood for a while on the cliff thinking things over. Then, she made a very difficult decision. She went to her parents and said in a firm and steady voice,

“I’m very sorry, but it’s just too cold for me here. I want to go with the people-ship to the North where it’s warm. Please don’t be cross with me!”

Adelie’s parents were very sad to hear that. They tried to talk Adelie into staying, but she had made up her mind, and so there was nothing left for them to do, but to let her go with heavy hearts. They accompanied her part of the way up the mountain, then waved with their short little wings, until they couldn’t see her anymore.

Adelie walked all night long. Around midday, she saw the Research Station with the big white ship docked nearby. The Station consisted of a pair of huts with big aerials on

the roofs. Men in thick anoraks walked back and forth between the Station and the ship, pulling sledges which carried crates and barrels over the ice. Adelie looked very carefully around her, and then ran as fast as she could to a crate, cleverly lifting up the lid with her beak, and jumped in head first. Ooff!

After a while, she heard voices. The crate was moved somewhere else, and then everything went quiet again. Exhausted, Adelie fell asleep. When she awoke, she peeked very carefully through a crack in the lid of the crate. She was on the ship, and the ship was sailing North! She had done it! Reassured that all was well, she went back to sleep.

