

A ZEBRA CALLED DOTTIE



First Story: A Zebra Called Dottie

Dottie arrives at school with her mum. She hides behind her mum's legs and she stays put. She can see the students entering the school yard:

Grayce with her parents, Hooknosser with his dad, Hoseblacky with his parents, and many more. Her mum has a lovely smell: fresh grass and mumscent. Dottie was going nowhere; she was staying right there. - Look, honey, how many animals your age! There, go and play!

No response from Dottie. Her mum bent and whispered to her fondly:

-You are my little star!

And Dottie came very slowly from her hideout. All the children's mothers were there. Some of them were very fat, others very thin, some of them furry, while others supple and strong. But definitely none of them had that special scent: grass-mumscent. Dottie rubbed her head on her mum's belly, paused for a moment, and then she dashed to the schoolyard. Her mum became fainter, like a little spot on the horizon.



- Good morning, children. Welcome to the first year of primary school. Grayce be quiet, hold your trunk - you are annoying the person in front of you!

Miss Giraffine, the big and wise giraffe, approached the little elephant and smiled at her. The first day at school is really hard. All the animals are anxious. Miss Giraffine knows that and she doesn't want to be strict.

- And now I want you to stand up and introduce yourselves in turns. The rest of us will listen carefully and repeat our classmate's name. Roary, you can start.

- My name is Roary and I'm a little lion. All the animal start clapping.

- My name is Grayce and I'm a little elephant. Clapping.

- My name is Hooknoser and I'm a little parrot. Clapping.

- My name is Hoseblacky and I'm a little python. Clapping.

- My name is Blackredyn and I'm a little ladybug. Clapping.

- My name is Snowhitie and I'm a little polar bear. Clapping.

- My name is Dottie and I'm a little zebra. Laughter, lots of laughter, laughter in hysterics. All the animals held their bellies.

Dottie burst out crying.

- And, why are you laughing? she asked sobbing.

- What do you think? We all have a name suitable to our appearance. You are a striped zebra named Dottie! said the python laughing.



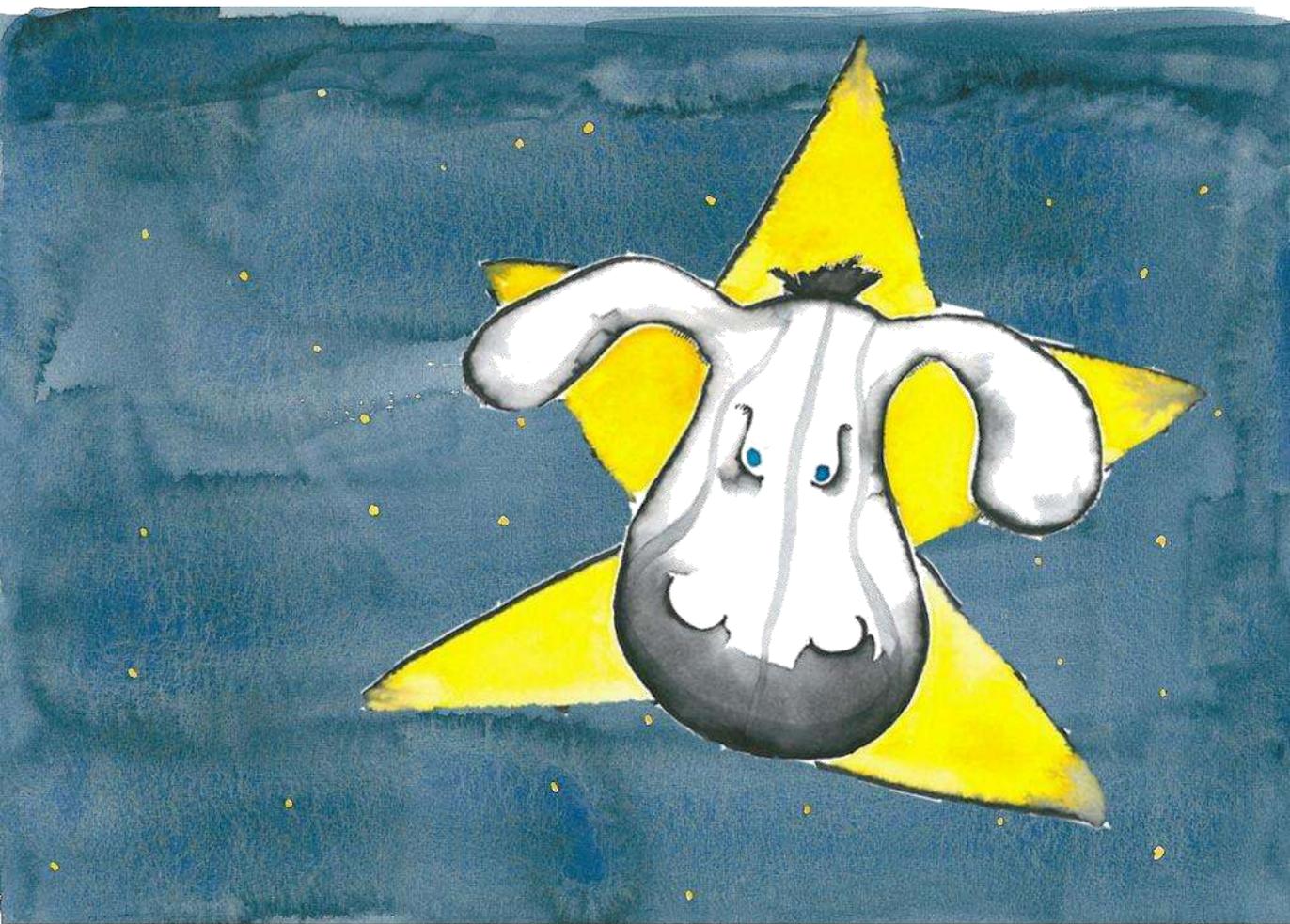
Miss Giraffine, who had also laughed, approached Dottie and told her:

- You have the most beautiful name of all, Dottie. If we draw rays on a spot, it will be a...
- A little star! Sprang the polar bear.
- Oh, yes. My mum calls me “her little star”. Dottie wiped her eyes and her face lit up.
- I like stars too. There is a constellation in the sky with my shape. The shape of a bear. Would you like to be our star? The polar bear asked the zebra.

- You are our little star! Shouted all the animals and lifted Dottie, the zebra with the stripes and the funny name, onto their shoulders. Sometimes the others laugh at you, sometimes they love you, thought Dottie. She came home with many thoughts. She explained what had happened to her mum.

- Mum, if someone laughs at you, and then loves you and wants you to be their friend, what does this mean? In which case are they being truthful?

- Both times, my little star. Because when we feel ashamed of ourselves, then the others laugh at us. When we love ourselves, then they love us as well. I’m sure that your face lit up when you said “my mum calls me her little star”. So the others saw the shame fading away from your face. They saw the spark and loved you.
- Good night my little star.

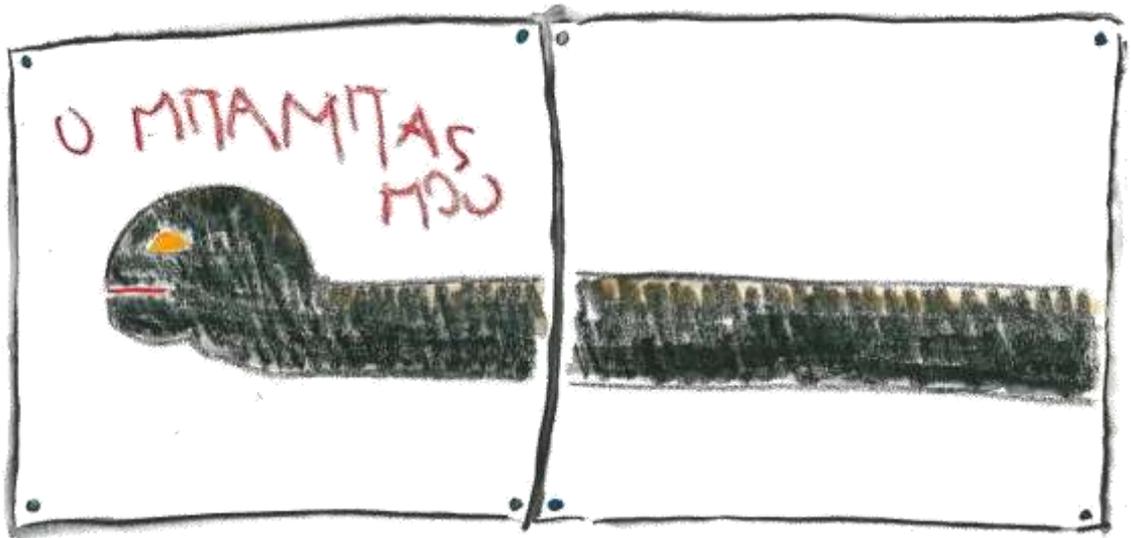


Second Story: Who's my Dad?



Today, it was a lovely day for Dottie, the zebra. All the animals of the class had played leapfrog. It was really fun. They then tried to make a tower. Each one was climbing onto the shoulders of the other but they failed and the tower collapsed. Grayce, the elephant, insisted on climbing onto Splattery, the butterfly, and Jawon, the crocodile, wanted to climb onto Bulgeyer, the frog. Every time the pyramid began to lean, the animals fell, and burst into laughter.

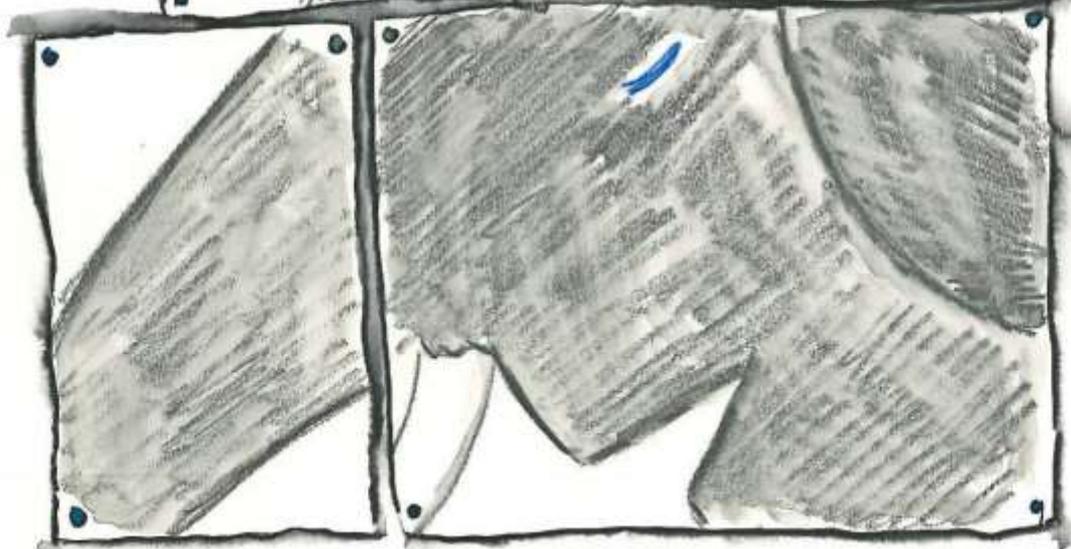
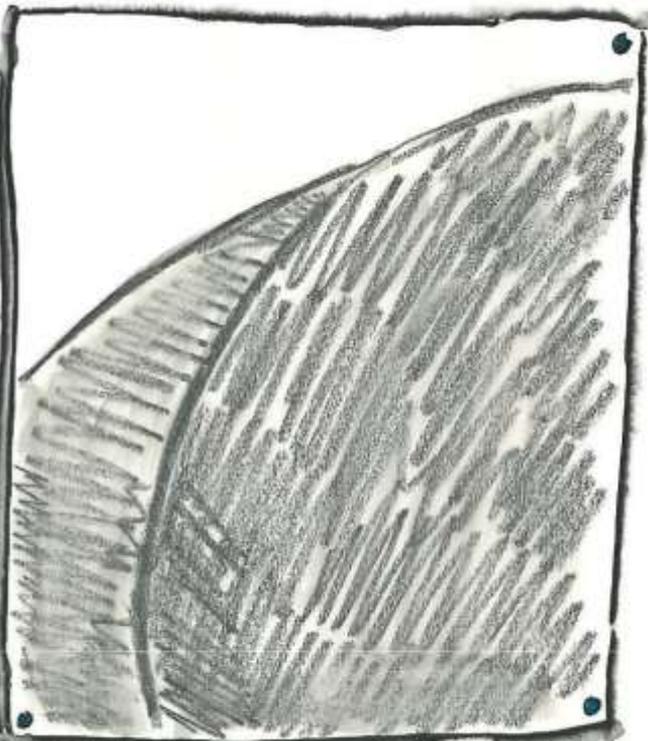
Then Miss Giraffine, the giraffe, asked them to draw something and write about their dad. Dottie flinched behind her desk. Hooknoser, the parrot, sitting next to her drew an ornate proud father parrot.



Hoseblacky, the python, asked for some more paper because, as he said, his dad was so big that he couldn't fit on one sheet of paper. After that Grayce did the same.

- I want some more paper too. Said one little animal after the other.

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Only Dottie spun the paints around with her tail and stared at the blank page in front of her tearfully. Splattery landed on her nose and told her a joke but Dottie didn't even look at her. The school bell rang and Dottie ran home.

- Mum, why don't I have a dad? Since everyone else has. Where's mine?
- I have already explained it to you my sweet Dottie; Mum looked at her little girl fondly.
- Don't tell me another fairy tale. I am grown up. I want the truth! Dottie's mum sighed:
 - Once upon a time when I was very young, I had an accident. I was caught in a hunter's trap and I risked death.
 - Yikes, Mummy. Thank heavens you didn't die Mum! Imagine I had neither a mum or a dad.
 - It took a lot of time to walk and run again. How I managed to escape from the animals and people only God-Zebra knows.
 - You're a very brave mum.

- By the time I was better, time had passed by, and I couldn't have children any more, without help.

- Were you old?

- No, I just needed some help for my body work like it did when I was younger.

- I really, truly wanted to have a Dottie. I dreamt of her day and night. She had your face, your eyes, and your stripes.

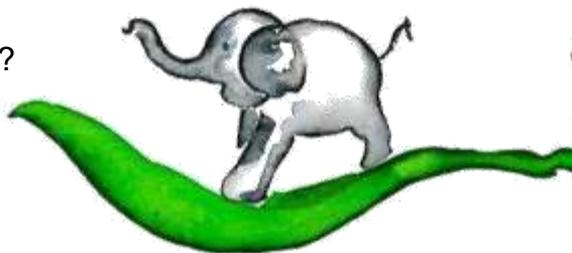
- Well done, Mum; You have taste. And how did you manage to make me? Tell me how did you make me?

- I visited a very good doctor who helps zebras that cannot have children. And he, just like when we plant a seed into the ground and it turns into a flower, planted into my body a seed, that gave me a beautiful and rascally Dottie like you. I had to be very careful that everything would go well. But, it did, and I have been really happy ever since I saw you coming!

- Are there any other animals that are born like this? Without a dad but with the help of a doctor?

- Sure.

- But why aren't any of them in my class?



- Because they all go to different schools or are in a different year, dear Dottie.

Now I want you to take a sheet of paper and write something.

- Oh, no. Spelling?

- No, I want you to write down the name of everyone who loves you. Come on.

Dottie started:

Uncle Zabra, Aunt Stripie, Grandma, her older cousin, her younger cousin, her best friend...and the list wasn't finished.

- Have you got some more paper Mum?

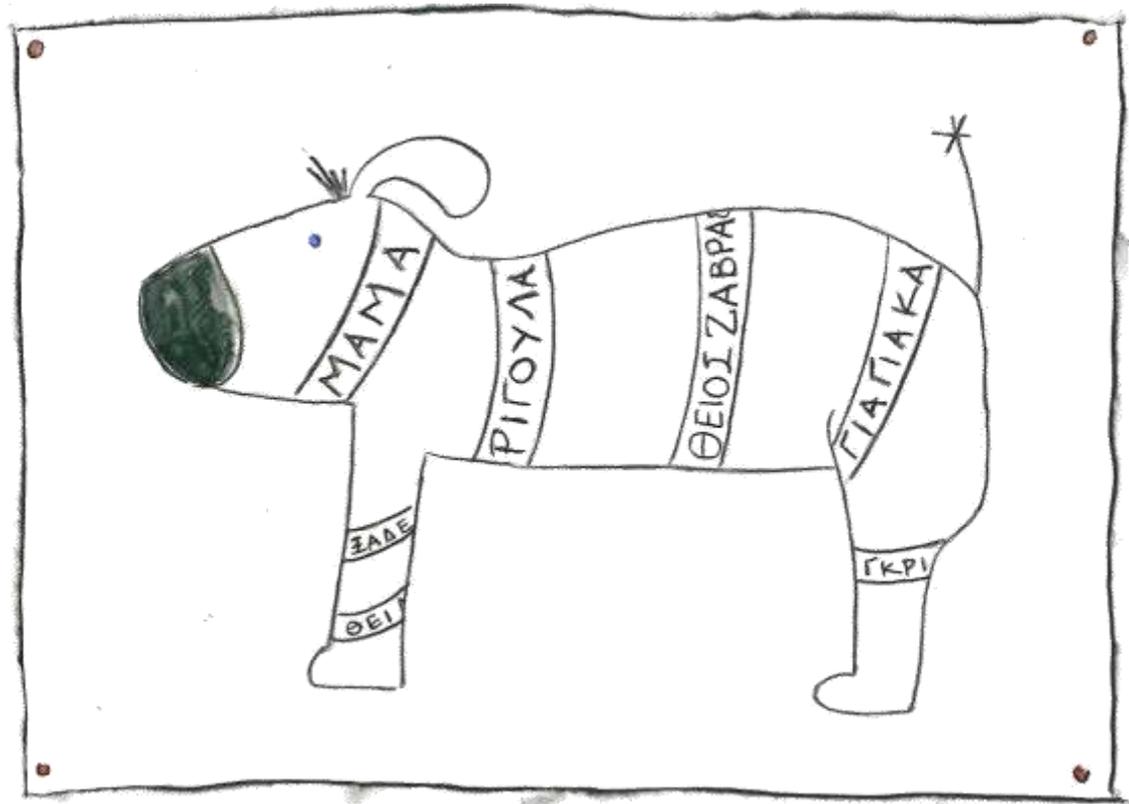
- Do you see how many animals love you? And of them all, who loves you the most?

Dottie rubbed her head on her mum's belly.

- Silly. Now draw a dad zebra and write all these names in him. We are all your family.

Go and change quickly into your pyjamas.

Goodnight Dottie.



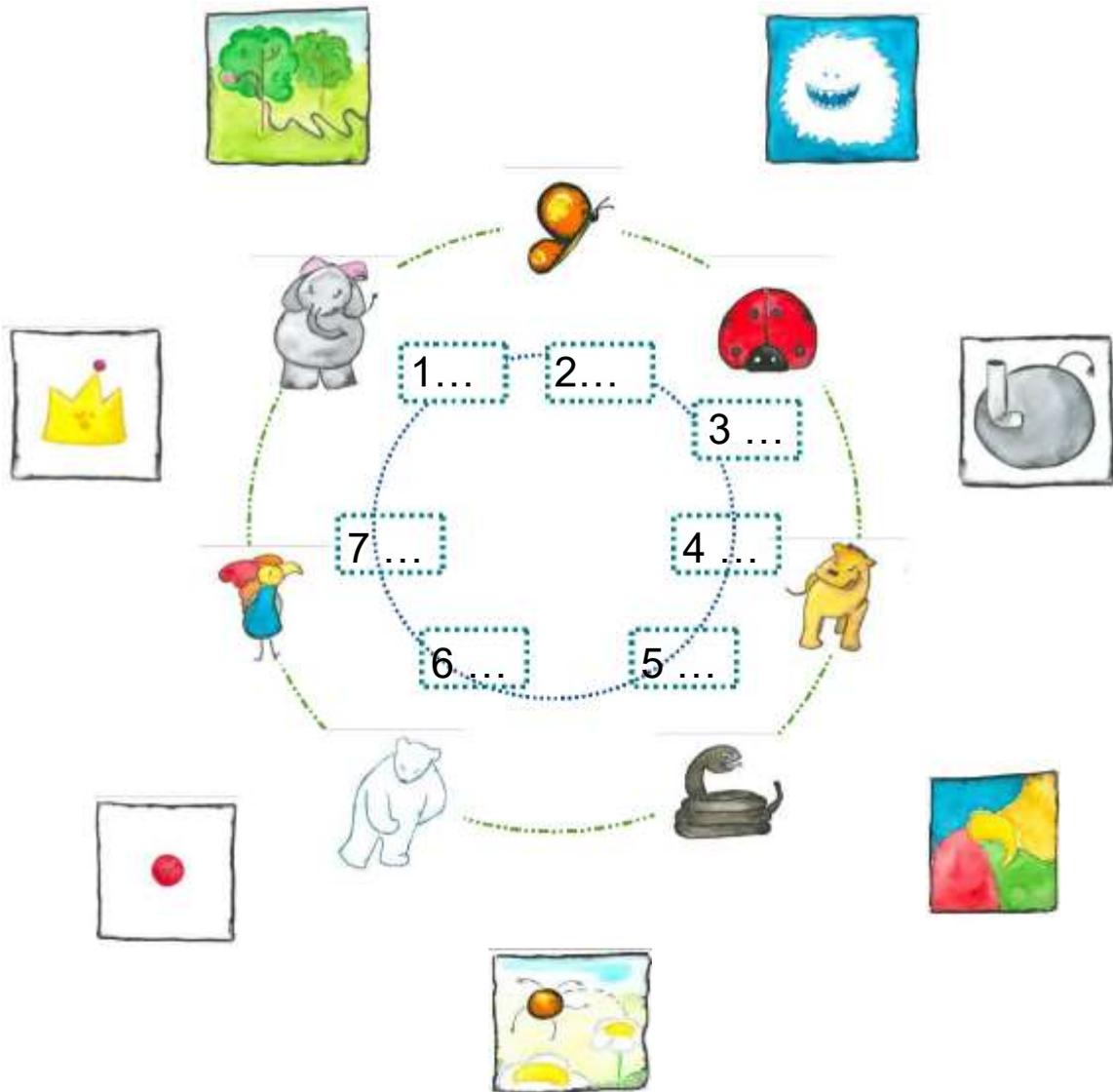
Third Story: Dottie, the Beautiful

Miss Giraffine wrote on the board: “Beautiful means...”. Then she looked at all the animals in the classroom without saying a word. Whispers spread. Chirrup, caws, squeaks, hissings...

- Miss will you tell us the fairy tale of Beauty? Sprang the python.
- Be quiet please! Get out a piece of paper and a pencil. The animals obeyed, while expressing complaints.
- This is a test! You need to write down what the word beautiful means. You are grown animals now and you have a rich vocabulary. It's a piece of cake. So you can all have an 'A' my dear little animals. It is easy, isn't it?
- Yeeees! cried everyone in unison.

The pencils were on fire. Tails, beaks, snouts, paws and claws; they all wrote nonstop. They would all have an 'A' for sure. What a nice teacher...

Can you guess which animal wrote what about beauty?



1. To have a nose like a hook and vivid colours..

It's the animal:...

2. The king of the animals is beautiful.

It's the animal:...

3. Beautiful is someone that is small, round and bright red with black spots.

It's the animal:...

4. Beautiful is a large, fat, grey ball with a long nose and a tail.

It's the animal:...

5. Beautiful is someone that is thin and black, and slithers on the ground and in the trees, and has a tongue with poison.

It's the animal:...

6. Beautiful is someone that has pretty colours and feelers, and flies from flower to flower.

It's the animal:...

7. To be large, tall, pure white, with sharp teeth and thick fur, that's what beauty means.

It's the animal:...

Dottie wrote, drew and smudged on and on. Everyone had finished and gone home but she kept writing and smudging...

- What is it Dottie? Why don't you write?
- Miss, I got confused. Look at the sketches I made. It doesn't make any sense. Everyone is beautiful.

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Dottie, my beautiful friends.

Dottie shows the teacher the sketches of all her classmates.

- I can't see anything that looks like you, though. Where are the striped pyjamas?
- Oh, I just wear these, Miss, so I can see all my beautiful friends around me.

The next morning Miss Giraffine said to the animals of the class:

- Everyone did very well. Everyone said that beautiful is someone that looks like them. Dottie, though, said that beautiful is someone that sees others as beautiful.
- But, Miss, I didn't say that...complained Dottie.
- I know, my dear Dottie. But if you think about it closely, with your little head, you'll see that this is what you meant. And, you have an 'A'!
- But I always get 'F's, Miss.
- Well, this time you have an 'A'. Be quiet! And let's move on to Maths...

Dottie came home:

- Mum, don't be sad, today I have an 'A'.
- Well done. It seems that you liked the lesson. Now get ready. Brownny, the lion, will be here in a minute. You can see how beautiful it is when she roars...She has braces now!
- Mum, she's very beautiful Aunt Brownny.
- Of course she is. What are you talking about? Do you know anyone who isn't beautiful around you? Now, go and draw a beautiful picture for your aunt.

