



Special Extended Bonus Chapter of The Learning Well

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Foreword

This is a continuation of the story first encountered in **Over The Bridge**, in which two voles, Milo and Daisy, set off on a journey to overcome their problems. Along the way they meet some wonderful, wise characters, who offer them guidance.

When Daisy discovers her diamond she finally finds the peace and confidence she has been seeking. However, it is not long before she feels a 'calling' within to make a journey on her own.

'[The Learning Well](#)' relates this adventure, and [The Speaking Well](#) concludes it.

The Speaking Well

Daisy's Return – The Speaking Well

Many years later, Daisy returned to the Well. She had wanted to give her children Bo and Lucy the opportunity to experience the Well, and now they had reached an age where they would be able to appreciate it. She could not wait to take them on the journey.

Bo had been named after an aunt with a love for the French language, who had insisted they call him 'Beau' because he was such a beautiful baby. They finally agreed, but compromised by spelling his name 'Bo.'

Bo was an enthusiastic and lively youngster. When he met Sale, it was like meeting a long-lost uncle. Sale became Bo's instant hero and he couldn't wait to try out diving to the bottom of the river to hold his breath, and other exercises the Great Sale eagerly practised.

Lucy was a different child, quiet, and introverted. Daisy told her about the 'LIL system' as Lucy loved to memorise facts. She also loved reading. Daisy used to joke with her that it would be easy to remember her name. All you would have to do was imagine Lucy going to the loo in the sea.

"Loo-sea, Lucy, you see?" Daisy would laugh.

This always embarrassed Lucy, as she was shy. However, when she met Herennia, the Keeper of the Scrolls, she found herself bubbling with questions. Herennia was delighted to find such an enthusiastic and curious student. She knew that the path to knowledge was by asking questions and showed her how to frame her questions.

What? Where? When? How? Why? Who?

Daisy had never seen Lucy talk so much, and was intrigued at how this quiet little mole could draw out Lucy's inner spirit.

Finally, Daisy was delighted to rekindle her friendship with Maisie, that kind, caring mouse who had first set her on this path. Maisie laughed when she heard about how to remember Lucy's name. Her sense of humour appeared as bright and endearing as Daisy had remembered it to be.

Daisy told her about her own little system that she had devised and passed onto others, telling her the mnemonic LEARNING, STEPS, KNOW IT, WORKS.

1. Whatever you are LEARNING
2. Action STEPS
3. Do you KNOW IT
4. Do what WORKS

"These are the 4 steps," Daisy said, her eyes softening with affection. "I owe the third one to you, Maisie. Thank you."

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Maisie suggested they take a shorter route through the maze so the children could find their way on their own. This would bring them out in a different place. She wanted them to visit a special place first but she would not tell them anything about its nature, thereby creating an extra sense of curiosity and excitement, even in Daisy. The children had the opportunity of practising the route on the above ground map of the maze and it was not long before they were ready to leave.

Maisie knew that Daisy wished to return to the Learning Well to show the children, so she gave her some directions from the special place to the Learning Well. It was actually very straightforward as there was a path linking the two places.

Daisy felt sad to leave Maisie again after such a brief meeting, but such was the sense of excitement that had been built up within the children that they could barely contain themselves from entering and exploring the maze.

After a much shorter journey with a few turns, the family returned into the light, Bo leading the way.

A path continued from the exit of the maze so it was obvious which way to go. They hurried along the path, Bo leading the way brimming with energy and curiosity.

The conversation focused on their destination and they began asking questions about the mystery place 'What would it be like?' How far away is it? Lucy realised that they had been asking questions and remembered that it was important to ask good question in the way Herennia had advised: 'Better questions, better answers'.

Lucy began telling them stories that Herennia had told her about the ancients who were great orators standing in public speaking to groups. She related how they managed to remember the words and stories they wanted to say.

Bo listened and something obviously touched a nerve within him because he suddenly piped up with 'How could they stand up in public and speak? If I have to speak at school my heart races and I tremble. My mouth is dry. It is awful.' He had never spoken about this before and Milo and Daisy felt for him, troubled by this admission.

The conversation continued but no one knew quite what to say to help Bo. Then in the distance by a pond they could see an unusual looking bird. As they drew nearer Daisy thought that the bird looked familiar. But she did not know why as she was uncertain as to what sort of a creature he was.

He looked a bit like a heron but he obviously was not a heron. In fact he possessed an owl like quality. They joined the group and Daisy now gained a much better view and suddenly realised where she knew this creature from.

A fleeting memory flashed through her mind. She had seen his image on the wall of the Learning Well many years ago. As had happened many times before, the images on the walls of the Learning Well were now becoming real.

She leant towards the others and quietly told the family that she had seen a picture of this heron like bird speaking in front of a group.

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Lucy was the first to speak, questions still fresh in her mind ‘What type of bird are you? Are you a heron? She inquired with her new found confidence.

No I am a bittern not a heron, but I am related to the herons. Did I hear one of you whisper the words ‘speaking in front of a group’.

Daisy looked slightly embarrassed at being overheard.

The bittern then continued nothing better or more fun, he turned to Lucy and asked ‘What is your name?’ My name is Lucy. Bo chipped in with ‘ You can remember it by imagining Lucy going to the Loo in the sea. Loo.....sea ’.

The bittern laughed a deep warm laugh and started to tell them a story.

As a youngster I loved to play in the water with the other creatures and I would always end up covered in the green slime. No one knew what to call me until one of my aunts called out ‘look at that boy, always covered in green. You should call him algae’. My mother unimpressed by the suggestion sounded the name to herself slowly al-gae. I’m not keen on the name Algae. Maybe we could call him Al for short. Yes that’s it, we’ll call him Al. That is how I acquired my name. By now a small crowd was gathering. They knew of Al’s reputation and had come to listen to him speak.

Al did not concern himself with the crowd instead he turned to Bo and asked him ‘Well young vole, how did you come by your name?’ to which he replied ‘a French aunt named me’.

Al realised his reticence to continue so changed the subject quickly and realising that they must have passed through the maze replied ‘I see you have made a trip, did anything exciting happen or did you meet anyone interesting on the way?’.

Immediately he started talking about diving with Great Sale. Al, acknowledged knowing Great Sale and asked after his health. He then asked Bo to tell him about the rest of the journey.

Bo continued with excitement and enthusiasm and Al cleverly stood back. Bo stood in front of the growing group still talking to Al but also to the group as a whole. Now so absorbed in relating his stories he was unaware of his previous fears. When Bo reached the present in his journey, Al stepped forward, looked at the crowd, congratulated Bo for telling his terrific tale and led the group in a round of applause. ‘Well done my lad’. You have chosen the path to freedom. The vast majority of creatures have been (born into a sort of bondage), born into a prison, they think they cannot escape from, born into a world of silence.....unable to talk before others and therefore ‘speechless’.

Today you will hear how you can be set free, free to soar above the great mass of the silent, huddled together in their collective fear.

I once, was held back from speaking, with heart pounding. Al continued exuding a love of speaking relating how he had seen miracles happen.

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Finally he concluded with 'so take the path to freedom, take the path to the Speaking Well'. Many creatures stayed behind afterwards to talk to Al.

Daisy and the family remained. Bo now realised the significance of what had happened, beamed with confidence and happiness at his achievement with Al's guidance.

They waited to pass on their gratitude to Al. Bo stepped forward and thanked Al..

It was a pleasure.'Marvellous speech, very interesting'.

In fact I would like to hear more. There is a place not far from here I would like to show you all, if you would not mind an extra companion.

They were absolutely delighted and felt honoured to have such a distinguished character and speaker take the time to help them.

First Al congratulated Bo on speaking so well. He told him he had natural abilities as a speaker. You now know you can speak confidently so next time you have the opportunity to speak grab it with both paws and speak.

I wish a similar opportunity had been offered to me. When I was young the herons were the confident speakers and the bitterns, being shy and more retiring did not speak in public. Then one day after so many years of silence I spoke up in a group and, as you have heard, I have been unable to stop speaking since then.

The conversation moved to Daisy's previous journey. Al was particularly interested as he already knew many of the characters she had met. She had just reached the part in her journey when she had passed through the maze and was just about to relate what she had found when the path turned a corner when Daisy stopped and surprised exclaimed 'A Learning Well.' I was just about to tell you about the Learning Well' Al replied 'I thought you might recognise it, actually this is a type of Learning Well, it is called the Speaking Well. This is the special place Maisie wanted you to visit. I will leave you here to investigate with your family and with that Al was gone.

Daisy and her family approached the Speaking Well, they climbed the outer wall and descended the steps leading down into the Well. The inside walls of the Speaking Well were covered with pictures. They descended further. Bo went ahead and when he saw the picture of himself talking to a bittern he called out to the rest of the family. The others then noticed pictures of themselves on the wall.

Bo began to speak out loud about his meeting with Al. The sound of his voice was fed back to him not as an echo but exactly the same with total clarity. It was a unique feeling. He could hear how he sounded to others. They all took turns to speak and instead of being consumed by the usual self-consciousness they could hear themselves from another's perspective. Their fear of speaking was evaporating every time they spoke.

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Lucy discovered that there were stories contained in the pictures on the walls and by touching the walls, she could hear wonderful melodic voices telling the stories

No one wanted to leave this magical place but after many hours the light began to fade so they climbed the steps. Just as they were leaving Daisy noticed some words written on the wall 'Speak to Learn'. What a wonderful idea she thought and paused as it triggered a special memory for her. She looked at the children and quietly spoke 'Children before we go home I would like to take you to a special place I visited before you were born'. They glanced behind them at [the Speaking Well](#) for the last time and set off for the Learning Well.

After a short walk along a path they reached The Learning Well. Daisy descended first.

This time, she found that she found that some of those pictures which had been dimly shaded before became easily visible. There, etched into the stone, was her present journey with the children.

Had it been there all along, waiting for her to discover it?

When they reached the surface, they were all talking in an excited manner about what they had seen on the walls. It appeared that they all glimpsed their own journeys and the relevant parts that proved important to them. Each one drew something different from The Learning Well, but they were united in their desire to return again.

That was the beauty of the place.

This time, Daisy realised something new. One of her greatest joys had been for her children to discover their own Learning Well.

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