

The fabulous storybird

Story by Kerry Saadien-Raad

Illustrations by Natalie and Tamsin Hinrichsen

A long time ago, there lived a wonderful creature. She was known as the fabulous storybird.

The storybird was beautiful and wise. She was tall and strong and her feathers shone and sparkled with lovely colours. She was the best storyteller in the land. People came from far and near to listen to her tell stories and to watch in wonder as her feathers shone in the sunlight.

“Storybird! Storybird! Tell us a story,” the people called out.

When the storybird heard them she would stand in front of them and say, “Sssh. Quiet. Come near. Be still and you will hear.”

People would gather wherever the fabulous storybird went. Her words filled their minds with pictures of faraway places. The storybird told them of adventures. She told them of things that they had never seen. Her stories were able to make even the saddest hearts feel happy.

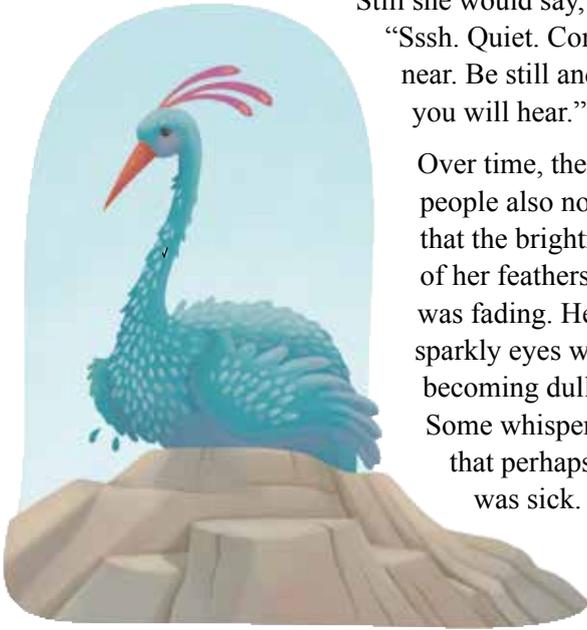
The fabulous storybird was invited to many celebrations. People would wait patiently for her to arrive. When they were ready they would call out, “Storybird! Storybird! Tell us a story.”

And she would say, “Sssh. Quiet. Come near. Be still and you will hear.”



When she was young, the stories that the storybird told were fabulous! People would sit for days and nights listening to her. But in time the fabulous storybird began to grow old and weak, even though her voice still stayed strong.

Now, when the people called out to her, “Storybird! Storybird! Tell us a story,” she would come to them slowly.



Still she would say,
“Sssh. Quiet. Come
near. Be still and
you will hear.”

Over time, the
people also noticed
that the brightness
of her feathers
was fading. Her
sparkly eyes were
becoming dull.
Some whispered
that perhaps she
was sick.

One day the people gathered together under the trees. They called out, “Storybird! Storybird! Tell us a story,” but the bird did not appear.

They called out again, “Storybird! Storybird! Tell us a story,” but the bird still did not appear. The children were worried. The adults were scared.

“What has happened to her? Will we ever hear her speak again?” they asked each other.

They watched the skies for her to come. But she did not.



The fabulous storybird heard the people’s cries, and knew that they were worried, but it was time for her to go home.

Slowly, slowly into the hills she went until she stopped in front of a cave. It was a place that only she knew of. The fabulous storybird then went deep into the secret cave. There the storybird quietly told her stories. For days and nights her voice flowed softly. The sounds of her stories echoed against the walls and filled the dark cave. Each story stayed in the echoes, not one was lost. When she was finished, she moved deeper and deeper into the tunnel at the back of the cave and was never seen again.

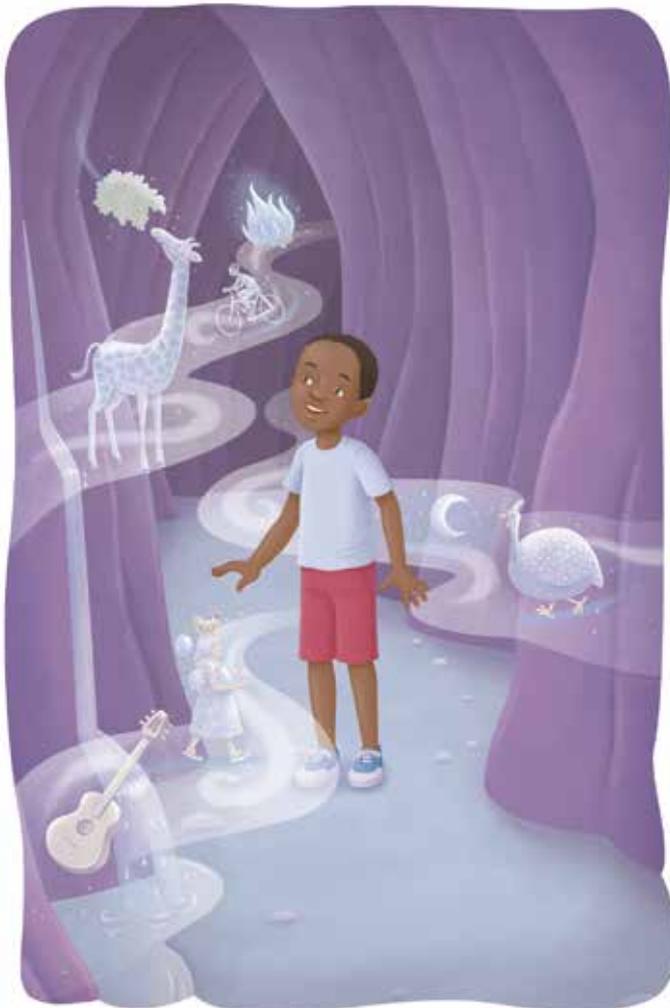


A long while later, on a warm and sunny day, a young boy called Samuel was out playing next to a stream. The sun climbed higher into the sky as Samuel played. Late in the afternoon he began to feel hot and tired and so he found a shady tree under which to rest. Samuel fell asleep and slept deeply. It was nightfall when he woke up. It was dark all around him.

Samuel was frightened because he knew he would be in trouble when he got home. “I better hurry home,” he thought, and set off into the night.

After only a short while Samuel realised that he was lost in the hills. He had walked and walked by the light of the full moon, but he seemed to be no closer to home. He was hungry and thirsty and he began to imagine all kinds of scary things in the shadows of the night. Samuel slowed down, his feet ached and he began to cry.

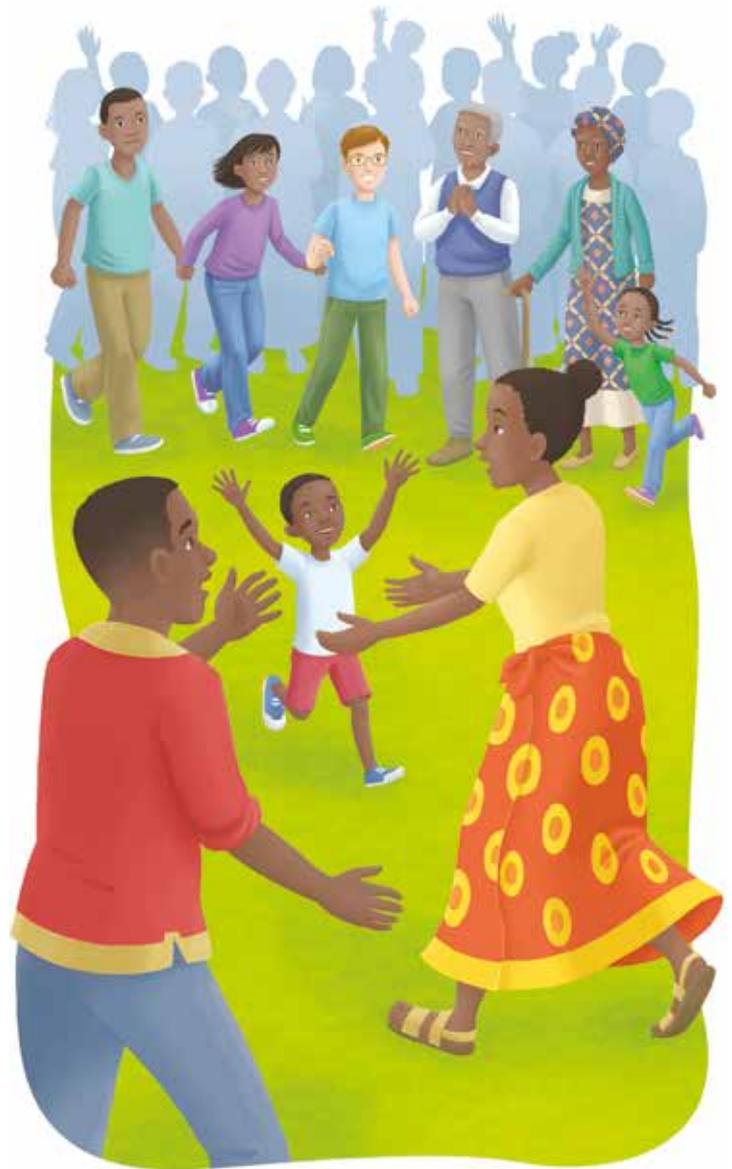
Then, in the distance and in between the night sounds, Samuel heard sweet, comforting sounds calling him to follow them. He followed the soothing sounds. These led him to the storybird's secret cave. Samuel went inside. In the corner was a gentle trickle of water from which he gulped mouthfuls of water. Samuel had found the secret cave filled with echoes that told stories. And, as the storybird's stories had done before, the stories in the echoes filled Samuel's imagination.



Samuel was exhausted and his body was tired and sore, but in this special place he felt calm and comforted. He rested. And while he rested he listened. The stories filled his imagination and he remembered them all.

At the first light of dawn, Samuel drank water from the trickle inside the cave and then walked out of the cave. And then, the spirit of the fabulous storybird led him home.

There was great joy when Samuel arrived home. People celebrated when they heard what had happened to him.



“What a happy day! What a happy day! Our storybird has left us these gifts. What a happy day!” they cheered.

The people never spoke of the fabulous storybird again. Instead it was Samuel who told the stories they listened to over and over again.

These stories were written down in books for anyone to read. The books were copied so that the stories could be shared across the land. And now the stories can be read and heard in places that the fabulous storybird could never have reached. The people were happy that her stories would be with them forever.

So, listen very carefully the next time you hear a story. You may just hear the sweet sounds of the storybird. Can you hear her now?

Keep reading! If you enjoyed this story, don't forget to visit our website (www.nalibali.org) for a growing collection of FREE children's stories.



Get story active!

Here are some ideas for using the story on pages 1 to 3 with the children in your class and/or your reading club. Choose the ideas that best suit the ages and interests of the children.

- ★ On a large sheet of paper, draw a picture of the fabulous storybird and, in a speech bubble write, "Sssh. Quiet. Come near. Be still and you will hear." As a way of introducing the story, show the children your picture and ask, "Would you like to listen to a story? What kinds of stories do you like?" Encourage the children to share the kinds of stories they like.
- ★ Ask the children who reads to them or tells them stories. Ask them how they feel about those people when they read to them or tell them stories.
- ★ Suggest that the children use recycled materials (like cardboard boxes, bottle tops, toilet paper rolls and paper towel

rolls) and other materials (like strips of coloured paper, fabric scraps, wool, buttons and beads) to make their own fabulous storybirds.

- ★ Encourage the children to suggest animals that they think could be fabulous storytellers. Then let them draw a fabulous, colourful storytelling animal and write: "The fabulous story _____" (fill in the kind of animal) under their picture.
- ★ After you have read the story, ask the children what kinds of things they are scared of in the dark. Then ask them to suggest what we can do when we feel afraid in the dark. Encourage the children to work in pairs to make up short rhymes or poems that they can say when they feel scared in the dark. For example, "What can I see? What can I hear? If there is nothing, there is nothing to fear."

About the Story Powered Schools project

Nal'ibali (isiXhosa for "here's the story") is a national reading-for-enjoyment campaign to spark children's potential through storytelling and reading.

Story Powered Schools is a pilot project bringing the Nal'ibali reading-for-enjoyment campaign's proven approach to literacy development to selected schools in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Endorsed by the Department of Education, it has been made possible by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The schools that are part of the Story Powered Schools project are committed to sparking their learners' potential through storytelling and reading. They use the power of stories to inspire their learners to want to read and write.

