

**WATER PARK
TALES**

Hayden Heron



Hayden Heron lived in a *huge* nest in an *enormous* tree near to a canal.

Hayden's family weren't the only herons living in the enormous tree. Lots of other heron families lived there and, because there were so many of them, the tree was known as the Heronry.

Sometimes Hayden would peep over the edge of the nest and look at the other young herons in their nests. He couldn't wait for when he was old enough to go out and play with them.

One day, his mummy said to him:

"Hayden, tomorrow I'm going to take you out fishing. You're getting older now and you need to learn how to look after yourself and catch your own food."



Hayden was excited. The next morning, he was up before the sun rose, eager to learn how to fish for himself. He felt very grown up.

“First of all, Hayden” his mother told him “you have to choose the right place.”

She showed him a map.

“There are too many herons in the Bird Park and they all have to catch fish” she explained “so I’m taking you somewhere special for your first lesson. We’re going to fly all the way along the canal to the Water Park and we’re going to look for a nice, quiet place to catch fish there.”

Hayden nodded. It was a real-life adventure. He couldn’t wait to go.

“Come on, mummy. Hurry up!” Hayden bounced up and down with impatience.



Hayden followed Mummy Heron along the canal towards the Water Park. There were so many new things to see and he could hardly fly for excitement. It was going to be the best day ever!

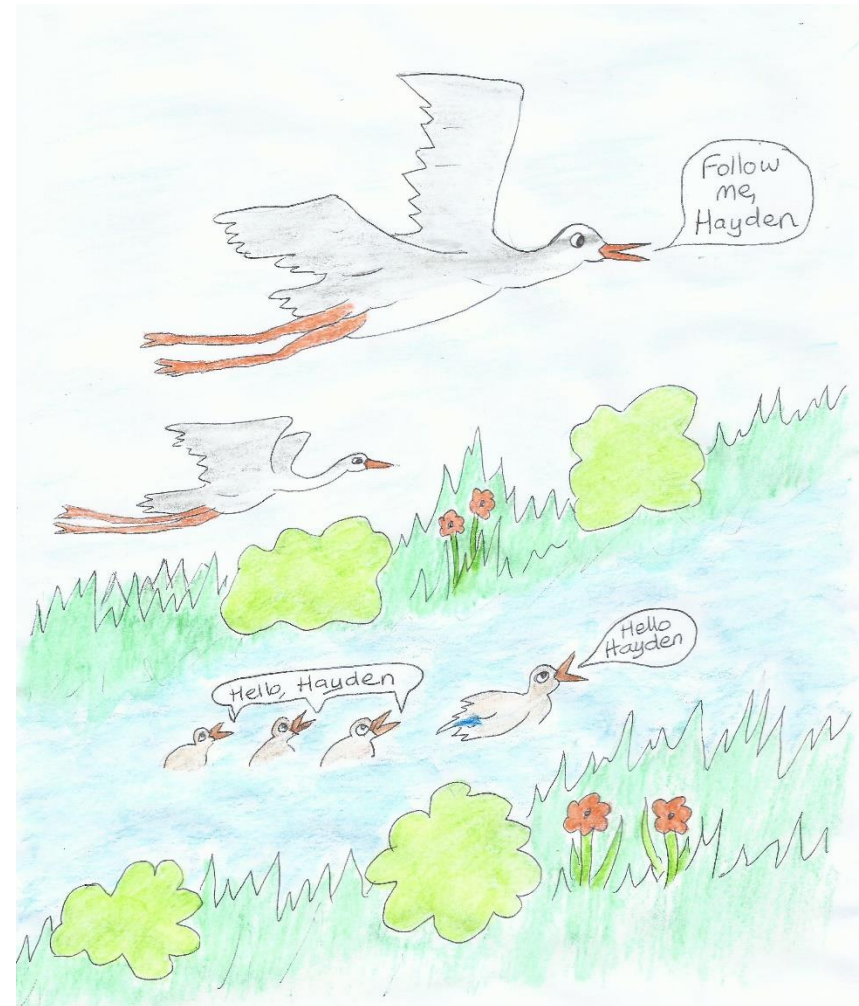
It was a long journey but Hayden loved it.

There were reeds and flowers by the side of the canal and a duck swimming with her babies.

“Hello, Hayden” they all shouted.

After a little while, Hayden’s mother turned away from the canal. Together, they flew on, over a lake and over a huge road with lots of cars.

It was all wonderful.



Mummy Heron was slowing down and peering from side to side. Suddenly she plunged downwards, swooping across a wide lake and coming in to land by a quiet lake.

“Now, Hayden” said Mummy Heron “you have to stay very still. All good herons have to learn to be very quiet and patient. Watch me.”

Hayden’s mother stood up tall and straight. She was completely still. She didn’t move. She didn’t talk. She didn’t even blink.

Hayden was worried.

“Mummy.....” said Hayden anxiously “.....mummy. Are you all right?”

He’d never seen Mummy stand so still and quiet before.



Suddenly Mummy Heron dived into the water and reappeared seconds later with a big, fat fish in her beak.

“There, that’s how you do did, Hayden” she said. “Now, I’ll take this one home for tea and you can stay here and catch us another one.”

Hayden was worried.

“How will I get home?” he asked.

“You’ll find your way” his mother reassured him. “Hérons always find their way back to the Heronry.”

Hayden looked doubtful.

“Fly over the road, across the lake and then along the canal” said his mother.



Mummy Heron flew off.

'Fly over the road, across the lake and along the canal'
Hayden repeated the words to himself.

He was scared but Hayden was determined to show his mummy that he could catch his own food. He stood tall and straight and still, just like his mother had shown him and he began to look for fish.

One fish swam right past him and he dived quickly into the water but the fish was too fast for him.

He waited again.

Another fish swam past and again he dived down but again the fish was too fast.

"I'm never going to be able to catch my own fish" thought Hayden, sadly.



Just then Hayden noticed a man sitting by the side of the lake. The man hadn't noticed Hayden; he was too busy staring out across the lake.

In his hand the man held a long fishing rod. Alongside him, dangling in the water, was a deep net with a big, fat fish swimming around in it.

Hayden looked at the net, thoughtfully.

"Mummy will think I'm very clever if I take that fish home" he said to himself. "Perhaps I can take it when the man isn't looking."



Hayden shuffled closer to the man, quietly. The man still hadn't noticed him.

The fish was still swimming round and round in the net. Hayden waited patiently then, taking a deep breath, he dove right into the net and picked up the big, fat fish in his beak.

"Hey, you!" the man turned round, angrily. "Stop that" he said.

Hayden panicked. The fish flew out of Hayden's beak and landed in the lake with a huge 'SPLASH!'

The man was shaking his fist at Hayden. "What do you think you're doing? That's my fish, not yours."



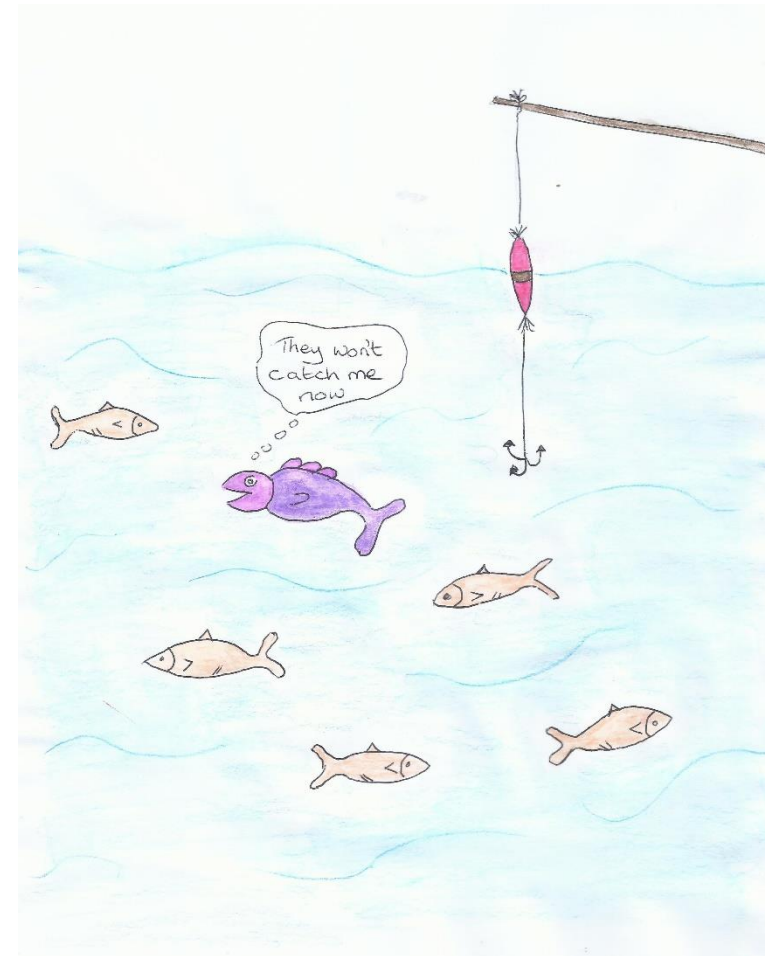
"Squawk" cried Hayden.

"My fish" cried the man "I've lost my fish."

"My fish" cried Hayden "I've lost my fish."

"My goodness! That was a lucky escape" thought the fish and she swam quickly out into the middle of the lake.

"Don't go swimming over to that side of the lake" she warned her friends "It isn't safe over there."



"I'm really not very good at fishing" Hayden shook his head, sadly.

He wanted his mummy to be proud of him but most of all, he wanted to go home.

Hayden tried to remember the way home.

"What did mummy say?" he wondered. "Did she say 'over the river and across the woods?'"

Hayden frowned.

"Or was it 'under the bridge and across the field?'"

He tried and tried but he just couldn't remember.



"It was neither of those" a tiny voice nearby made Hayden jump.

Winnie the Water Vole was holding a blade of juicy, green grass in her front paws and she was nibbling on it, hungrily.

"What did you say?" asked Hayden Heron.

"I said" Winnie Water Vole paused, wiping the juice from her lips. "I said 'it was neither of those.' I know that because I was listening when your mum told you how to get home."

"Oh" said Hayden in surprise.



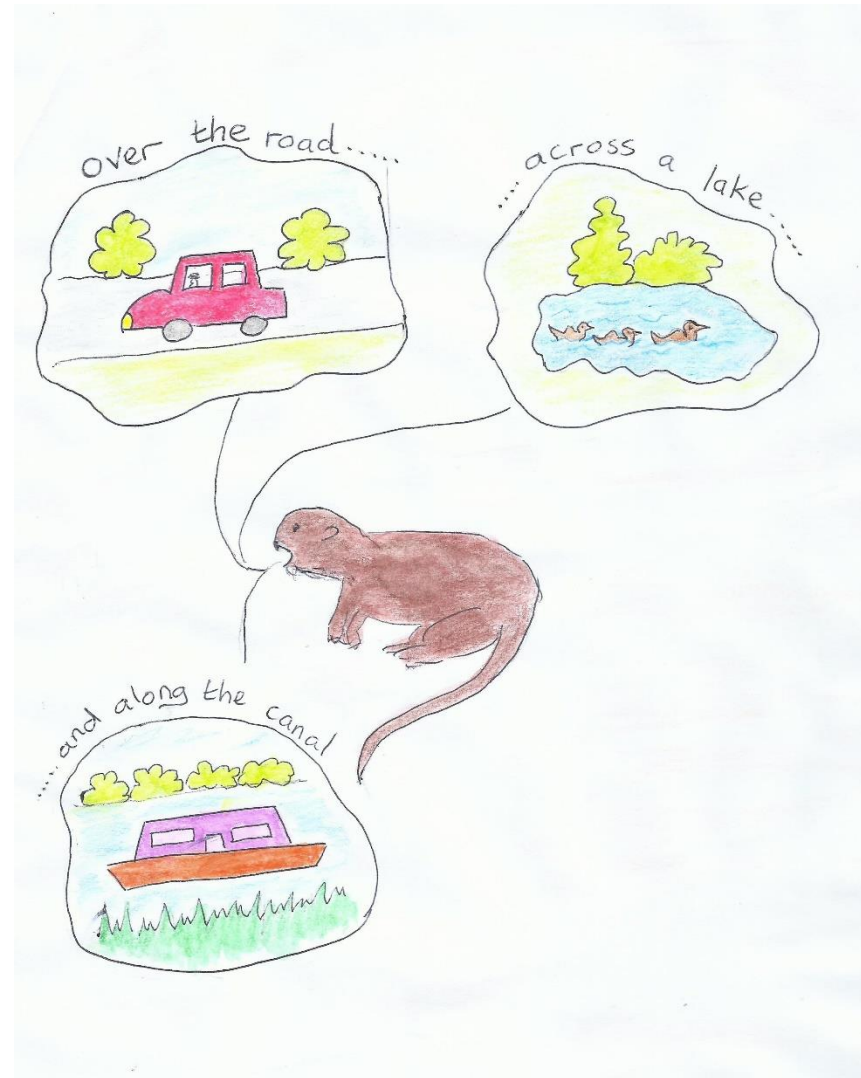
Hayden waited.

Winnie was nibbling again. She seemed to have forgotten he was there.

“Where did my mum say I needed to go?” he asked at last.

Winnie looked up. She stopped eating for a while and frowned.

“Hmmm. Now, where did Hayden’s mum tell him to go?” she muttered to herself. “I know” she said suddenly “you’ve got to fly over the road, across the lake and along the canal. *That’s* what she said.”



Fly over the road, across the lake and along the canal. Fly over the road, across the lake and along the canal. Fly over the road, across the lake and along the canal.

Hayden repeated Winnie's words to himself as he flew.

He flew over the road.....

He flew across the lake.....

He flew along the canal.....

It all looked familiar to him now. He remembered his mummy's map.



When Hayden saw the enormous tree, he became very excited.

"Mummy.....*mummy*..." he shouted loudly. "I'm home!"

He could see the Heronry and all the other herons sitting in their nests.

And right at the top of the enormous tree, looking very anxious, was his mummy. She had been looking out for him.

She was so pleased to see him that she didn't even ask him if he'd managed to catch a fish. She just gave him a great big hug!





Grey herons stand very still when they're looking for fish. They are tall birds (about 1 metre in height) but often go unnoticed by passers-by because of this ability to stay so still and quiet.