

THE PONDS OF WONDER

A world of adventure like no other



The Ponds of Wonder

Dear Reader,

Thank you for clicking on the link to read the first chapter of this story. Should you decide to purchase a copy I would like you to know that the funds raised through the sale of this book will be going towards therapeutic needs for my son who was born with a rare syndrome called Mowat Wilson Syndrome which also lead him to being born with a severe visual impairment. Your purchase helps me to help him reach milestones that we take for granted, like walking, self-feeding and caring for himself.

I sincerely hope you enjoy reading this story yourself and/or to your own children.

Spreading a love for reading in other people's children and helping my son at the same time. In my book, that's a win-win.

Will you join me?

All the best,

Brian

For my son Eric

May his imagination soar as strongly
as the Ponds glow.

Chapter One for Free

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Chapter 1 - An Unusual Surprise

I looked up at the clock on the classroom wall.

'9:55,' I said to myself. 'Only five more minutes until the morning break.' The morning had dragged on and on and I couldn't wait to get out onto the playground. My teacher, Ms. Torres, was mumbling something about long multiplication but I couldn't concentrate on what she was saying. I looked out the classroom window and stared at the white clouds that dotted the deep blue sky. Some of them looked like dinosaurs and I could almost make out one that looked like a huge ice-cream cone. From my desk, I had a great view of the playground. A blue coloured swing set and a plastic climbing frame with a slide for the younger children were the first things I could see but my favourite was the dome-shaped metallic climbing frame further off in the distance. It stood nearly five metres high and was surrounded by thick green grass. My friends and I always met there during the break making up games that had us climbing up, down and all over that frame. The more I stared at it the more I wished that time would pass by quickly so that we could get out there!

The weather had been really bad as of late and this was the first break from the stormy weather that we had in a while. Suddenly the whole classroom went quiet.

'Tom. Tom Hanson. Can you tell me the answer to the question?' I looked around and saw everyone staring at me. I could even hear a few giggles coming from two boys sitting a few seats behind me. 'Jack and Julian,' I thought to myself. The class bullies who love to see other children get into trouble.

'Great,' I thought to myself looking at everyone staring at me, 'here we go again.' I took a quick look at what was written on the board and saw the long multiplication question that Ms. Torres had been explaining.

'Three Hundred and Thirty-two,' I answered, but from the way the other children started giggling I knew straight away that three hundred and thirty-two was not the correct answer.

'Tom,' Ms. Torres closed her eyes for a brief moment, opened them and began, 'how do you expect to understand your multiplication tables if you keep letting your mind wander? You must

concentrate. The rest of the topic depends on you learning your tables.'

There was no other way around it. The other children were still staring at me, waiting for my excuse as to why I wasn't paying attention. As I opened my mouth to explain myself, the school bell rang for the morning break.

'All right everybody,' the teacher called out as she placed the white board marker on the ledge, 'we will continue with this lesson later. Please organize your table top before going out for a break. Remember an organized desk is a sign of an organized mind.'

Everyone began to organize their table top quickly but I could hear Jack and Julian mimicking Ms. Torres as they cleared their table top and then left as quickly as they could. Ms. Torres had a habit of asking children who took too long to stay in and help her with something in the classroom. This wasn't a bad thing but there was no way we were going to miss the chance of playing in the playground after so many rainy days!

I quickly arranged my table top and started to make my way towards the door. All of a sudden I heard Ms. Torres call my name.

‘Tom, could I see you for a moment please?’

I closed my eyes for a second then turned around and made my way towards Ms. Torres' desk. Two other boys, Nick and Lucas, jabbed me in the ribs as they made their way out the door. I could hear one of them tell the other that I was really in for it.

Ms. Torres sat at her desk wearing her reading glasses as she scanned over a note she had collected earlier from one of the girls in the class. She had brown hair, about shoulder length and her skin was a light shade of peach. She had brown eyes that could stare right into one's mind and read whatever excuses would be lurking. She was neither too fat nor too skinny. I had once overheard her in the playground whilst on supervision duty that she was 38 years old, almost as old as my mother was. Although very demanding, she was a nice teacher. My mother had once told me that being demanding was a good quality to have in a teacher as it kept us on our toes to do our best. I didn't agree, especially on days when she piled on the homework.

'Yes, Ms. Torres.' I said as I approached her desk.

'Tom. I am worried about you. Your lack of attention lately during lessons has worsened. Is there something bothering you?'

"No, Ms. Torres', I shrugged, 'I'm ok.'

'Well then are you getting enough sleep at night? Do you know that a growing boy like yourself should get at least 8 hours of sleep every night?'

'I'm sleeping pretty well,' I replied.

'I see. Then can you please explain to me why I have to keep reminding you to pay attention in class? You are a very smart boy and if you just applied yourself more often I'm sure you could be at the top of the class.'

'Yes, Ms. Torres. I'll try harder. I'm just bored of all this rain we've been having. It makes my mind wander and now that the weather is nice I really want to enjoy it before it starts raining again.'

'I see,' replied Ms. Torres, 'well then I suggest you go out and clear your head, perhaps you'll be able to concentrate more after the break.'

'Yes Ms. Torres.' It was all I could say. Ms. Torres had a look in her eye that said she wasn't in the mood for silly answers. I guess the bad weather was getting to her as well.

'Very well then, out you go before the bell rings.'

'Thanks miss,' I replied and made my way out the door very quickly.

The cool air felt great as I walked out the school door and onto the playground. I made my way to the climbing frame where my friends were hanging out. Nick and Lucas were already busy playing a game we had created called 'Save the Ship from the Pirates'. Nick was a slightly chubby boy with brown hair and freckles while Lucas was slightly taller than me with blond hair and a pointy nose. My best friend Ben was also playing in the game and from the way he was acting he was playing the part of the pirate. He was about the same height and weight as I was and had curly brown hair and light brown eyes. I joined Ben as a pirate and we played on the climbing frame until the bell rang for us to line up. I got to the line first followed by Lucas and Nick but I could see Ben limping near the swings.

'What happened to you?' I asked as he got closer to the line-up.

'Ah, it's nothing really. I tripped by the swings while I was chasing Jack to the line. He thought it would be cool to flick my ear as he ran by me. I started to chase him but caught my toe on a tree root sticking out of the ground, tripped and scraped my knee. Look at how the blood is already drying up, isn't it cool?'

I looked at his scraped knee. It was covered with blood that was drying up but a small trickle was making its way just below his knee.

'Wow, cool!'

I then had an idea, 'you'd better get it checked by the nurse.' I continued, 'The last thing you need is for it to get infected. Your mum would have to take you to the doctor and he might decide that you'd need some kind of injection.' I knew that he was scared stiff of injections.



The smile on Ben's face quickly disappeared at the thought of needing to visit the doctor and the possibility of having to be given an injection. His face started to become pale and then seeing the smirk on my face, stood up and gave me a good punch on my shoulder.

'Ouch!' I said rubbing my shoulder. 'What'd you do that for?'

'You know exactly why. Don't kid with me about injections, you know I don't like them.' Ben would never admit to being afraid of them. 'Nine-year-old

boys shouldn't be afraid of anything,' he would say, but I knew better.

I gave him a big grin as I followed the other students into the school all the while still rubbing my shoulder. He didn't have to hit me that hard. Still, I thought, seeing the look on his face when I mentioned the word injection made it all worth it.

The rest of the morning moved along and at least I was able to focus my attention better in class which was a good thing as I didn't want Ms. Torres to think that I wasn't listening to her.

When the lunch bell rang I made my way quickly to the door and began walking home. As many of us lived close to the school we were allowed to go home during lunchtime and eat at home. I loved lunch time. It gave me a chance to be outdoors longer and not cooped up inside.

I followed the usual route to get home that took me by a small park filled with trees. It was autumn which happened to be my favourite season. The leaves on each tree had already begun to change colour. There were shades of red, orange and yellow everywhere, making the park very colourful in appearance.

I decided to take a small stroll around the park before continuing home. I stopped by a man-made pond that had a small fountain with a large stone fish mounted on top. Water was coming out in a constant stream from of the fish's mouth and back into the pond. Large orange coloured Koi swam around bobbing the surface of the water for anything good to eat. I loved watching them swim around, so peaceful. I bet they didn't have to worry about long multiplication!

I walked around the fountain. Tiny toddlers were chasing pigeons that were scavenging for bits of bread that two elderly men sitting on a park bench were tossing to them. The toddlers' mothers watched with delight as their children squealed and laughed at almost catching the pigeons, their tiny hands always a short distance from the pigeons who knew better than to be caught.

I left the park and continued making my way home. The town sure did look different during the autumn season. I walked past old Ms. Slater's home, a tiny little house with a white picket fence that had seen better days. Ms. Slater was a widow; her husband had passed away some years ago. She tried to keep the appearance of

her home looking good but she herself was quite old as well. Once I had overheard her speaking to another elderly woman while I was playing near her home. She had said that she preferred to spend her time cooking wonderful delights in her kitchen than trying to keep up the appearance of her house. She had even let me taste some of her famous gingerbread cookies, my favourite, which were truly delicious. Small plumes of smoke escaped from her chimney carrying the smell of freshly baked gingerbread cookies and my stomach started to grumble.

I took a deep breath through my nose and enjoyed the wonderful gingerbread scent one more time before heading along the street towards my home. I turned left at the next corner and made my way up the drive to the front porch of my house. I opened the front door and made my way inside.

"Mum, I'm hooooome," I yelled out.

"Yes. I could hear you coming in Tom. Did you really have to yell out like that? You know that it isn't nice to yell."

"Sorry mum I didn't know where you were."

Wow was everyone going to have something to say about what I did today!

'Do you know I walked past Ms. Slater's home and could smell that she was baking gingerbread cookies? It was a wonderful smell!' I said hoping that we had some gingerbread cookies of our own.

'Well perhaps you should head over to Ms. Slater's after you finish from school today,' she replied with a tone in her voice that said she knew exactly what I was getting at, 'and see if she needs any chores done, perhaps she will reward you with some of them.'

I grimaced at the idea of doing chores. It was NOT something I enjoyed doing!

"Come sit down and eat your lunch. I have some important news to tell you."

I quickly stopped in the bathroom to wash up. "What happened mum?" I called out as I washed my hands. 'Did we win the lottery? Or did Uncle Mel's dog bury his false teeth in the garden again?'"

"Neither Tom and I wish you'd stop bringing up that story about Uncle Mel's teeth. You know how he feels about people speaking about that incident.'

I towelled my hands and walked into the kitchen with a picture of Uncle Mel's dog, Bucky, in my mind, wagging his tail next to a mound in the ground where he had buried poor Uncle Mel's false teeth. I couldn't help but chuckle as I sat down at the table. A large plate of hot, steaming Spaghetti Bolognese was waiting for me and I quickly tucked in.

My mother carried a cup of tea to the table, pulled out a chair and sat down. Gathering her thoughts she continued.

'Do you ever remember me speaking to you about your great uncle John who had moved to Lockeport, Nova Scotia?'

'Once,' I replied. 'Isn't he grandma's brother?'

'That's right. Well, Tom, he was quite old when he left. My mother told him that it was a crazy idea for him to move all the way to another country but he was stubborn and wanted to leave. I remember him telling her that he wanted to move away from

the hustle and bustle of his life and find someplace quieter where he could live out his remaining years.'

'I think I do remember you telling me about this,' I replied putting a forkful of spaghetti into my mouth, 'but why are you telling me this again?' I said trying not to let bits of spaghetti fly out of my mouth as I spoke to her.

'Well Tom, your grandmother phoned me earlier this morning to let us know that Great Uncle John has gone missing. He didn't go to a meeting he had arranged with his lawyer and when the lawyer went to his home the place looked abandoned. The police have been searching for him but no one has been able to find him and now they fear the worst. Your grandmother learned that he was missing earlier this morning as Uncle John's lawyer finally found her telephone number. It seems he didn't keep very good records.' Feeling sad that my mother's uncle had disappeared I stopped eating away at the mound of delicious spaghetti on my plate and continued to listen.



'There was also something else Tom.'

'Go on,' I replied.

'Well, the lawyer asked your grandmother where he could contact you.'

'Me!' I said in a surprised tone of voice. 'Why would he ask for me? I was so young when I last met him; I hardly knew him!'

'Well, the lawyer told your grandmother that a large package was left in Uncle John's bedroom with your name written on it.'

'What kind of package?' I asked while I wound some spaghetti around my fork. My mind began to race. I really loved presents even more than being outside. I guess it is why Christmas is my favourite time of the year. The idea of tearing away the wrapping paper from a gift someone gives you and finding out what is hidden beneath is really fun. I put the forkful of spaghetti in my mouth and began to chew, all the while keeping my eyes on my mother as she told her story.

'I don't know,' my mother replied, 'but the lawyer asked for your mailing address so that he could send it to you by express post. It should be here by the time you get back home from school.'

'This afternoon!' I exclaimed almost choking on the mouthful of spaghetti that was trying to work its way down my throat. As soon as I got control of my coughing I looked at my mother, 'Mum, there's no way I'm going to be able to concentrate at school knowing that a strange package is being delivered to me. Couldn't I just skip school this afternoon, just this once? Pleeeeease?'

'No, Tom. I know that you are very curious about that package, and to be honest so am I. I can't possibly think of anything that Great Uncle John would have arranged to send to you, but skipping school won't make the package arrive any sooner. Besides, concentrating on your lessons will help distract you and make the afternoon go by faster. Finish up your dessert, wash up and then head back to school.'

I did as I was told but wasn't at all very happy about it. I grumbled about having to go back to school while a mysterious package was being delivered to me. I looked at my mother from the corner of my eye in the hope that she would change her mind but she had started reading one of her favourite magazines and didn't give me much notice.

I may have to go back to school, I thought, but there was no way that I was going to be able to concentrate! What could possibly be in that package? It was all I could think about for the remainder of the afternoon. A fact that my best friend Ben could see and made a point to ask about as we walked home from school.

'Hey, Tom! Wait up.' I stopped to let Ben catch up to me.

'Hi, Ben.' I replied. 'How's your knee? It looked pretty gross with all that blood coming out of it.'

'Ah, it's ok now. I went to the nurse and she cleaned it for me. She even put a bandage on it so I'm almost good as new.

I looked at Ben as he lifted and bent his leg to give me a better look at his bandaged knee. It was true, his knee looked a lot better.

I started walking home again and Ben followed.

'Hey, what's the rush?'

'Something weird has happened.' I replied.

'Oh yeah, like what?' Ben was always interested in weird things.

'Ok, here goes. You see I had this great uncle who has gone missing. It seems that he had made arrangements for his lawyer to find me and send me a large package. The thing is no one knows what's in it, not even the lawyer! I'm supposed to be getting the package today. In fact, it's probably waiting for me at home right now!'

'Wow, that is weird,' answered Ben.

'Yeah,' I replied, 'I can't stop thinking what might be inside it.'

'Well, you're not going to find out talking to me! Start running home. Just make sure you call me when you find out.'

'Why don't you come with me and we'll both find out together?' I answered.

'I can't, my mum's sending me to piano lessons and she'd go crazy if I was late. Go on, hurry up!' Then he lowered the tone of his voice, 'the myster-iousssss package is waiting for you! If it were me I'd be running home.'

'You're right! Thanks, Ben. I'll talk to you later!' I shouted as I started running home.

What mysterious package will be waiting for Tom when he arrives home?

Find out by ordering your copy today. Click on the picture of Tom below to purchase your copy at a special price of only \$1.99.

Hurry this offer won't last for long!



Tom's life will never be the same again!