



SUSAN

# Susan and the Sky Inside



Australian  
Childhood  
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Susan was helping to clean up after the enormous storm that had swept across the forest the night before. It had been an awful experience for those in the Big Tree. Susan could not remember feeling so frightened. She had clung to the trunk and swayed with the shaking tree as her teeth chattered and her fur stood on end. The sky had cracked with thunder and been lit up with lightning like fireworks. She shuddered as a sudden image of the night before burst into her mind.





Susan returned to school a few days later. Ever since the storm she had felt jumpy, and like her insides were a shaken up bottle of fizzy drink. She couldn't concentrate, and didn't feel comfortable anywhere. "Are you listening Susan?" her teacher asked with a scrunched up face. Susan jumped at the tone of her voice, and her body filled with energy. It told her to run. She hopped up and scurried out of school with her teacher yelling after her.



On and on she ran, over Stone Mountain and down through Fern Valley, before reaching a part of the forest that she had never explored before. The trail became overgrown and Susan suddenly felt lost. There was a rustle in the branches of a nearby tree. "Hello" smiled down the most gentle looking creature that Susan had ever seen. With the grace of a slow-motion gymnast the sloth came down from his branch.







Susan didn't know what to say. She had never met a sloth before. "I'm sorry to disturb you sir, my name is Susan." "I'm Franco" said the sloth. "You look like you could do with a rest and something to drink." Franco motioned towards two rocks. He gave Susan a warm mug of milk and the pair sat on the rocks and sipped their drinks together.





“What brings you to this part of the forest Susan?” Like gushing water, Susan’s story about the storm, her teacher, and how she had been feeling spilled out of her. “I’m worried that the storm is going to come back all the time,” she blurted out. “I constantly look up for signs of dark clouds. I’m hardly sleeping because if I’m asleep I can’t keep guard. I am trying to do everything I can to never feel like that again. I think I might be going crazy” she said at last.



“What you speak about is not unusual” said Franco. “I used to not like thunderstorms either” he said. “It took me a long time to get used to them.” “How did you do it” asked Susan quickly. “I learned some neat tricks from a traveling Snow Goose. I use them all the time now. It has slowed me down and evened me out.” Susan couldn’t deny it. Franco was the most chilled out creature that she had ever met.






“What happens to your heart when you feel worried?” asked Franco. “It beeps really fast” said Susan, and feels like a runaway train” said Susan. “Ahh, that was the same for me” replied Franco. “Did you know that if we breathe out longer than we breathe in, we slow down our heart and that can help us feel like finding a friend or adult to support us, rather than running away. Let’s try it together. Put one hand on your belly, and the other on your heart. Then breathe in for 3,

and out for 4.” Susan tried it and did feel different. “The more you practice this, the better it works,” said Franco. Just sitting next to Franco helped Susan feel better, maybe he was rubbing off on her?



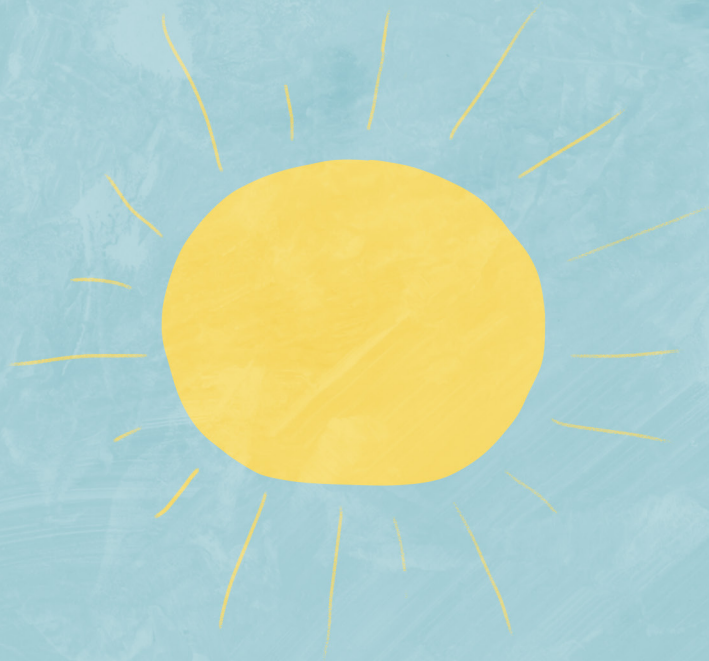






Franco continued, "the other thing the snow goose taught me was to think about storms differently. She flies through the sky on big journeys every year. She knows that the sky holds all sorts of changing weather, like sun, rain, wind, and snow. One day she flew up above the clouds and do you know what she noticed there? Sunshine and quiet. Even if there is a storm below, it doesn't take up the whole sky, because the sky is greater than the storm. For many years, I feared a storm rising up inside of me, until I realised that I also have a sky inside which is greater than any storm. You have a sky inside of you too, everyone does."











Susan left Franco that day feeling like all the fizz inside of her had drained away. She went back every week after that to visit with Franco. They shared mugs of milk, practiced breathing and flying above the clouds within the skies inside of themselves. Susan became less worried about the chance of thunderstorms and more focussed on what was going on around her there and then. If a thunderstorm blew in she had some ways to help herself now, and getting in touch with her sky inside helped her know that better weather was always on its way.







Is there anything that worries you?

Do you have someone to share your worries with?

Have you ever felt like there is a storm inside of you?

Did you know that you have a sky inside?

Did you know that you can breathe in ways to help calm your body down?