

A GOOD IDEA THAT WASN'T  
A Children's Story for Earth Day  
By  
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Once upon a time, not so very long ago, Michael and Nicole went to the zoo. Michael and Nicole were seven years old and very good friends. They loved doing things together and the zoo was their most favorite place to go and they visited the animals as often as they could. Little did they know how much the zoo would change their lives on this special day.

This day at the zoo started out just like any other day, except for one thing. On every other day, when Michael and Nicole went to visit the lions, the lions were sleeping in the shade, under the trees. But on this particular day, when Michael and Nicole went to visit the lions, they were not sleeping. They were walking back and forth and around and around inside their enclosure. As the children watched, the biggest lion gave out the loudest roar of all, ran, jumped and hit the enclosure fence with a great big bang, right in front of Michael and Nicole.

Michael and Nicole fell backwards. Michael landed on his butt and did a crab walk backwards faster than he ever did before. Nicole twisted in mid-air and landed on her knees and crawled away as fast as she could. When they could catch their breath, they stood up and ran and ran and ran. After a while they stopped and looked around. No lions. Whew. They looked at the scrapes and scratches on their hands and knees and declared them, "Not so bad." And, after a while, Michael and Nicole even stopped shaking.

"Boy, that was close," Michael said. "I was scared... but not THAT scared."

Nicole said, "Me too. I never heard anything that loud before. I wonder what kids do when the lions are not in zoos."

"I bet they learn to run very, very fast so the lions can't catch them," Michael said.

"I don't think I could run that fast," Nicole said. "I would be afraid."

Michael said, "I bet there are a lot of children who would be afraid. Hmmm, you know what?"

"No, what?"

"What if," Michael said, "we went on a special mission to put all the lions in zoos. That way they wouldn't hurt anyone anywhere – ever."

"Wow. What a good idea," Nicole said. "Do you think we could do that?"

And, Michael said, "I think if we think we can, we CAN!"

And they did. Michael and Nicole sailed on boats, flew on planes, rode on buses, traveled on trains and bumped up and down in trucks. They searched the forests and the jungles. They found every lion in the world. And, they made sure that every lion had a wonderful home in one of the wonderful zoos all over the world. When Michael and Nicole were all done, they knew that children everywhere were safe and would never be scared by lions again. And the children of the world thanked them.

But, what Michael and Nicole did not know was that with all the lions gone, strange things were happening. There were no lions hunting the giraffes, gazelles and zebras for dinner. As a result, the herds of giraffes, gazelles, and zebras were getting larger and larger. Soon, there were soooo many giraffes that they ate all leaves off the trees. Without leaves, there wasn't any shade. Without any shade, the sun was dried up all the water where the animals lived. Without water, there was nothing to drink. Since there was some water in the grass, the animals ate more and more grass. With so many animals eating so much grass, the grass began to disappear. Without leaves and grass and water, the giraffes, gazelles, zebras and all the rest of the animals were very sad and hungry and thirsty.

Looking for food and water, the animal began to walk away from the forests and jungles. They went into the villages and towns and cities, eating all the grass, drinking from the fountains, and peeing and pooping everywhere. They were on the streets and in the parks, malls and houses. It was messy, stinky and just plain awful!

The children of the world were sad. They were safe from the lions, but now they had gazelles watching TV in their living-rooms, zebras sleeping in their beds and giraffes standing in their bathtubs. This was not a good idea – no, not at all. "What is to be done?" they wondered. It was time to call Michael and Nicole.

"Please," the children said, "please let the lions go home." They explained how the giraffes ate up all the leaves, the sun dried up the water and the grass was gone and now the animals were all over the towns and villages. The lions had to go back to the forests and the jungles to make things okay again.

Michael and Nicole listened and understood. All they had wanted to do was make children safe from lions, but now children were being scared by the most gentle of all the animals - the giraffe, gazelle and zebra. They knew they had to do something immediately.

Nicole said, "Do you think we can change things back?"

Michael said, "I think if we think we can, we CAN!"

Michael and Nicole sailed on boats, flew on planes, rode on buses, traveled on trains and bumped around in trucks to all the zoos all over the world. They made sure the wild lions from the zoos went back to the jungles and the forests. The children watched and waited.

As days and weeks passed, things began to change. As new leaves sprouted on the trees there was shade once again. The water returned, filling the watering holes and streams. The grass began to grow.

The animals sniffed the wind, smelled the sweet grass of home and knew it was time to go. They left the villages, towns and cities to return to their homes in the forests and jungles. Once again there was plenty to eat and water to drink. The lions hunted the herds of giraffes, gazelles and zebras. Soon the herds were just the right size and they could eat, pee and poop wherever they wanted and nobody cared. The animals were very happy.

The children were very happy too. The animals were no longer living in their houses, watching TV, sleeping in their beds and standing in their bathtubs.

Michael and Nicole learned four things from their adventure that are still true today.

One - the lion has to live with giraffe, gazelles and zebras.

Two - the trees, water and grasses have to be protected so animals will always have enough to eat and drink.

Three - if everyone works together to make this happen, the world will be a much, much happier place.

And, four - if everyone, including you and me, wants to make the world a happier place and we think we can, we CAN -- together.