1. THE CAVE

Dr. Ow-It-Hurts loved to hike. Every evening after work he would take his umbrella and go off with his pets to trek through woods or fields. Shtup-Shlep would walk alongside him and Ki-Ki the duck ran ahead of them. Bringing up the rear were the dog, Ava, and the piglet, Kriu-Kriu. Boom-Ba, the old owl, perched on the doctor’s shoulder. They would wander very far and if Dr. Ow-It-Hurts grew tired he would climb up and ride on Shtup-Shlep’s back.

Once, while rambling, they spotted a cave at the edge of the sea. They wanted to enter it but the cave was barred with a lock on its door.

‘I’d be eager to know what is hidden in this cave?’ Ava said. ‘Maybe sugar cookies,’ Shtup-Shlep speculated. There was nothing in the world he loved more than sugar cookies.

‘No,’ Ki-Ki said, ‘I’m sure it’s rock candy and nuts.’

‘No,’ Kriu-Kriu asserted, ‘It’s apples, knishes and chocolate.’

‘We have to find the key,’ the doctor declared, ‘Go and find the key.’

The animals ran off in search of the key. They rooted around under every stone and bush, but didn’t find the key anywhere.

So they reconvened near the locked door and began peeking through cracks. But the cave was dark inside and they couldn’t see anything. Suddenly Boom-Ba he owl called out:

‘Sha! Sha! I think there’s a living thing in there—it’s either a person or an animal.’

Everyone strained to listen but couldn’t hear a thing. Dr. Ow-It-Hurts addressed the owl:

‘I think you are mistaken, I don’t hear anything.’
‘What a surprise,’ responded the owl, ‘of course you can’t hear, your ears aren’t as good as mine. ‘Tsm! Tsm! You hear that? You hear that?’

‘No,’ the animals responded, ‘we don’t hear anything.’

‘But I do,’ the owl insisted.

‘What is it you hear?’ Dr. Ow-It Hurts asked her, ‘I had no idea you had such precious hearing. Listen again and tell us what it is you’re hearing.’

‘I hear a tear rolling down a person’s cheek.’

‘A tear!’ the doctor shouted, ‘A tear! Does that mean someone’s crying behind that door? We must help him. I hate it when someone cries. Get me an ax—I’ll break that door down.’

2. PENTA

Shtup-Shlep raced home and brought the doctor back a sharp ax. The doctor took measure and with all his might heaved into the locked door. Hack! Hack! The door splintered into kindling and the doctor went in. It was dark in the cave. The doctor lit a match. Oh what filth and how cold it was in there. No table, no chair, not even a stool. On the ground a pile of straw and on the straw a little boy sat and cried bitter tears.

The sight of the doctor and all his animals frightened the boy and he cried even more. But when he noticed the doctor’s kind face he stopped crying and said:

‘You don’t look like a pirate.’

‘No, no, I’m not a pirate! The doctor pronounced and burst out laughing. ‘I am Dr. Ow-It-Hurts, not a pirate. Do I look like a pirate?’

‘No, you don’t,’ the little boy replied, ‘but you do have an ax. Nonetheless I’m not afraid of you. Good-evening, my name is Penta, maybe you know where my father is?’

‘I don’t,’ the doctor replied. ‘Where could your father have disappeared to?’
‘My father is a fisherman,’ Penta informed them, ‘Yesterday we set out to sea to catch fish—he and I, the two of us, on a fishing boat. Suddenly our boat was attacked by pirates and they took us prisoner. They wanted my father to join them, to become a pirate and rob and sink ships with them. But my father did not want to be a pirate. ‘I’m a respectable fisherman and I don’t wish to be a criminal!’ he’d maintained. So the pirates got very mad. They tied him up and took him away—I don’t know where. And they locked me up here in this cave. I haven’t seen my father since. Where is he? What did they do with him? They probably threw him into the ocean.’

With that the little boy burst out crying.

‘Don’t cry!’ the doctor beseeched him. ‘There’s no need to cry. What good will crying do? Let’s better think this over, let’s think about how to find your father. Tell me, what does he look like?’

‘He has red hair and a red beard—a very long one.’

Dr. Ow-It-Hurts called over the duck, Ki-Ki, and quietly whispered in her ear:

‘Tsheri Beri Tshava-Tsham!’

“Tshuka-tshuk!,' Ki-Ki replied.

Hearing that strange talk, the little boy wanted to know:

‘Why are you talking so upside down? I didn’t understand a word you said.’

‘I speak to my animals in their tongue, in Animalish,’ Dr. Ow-It-Hurts informed him.

‘What is it you said to your duck?’

‘I told her to summon the dolphins.’

3. THE DOLPHINS

The duck rushed over to the edge of the sea and called out into the ocean.

‘Dolphins, dolphins, come on over here! Dr. Ow-It-Hurts, sent me to summon you.'
The dolphins immediately swam over to shore and said:
‘Good evening Doctor, what’s up?’
‘An awful thing happened,’ the doctor replied, ‘Yesterday morning pirates attacked a certain fisherman and we think they might have thrown him into the ocean. I’m worried that he might have drowned. Please be so kind and search through the entire sea, maybe you’ll find the fisherman at the bottom?’
‘What does he look like?’ the dolphins wanted to know.
‘He’s a redhead,’ the doctor replied, ‘He has red hair and a long red beard. I beg you, please find him, I am in dire need of him.’
‘Okay!’ the dolphins agreed, ‘we are ready to serve a renowned doctor such as you. We will troll through the entire ocean. We’ll ask all the fishes and crabs if the redheaded fisherman drowned. We’ll find him and let you know tomorrow.

The dolphins swam back into the sea in search of the fisherman.

They trolled through the entire sea, its length and breadth, and didn’t leave a single stone unturned. They interrogated every single fish and crab, but nowhere did they find the drowned man.

In the morning they returned to the shoreline and told Dr. Ow-It-Hurts:
‘We didn’t find your fisherman anywhere. We searched all through the night. He is nowhere to be found in the depths of the sea.

The little boy was overjoyed to hear the news the dolphins delivered.
‘That means my father’s alive! He’s alive! He’s alive!’ the boy jumped up and down, clapping his hands for joy.
‘We will without a doubt find your father,’ the doctor assured him.
He lifted the little boy onto Shtup-Shlep’s back and Shtup-Shlep rode him around on the sandy edge of the sea for a long time.

4. THE EAGLES
Penta was happy on Shtup-Shlep’s back but after his ride he sighed and sadly asked: ‘How will you find my father?’

The doctor replied:

‘I’ll summon the eagles. Eagles have very sharp eyes. They can see very far. When they fly below the clouds they can see every little insect crawling on the ground. I will ask them to search the entire earth, every forest, field and mountain, every town and village—they will search everywhere for your father.

‘Great!’ Penta said, ‘Hurry up and call those eagles!’

The doctor yelled out to the eagles and all the eagles came flying.

‘Fly off to all corners of the earth,’ the doctor instructed them, ‘and find that redheaded fisherman with the long red beard.’

‘Will do!’ the eagles saluted, ‘We will do everything possible to serve a renowned doctor such as you. We’ll fly off to the furthest reaches and search the entire globe from above—all the forests and fields,

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every mountain, town and village. We’ll do our best to find your fisherman.

And they flew off, way up high, over forests and fields, over mountains and towns. And each and every eagle made sure to carefully scan every square foot in search of the redheaded fisherman with the long red beard.

The next day, the eagles returned and informed the doctor:

‘We searched the entire earth but didn’t find your fisherman. And since we haven’t seen him it’s a sign he is nowhere to be found on this good earth.

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5. DOG AVA’S SEARCH FOR THE FISHERMAN

‘What’s to be done?’ Ki-Ki exclaimed, ‘We must find the fisherman. Be it thunder and lightning, Penta is aching for his daddy.’

‘How are we ever going to find him?’ Shtup-Shlep implored, ‘If the eagles couldn’t find him than no one will.’
‘There’s no reason to feel that way,’ Ava retorted angrily, ‘Eagles most certainly have very keen vision, but only a dog can find a person. If you need to find someone, ask a dog—no doubt about it.’

“Why are you insulting the eagles?’ Kriu-Kriu admonished Ava, ‘do you think it was easy for them to canvass the entire earth in one day, searching every mountain, field and forest? You just lounged around while they worked as hard as they could searching the planet.

‘So you’re calling me a leydig-geyer, a do-nothing!’ Ava flung back. You have no idea what I’m capable of—I’ll find that fisherman in one day!’

‘Oh yeah, in one day,’ Kriu-Kriu retorted and burst out laughing, ‘Boast all you want, you’ll never find him!’

‘So now according to you I’m a show-off,’ Ava was angry, ‘Okay then, we'll see who delivers,’ and up she sprang toward the doctor.

‘Doctor!’ she pronounced, ‘ask Penta for something of his father’s, something he touched.’

The doctor went off to ask Penta:

‘Do you have anything of your father’s?’

‘I do,’ the boy professed and pulled a big handkerchief out of his pocket, a red one.

The dog ran over to it and began sniffing it vigorously.

‘It smells of herring and tobacco,’ she said, ‘his father smoked a pipe and ate excellent herring from Holland. No more will be required, Doctor, tell the boy that it won’t even take me three days’ to find his father. I’m going up there to that high mountain to sniff out where the wind is currently coming from.

‘But it’s already dark out!’ the doctor opined, ‘how can you search in the dark?’

‘It doesn’t matter,’ the dog claimed, ‘as long as I’m familiar with his smell I don’t need anything else. I can detect scents in the dark too.’
Ava ran off to climb the high mountain.

‘Today the wind is blowing from the north,’ she claimed, ‘let me probe into its scent. Snow; wet fur; another type of wet fur; wolves; little wolf cubs; the scent of a woodpile—birch.’

‘That can’t be,’ the doctor was amazed, ‘your nose can actually differentiate all those smells in one little breeze?’

‘Nu, naturally,’ Ava replied, ‘Dogs have an exceptional sense of smell, the tiniest puppy can detect a spectrum of scents that a human would never notice.’

Ava resumed sniffing, picking up smells a person would never detect. She did this for a long time without saying a word and finally declared:

‘Goats; a calf; a metal roof; little mushrooms in the forest; a road; dust; dust... and...and...and...’

‘Cookies?’ Shtup-Shlep wanted to know.

‘No, no, not cookies,’ Ava responded.

‘Nuts?’ Ki-Ki asked.

‘No, not nuts,’ Ava replied.

‘Apples?’ Kriu-Kriu queried.

‘No, not apples,’ Ava said, ‘not nuts, not cookies, and not apples. Only pinecones from a spruce tree, meaning, the fisherman is not north of here. We’ll wait until a southerly wind comes along.’

‘I don’t believe you,’ Kriu-Kriu asserted, ‘you’re making all that up in your head. You don’t actually smell anything, you’re just babbling.’

‘Out of my sight!’ Ava convulsed, ‘before I bite your tail off!’

‘Sha, sha,’ Dr. Ow-It-Hurts, interceded, ‘Stop bickering. I see now my dear Ava, that you in fact have an incredible shnoz. Let’s wait till the wind changes. And now—home. Hurry up! Penta is whimpering and shivering. He’s cold and very hungry. We have to feed him and put him to bed under a warm quilt. Nu Shtup-Shlep, make your
back accessible. Penta, get up there and hold on to his horns. Ava and Ki-Ki come on, we’re going home!’

6. AVA RESUMES HER SEARCH FOR THE FISHER

At dawn the next day Ava rushed up the high mount to resume sniffing the air. The wind was blowing from the south. She sniffed for a long time and announced:

'It smells of parrots. But I don’t smell any fishermen.'

'So then keep on sniffing,' Boom-Ba suggested.

'I smell giraffes, turtles, ostriches, hot sand, pyramids, but not fishermen.'

'You’ll never find the fisherman!' Kriu-Kriu burst out laughing, ‘You bragged for nothing!’

Ava did not respond. But the following day she again rushed up the mountain at dawn. She stayed there till nightfall sniffing away. Late that night she ran over to the doctor who was sleeping soundly with Penta curled up next to him.

‘Wake up, get up!’ Ava cried, ‘Get up! I’ve found the fisherman! Get up already! Enough sleeping, can’t you hear me—I’ve found the fisherman. I can smell him. Yes! Yes! The wind smells of tobacco and herring!’

The doctor woke up and rushed after the dog.

‘An easterly wind is coming in off the ocean,’ the dog yelled, ‘and I’m picking up the fisherman’s scent.’ He’s on the other side of the ocean—on the opposite shore. Quick, hurry let’s get over there!’

Ava howled so loudly that all the animals hurried up to the top of the mountain, and Penta along with them.

‘Quick go get Fisherman Robinson,’ Ava implored the doctor, ‘ask him to lend you his boat. Hurry before it’s too late!’

The doctor immediately rushed over to where Robinson’s ship was docked.
‘Good morning to you, Fisherman Robinson!’ the doctor yelled out, ‘Please lend me your boat! I have to again take off into the ocean on a very important mission.’

‘It’s all yours!’ Robinson replied, ‘But be careful, make sure the pirates don’t capture you. They are horrific murderers. They’ll take you prisoner and either sink my boat or burn it down.

But the doctor did not hear him—he boarded the ship, situated Penta and all his pets and set sail into the open sea.

Ava ran up onto the deck and yelled to the doctor:

‘Zaksaro! Zaksaro! Ksu!’

In dog language that means:

‘Follow my nose! Keep your eyes on my nose! Steer the boat to wherever my nose is pointing.’

The doctor unfurled all the sails and the boat took off even faster.

‘Faster, faster!’ The dog yelped.

The ship quickly sailed through the waves.

The animals stood on the deck, looking into the distance, hoping to spot the fisherman.

Only Penta was sceptical about finding his father. He sat with his head down and wept.

When night had fallen and it was dark, the doctor addressed the dog:

‘No Ava, you will not find the fisherman. I feel so bad for Penta, nebekh, but what can we do? We have to get back home.’

As the doctor readied the ship to turn back, Boom-Ba, the owl, who was perched on the masthead in order to lookout into the distance, screamed out:

‘I see a big cliff over yonder, very far off!’

‘Quick let’s go!’ the dog cried, ‘the fisherman is over there!

I can smell him over there, he’s there!’

In a short while, everyone was able to see a cliff protruding out of the sea. The doctor pointed the ship toward the cliff.
But the fisherman wasn’t visible anywhere.

‘I knew Ava wouldn’t find the fisherman!’ Kriu-Kriu chuckled, ‘I can’t believe the doctor trusts such a liar!’

The doctor ran up the cliff calling the fisherman:

‘Hip-hip!’ the doctor yelled, ‘Hip-hip!’

Hip-hip in animal-speak means. “Let yourself be known!”

But nobody called back.

Only the wind roared over the water and the waves crashed against the rocks.

FOUND

The fisherman was not on the cliff. Ava sprang from the ship onto the cliff and began running back and forth, sniffing every crevice. Suddenly she started howling loudly:

‘Kinelele! Nap!,’ she yelped, ‘Kinelele! Kinelele! Nap!’

In dog language that means: ‘Here, over here!, Doctor, follow me, over here!’

The doctor raced after the dog to a small island beyond the cliff.

Ava paced the island trotting back and forth until she suddenly hopped down into a ditch. It was dark down there. The doctor went in after her and lit his flashlight. So what turned out? There was a reddish looking person, very skinny and pale, laying there in the ditch on the bare earth. It was Penta’s father.

The doctor tugged his sleeve and said:

‘Get up, we need you.’

At first the man thought the doctor was a pirate, and began cursing, but after a while he noticed what a kind face the doctor had and said:

‘Give me something to eat, I beg you, I haven’t eaten for days.’

The doctor gave him some bread and cheese. When the man finished eating he got to his feet.

‘What are doing here?’ the doctor wanted to know?
‘Pirates flung me in here. They didn’t give me any food or anything to drink. They took my son away from me and took him somewhere, I don’t know where. Maybe you know where my son is?’
‘What’s your son’s name?’ the doctor asked.
‘His name is Penta,’ the fisherman replied.
‘Come with me,’ the doctor said and helped the fisherman out of the ditch.
Ava the dog ran ahead.
When Penta saw his father he sprang from the ship to greet him.
‘You’ve been found! You’re found! Hurrah!’
Everyone started jumping up and down for joy. Boom-Ba and Ki-Ki began singing:

Of all brave animals among us
    Ava is number one!

Kriu-Kriu was the only one who didn’t participate in the celebration. He kept to himself and sighed miserably.
‘Please forgive me Ava,’ Kriu-Kriu said, ‘I made fun of you, called you a liar, said you were arrogant.’
‘Forget about it,’ Ava replied, ‘I forgive you. But if you ever insult me again I will bite your tail off.’
The doctor sailed the red-headed fisherman and his son home—to the seaside hamlet where they lived.
As the ship approached shore, the doctor spotted a woman standing at the shoreline. It was Penta’s mother, the fisherman’s wife.

She had been standing there for twenty days and twenty nights looking out to sea. Maybe her son was coming home? Maybe her husband was on his way home?
When she saw Penta she jumped for joy and rushed over to him, kissing him.