

# THE Tug of War



STORIES TO GROW BY

Derek and Michelle Brookes

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Based on an original story by Mary Roys

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**D**eep within a well-forested park, there grew a tall and leafy oak tree. Its trunk was strong and its branches were thick and wide. On one of the lower branches sat a new nest. Two robins had chosen this place to start a home. Mama Robin had laid four beautiful blue eggs. Day and night she covered them with her body so they would stay cozy and warm.

Papa Robin worked hard to find food for Mama Robin while she tended to the eggs.

Finally, one day, the four little eggs cracked open and out came four little baby robins. They didn't look much like robins to begin with, but in a short time they had fluffy feathers and had all opened their eyes for a look at the big, wide world around them.

Mama and Papa Robin gave them all names. They called the two boys Billy and Reddy, and they called the two girls Cherry and Chirpy.



Reddy wasn't actually red yet, since young robins do not get their colorful red breasts until they are much older. So, why was he called Reddy? Well, as soon as he was hatched, he started cheeping so loudly, wanting to be fed, that his mother said, "Boy, this one wants to eat already!"

"Then let's call him Reddy," said Papa Robin. "He is ready to eat now and will be red when he grows up!"





The two proud parent robins were still laughing about the name when a baby girl hatched. "Let's call her Cherry to match Reddy." Chirpy hatched next.

She got her name because she was the most active and talkative and noisy of them all. The last baby bird to hatch had a very large beak, or bill, and he loved to eat so they called him Billy.



One of the first lessons of life that all these little baby robins needed to learn was to have better manners. They often fought among themselves over who would get the best or the most food, and they never said “thank you” to Papa or Mama Robin, who worked very hard to find food for all of them. No matter how much their parents talked to them and tried to help them get along, they were becoming quite naughty little birds, quarreling and teasing, and pushing and shoving much of the time. Then one day something happened that changed all that.





Mama and Papa Robin were getting ready to fly out to search for some breakfast for everyone. This morning everyone was extra hungry.

“Papa, can you bring me a nice, fat, juicy worm?” pleaded Billy.



“I’ll try, Billy,” said Papa Robin, “but it’s not always easy to find worms, because the ground is hard and dry now and the worms are hiding deep underground.”

“Oh, I don’t like worms,” whined Chirpy. “They’re too long and squiggly to swallow. Papa, can you just bring us some bugs?”

“No way,” piped in Cherry. “Most bugs are horrible tasting. I’d rather have some nice fresh berries.”

“Children, remember your manners,” Mama Robin gently reminded her hungry brood. “When you ask for things, you need to be kind and polite and say things like, ‘Please, Mama and Papa, could you bring me a nice worm?’ When there is food you do not like, you should still try to eat it with thankful hearts because God has supplied it and helped your father and me find it for you.”



The young birds listened for a moment, but soon forgot all about what Mama Robin had just told them.

“You know what I would really like?” demanded Reddy, “Some nice, crunchy seeds!”

“Papa,” said Billy, “why don’t you just get what everyone wants so we will all be happy?”

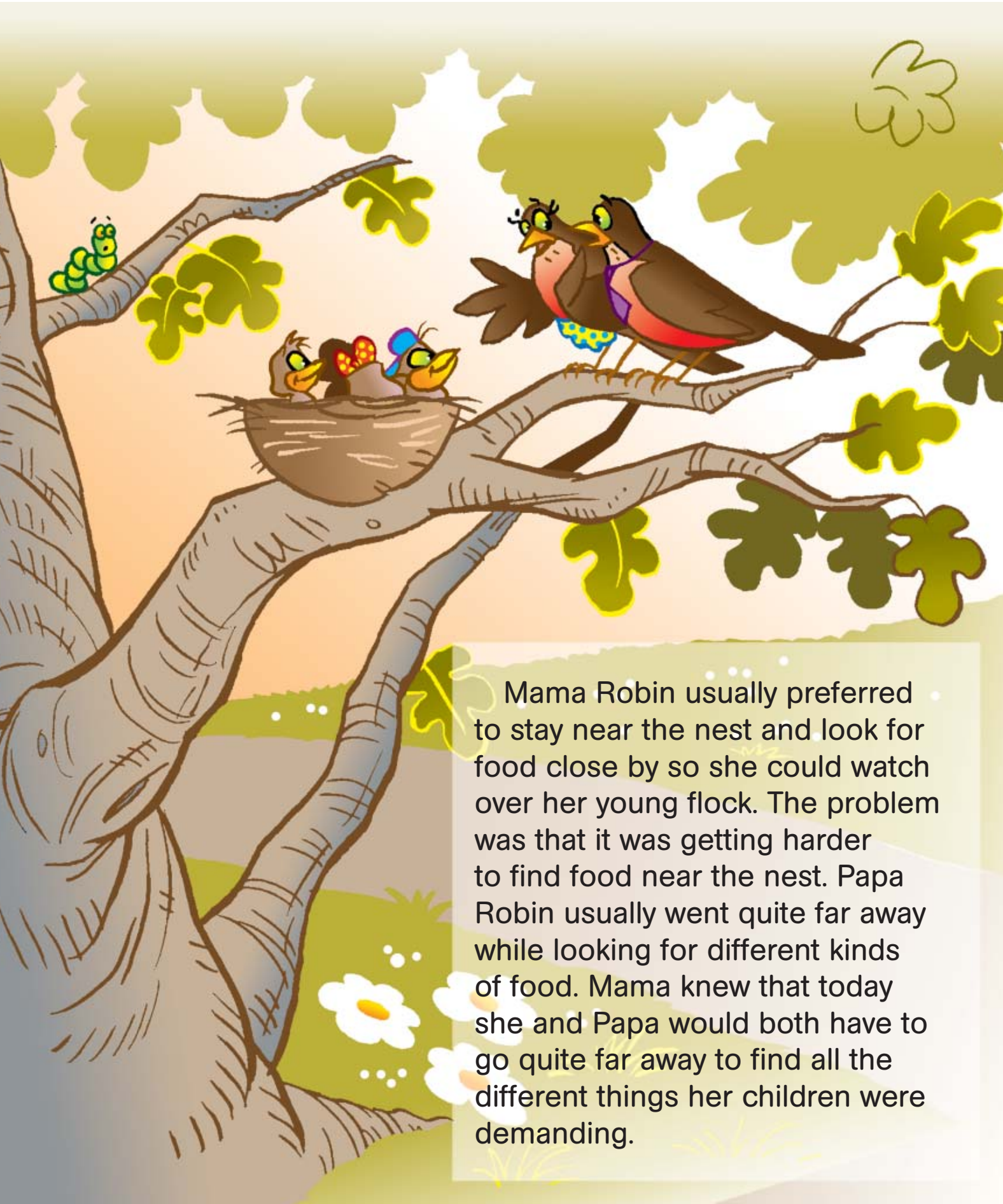
“Yes, get us all the things we want!” echoed the others.

“That will make us happy!”

“Oh dear, what can we do?” whispered Mama Robin to Papa Robin.



“I guess it would be good if we could give each one just what they want. We will have to do a lot of extra searching, but if it will make them happy, it may be worth it. Come on, let’s go see what we can find,” Papa Robin said at last.



Mama Robin usually preferred to stay near the nest and look for food close by so she could watch over her young flock. The problem was that it was getting harder to find food near the nest. Papa Robin usually went quite far away while looking for different kinds of food. Mama knew that today she and Papa would both have to go quite far away to find all the different things her children were demanding.

“Papa and I will have to fly quite far away to find all this different food for you today. Please try to be patient and kind to each other while we are gone. Okay?”

“Okay,” all the young robins chirped.

So Papa and Mama Robin went flying off to the far side of the park. Papa Robin was the first one to spot a very large earthworm wiggling his way up to the surface and into the grass.



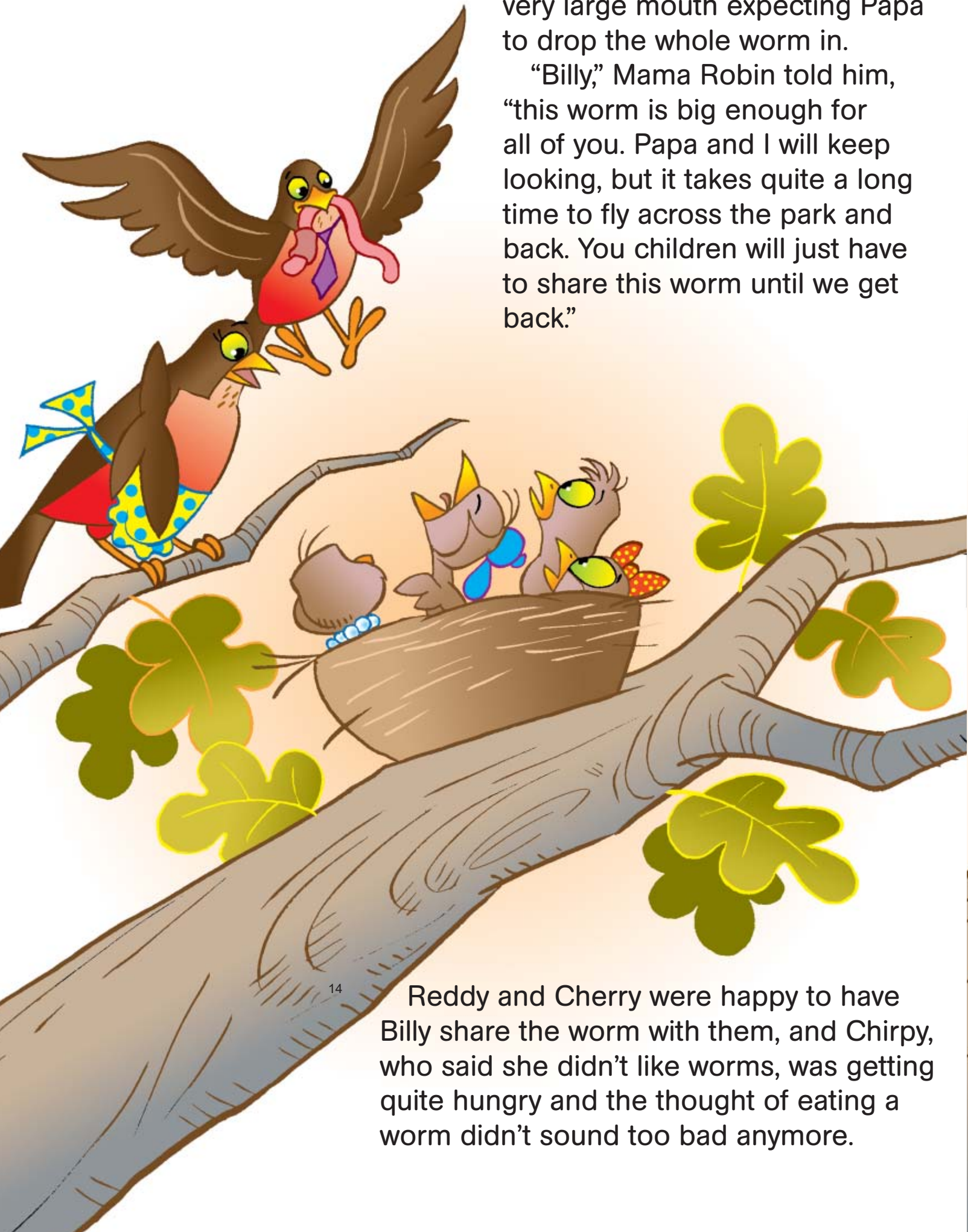
With great speed he flew down and grabbed the worm in his beak. The worm was very large and very strong and was still partly in the ground. The worm resisted with all its might, and Papa Robin pulled and pulled, but the worm was too strong and was getting away. Mama saw the struggle so she joined the fray and together they pulled and pulled, and at last, the great big worm let go and the happy robins flew back to the nest with their very large catch.



“Oh look! Papa found my worm!” Billy chirped.

“It looks like I’m going to get my breakfast first!” Billy opened his very large mouth expecting Papa

to drop the whole worm in.  
“Billy,” Mama Robin told him, “this worm is big enough for all of you. Papa and I will keep looking, but it takes quite a long time to fly across the park and back. You children will just have to share this worm until we get back.”



Reddy and Cherry were happy to have Billy share the worm with them, and Chirpy, who said she didn’t like worms, was getting quite hungry and the thought of eating a worm didn’t sound too bad anymore.

Mama and Papa Robin flew off again to continue their search for breakfast, leaving the young birds to work out the details of sharing the worm among themselves. Well, you guessed it ... Billy didn't want to share.

“Sorry, guys, this is my worm! You all ordered something else for breakfast. You'll just have to wait your turn. Chirpy doesn't even like worms anyway.”





“But what if they can’t find any crunchy seeds anywhere?” Reddy fretted out loud. “I will have no food today and I am very hungry right now!”

“Me too,” said Cherry. “Please, Billy, let us have some of the worm too!”

“No, no, no! No way! This is my worm, and I’m going to eat it all by myself!”





That is when the great tug of war began. Billy grabbed one end of the worm and Chirpy, Cherry and Reddy grabbed the other end and started pulling. Billy was big, but he was no match for his three siblings all pulling against him. Billy decided to climb up on the edge of the nest to get better footing and yank the worm away from the rest of them.

Cherry gasped, let go of the worm and cried, “Oh, please get down, Billy! It looks very dangerous up there and you might fall!”

Billy didn't want to answer, because if he opened his beak he would let go of the worm, so he just kept on pulling. Billy was now almost completely out of the nest. He was standing against the edge of the nest and all that was holding him was the worm. When Cherry let go, Billy yanked the worm with all his might, and Reddy and Chirpy lost their balance and fell forward. Billy started to fall backwards off the edge of the nest! He opened his beak in fright and lost hold of the worm. Down and down Billy fell. He tried to flap his wings but it didn't help much, because he didn't have all of his wing feathers yet, and besides, he didn't know how to fly. It was a long way down, and he landed with a "plop" on some soft grass.



“Oh no!” squawked Reddy. “Look, Billy has fallen all the way to the ground. Is he hurt?”

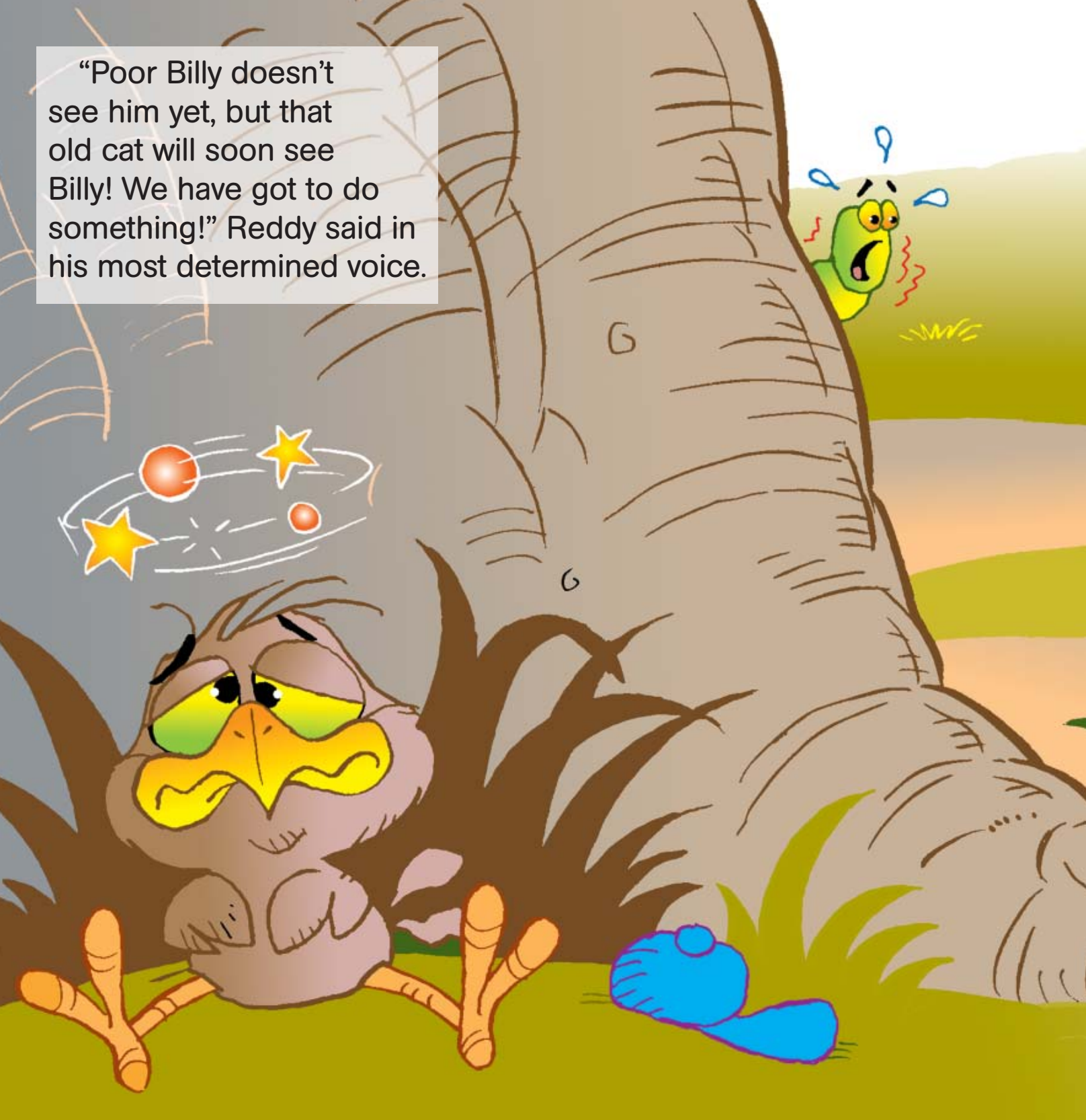
“I don’t think so,” said Cherry. “See, he’s getting up and hopping around. But he can’t fly yet and he is too big for Mama and Papa to try to lift, so how will he ever get back in the nest?”

Their eyes scanned the woods in every direction to see if help could be found, but there was none.



“Oh no!” cried Cherry. “Look over there, coming across the lawn this way! It’s that big mean old tomcat that Mama and Papa and all their friends have to keep chasing away.”

“Poor Billy doesn’t see him yet, but that old cat will soon see Billy! We have got to do something!” Reddy said in his most determined voice.



“Oh dear, this doesn’t look too good. Let’s all pray for Billy!” said Chirpy. “Dear God, please keep Billy. Rescue him from that terrible tomcat, and somehow, help him to get back up here in the nest.”

Down on the ground, little Billy was having a few troubled thoughts of his own. He had no worm. He had no nice warm nest. His parents were gone and he was all alone on the ground, the most dangerous place in the world for baby birds.



Billy peeked up above the grass and looked around. His eyes spotted a large gray tomcat making its way towards him. His heart froze. I'm in serious trouble, he said to himself. Billy decided to pray too. He prayed harder than he had ever prayed before, and he was very, very polite when he talked to Jesus.

“Please dear Jesus, I am so, so sorry for being a bad, selfish, grabby and unthankful bird. I promise I’ll do my best to learn my lesson. Oh, please keep me safe. Hide me so that tomcat doesn’t see me. And please, somehow help me get back into the nest.”



Closer and closer the old tomcat came to where Billy sat, still hiding in the grass. Any moment now the cat would discover Billy. Suddenly, Chirpy spotted Papa flying towards them, and Mama behind him. Chirpy cried out in her loudest voice, “Hurry! Hurry! Billy is in trouble and there’s a cat coming!”

Papa's sharp eyes soon spotted the cat and could see he was nearly to where poor Billy was trembling in the grass. Papa let out a loud, angry cry and dived straight down at the cat and pecked his head and flapped his wings noisily.

Then Mama attacked the cat as well, swooping in for a quick peck and then escaping before the cat could catch her. The cat was so surprised by this sudden attack from the air that he raced off across the park.





His brother and sisters gave a sigh of relief. Billy was safe for the moment. He wouldn't starve because Mama and Papa would find him and feed him on the ground. But the ground was still a very dangerous place and it would be some time before Billy could fly.

Then the miracle happened. On the other side of the open space beside the great oak tree, an old man had been resting on a park bench. When he saw the robins attack the cat, he knew that they must be protecting one of their babies.

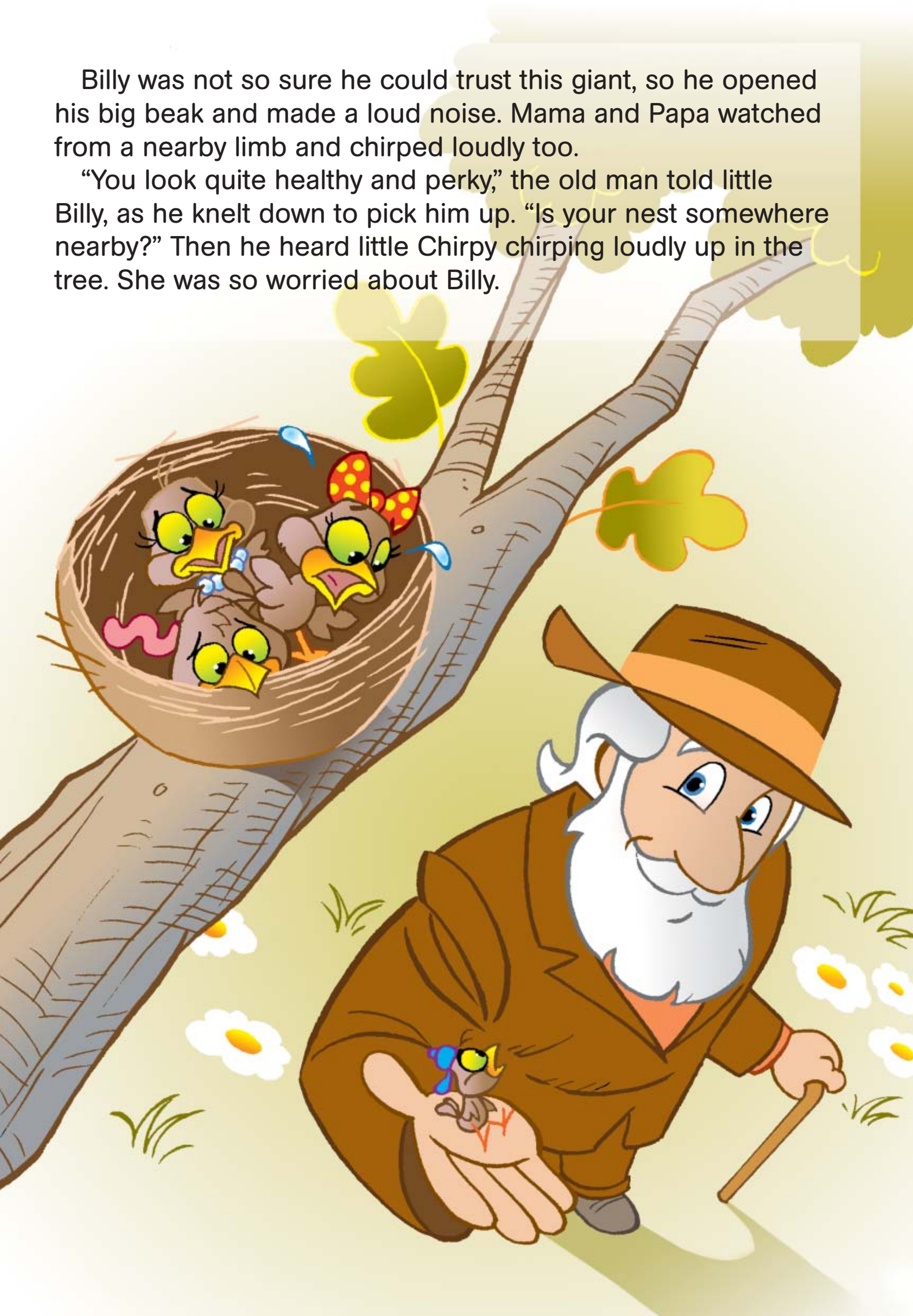


The kind old man rose from his bench and strolled over to the oak tree. It didn't take him long to spot Billy hiding in the grass. When the man came over to him, Billy tried to run. He tried to flap his wings and escape but he could not. Billy was not in danger, though, because the old man loved birds. "Don't worry, little fellow," the man said. "Jesus loves little birds and so do I. He knows you have fallen to the ground and are in trouble, so He brought me along to help you."



Billy was not so sure he could trust this giant, so he opened his big beak and made a loud noise. Mama and Papa watched from a nearby limb and chirped loudly too.

“You look quite healthy and perky,” the old man told little Billy, as he knelt down to pick him up. “Is your nest somewhere nearby?” Then he heard little Chirpy chirping loudly up in the tree. She was so worried about Billy.





“It’s okay, Chirpy,” Reddy said to comfort her. “Don’t worry. I think Jesus sent this kind man along to help Billy and to answer our prayers.”

“Look,” said Cherry. “The old man sees our nest and is reaching way up over his head with Billy. He’s bringing Billy back to us! Oh, thank You, dear Jesus, for answering our prayers!”

“There you go, little fellow,” said the old man, as he pushed Billy back into the nest. He smiled at Mama and Papa Robin and continued on his walk.

“It’s so good to be home!” said Billy. “I’m sorry, everyone! I was so selfish and unloving. I really learned a lesson the hard way today!”

“We all learned a lesson today,” said Chirpy. “I feel like we almost grew up in one day.”

“Come on, everyone,” said Reddy. “Look, we still have a nice big worm to eat.”



So they all shared the worm with one another. Mama and Papa Robin looked on proudly and were so pleased to see them all behaving so nicely. From then on, the young robins made a big effort to be kind to each other and they were very polite to their parents. Whenever they were given some yummy food, they all chorused a big “Thank you!”



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# THE Tug of War



Billy, Reddy, Cherry and Chirpy are four little baby robins with a variety of personalities and preferences, huge appetites, and a few things to learn about manners!



Find out what happens when Mama and Papa Robin fly away to find food, and Billy has his first brush with danger.



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