



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Crane Express

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Once upon a time, there were six little birds, all fat, all fluffy, and all friendly. They sat in a tot on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. "Fat and fluffy friends," said one of them, "let us go over to Africa. I have heard that the worms there walk into one's mouth as soon as one opens it, and that they have besides a very fine flavor."

"Fluffy friend and fat," replied the others, "gladly would we go to Africa, but how can we get there? Our wings are short, and we are small. We could never fly so far, we would drop into the sea and be drowned."

"That is true," said the first. "Let us see if someone does not come along who will carry us over." So they all waited, sitting in a row on the sand. Soon, a great fish came swimming by.

"Will you carry us to Africa, fish?" asked the six little birds.

"I will carry you to the bottom of the sea," replied the fish. "Just like this!" And, folding his fins, he darted down through the water as swift as an arrow.

"Dear! Dear!" said the little birds. "How lucky that we did not go with him. We must still wait."

Soon, a sheep came walking by, and as it looked very good-natured, the birds asked if it would carry them over to Africa.

"I can't," said the sheep. "I never swim, and I cannot fly. You must wait for the cranes."

"And who are the cranes?" asked the little birds.

"They are big birds," said the sheep, "with long bills, longer necks, and legs that are longer yet. Once every year, they come from the north and fly to Africa, and always carry small birds like you. I wonder you have never seen them."

"We are very young," replied the fat, fluffy, little friends. "We have seen little of the world, but we thank you very much for telling us, and we will wait for the cranes."



They had not long to wait. In a few minutes, they heard a rushing sound overhead and looked up to see a flock of great birds with necks outstretched and wings spread wide, flying low over the beach.

"Will you carry us over to Africa?" called the little birds, all in a flutter, as the first crane swept by.

"I am full!" replied the crane. "The fourth behind me has room for you, but you must get on quickly!"

As he flew on, the six friends saw that his back was covered with small birds, all huddled together and holding on with beaks and claws. The second crane passed, and the third, both heavily laden. Then came the fourth. Hop! Skip! Flutter! Scramble! And the six fat, fluffy friends were seated on his back, with a dozen or more little fellows about their own size.

"Are you all right?" said the crane. "Hold on tight!" And away he flew over the wide, blue sea.

Many other little birds came flying to the shore to take passage on the Crane Express. And many a back was covered with tiny passengers.

"All aboard! All aboard!" cried the cranes. "Twitter! Chirp! Twit-twit!" piped the passengers. And the whole train swept on, far away over the sea, toward the white shore of Africa.

Now, part of this story may be true, for cranes can easily fly long distances, but they are also solitary birds and do not engage in cooperative behaviors.