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Elephant Ways

Mary Graham Bonner

"Why did you have your toenails cut, your skin oiled, and your feet sandpapered?" Sally asked the elephant at the zoo.

"One question at a time, please," said the elephant. "Actually, come to think of it, I can answer all three at once. My nails needed cutting. My feet needed sandpapering. My skin needed oil. So the keeper looked after me, just as he does my friends." He waved his trunk at the others.

"But what do you do in the wild?" asked Sally. "There aren't nail scissors or sandpaper in the jungle."



"Ah," said the elephant. "That's exactly the point, and it's where the keeper understands things better than you do. In the wild, I cut my nails on rocks — they keep themselves short naturally. I get the oil for my skin from the swamps. And the ground and rocks keep my feet hard. When we're free, old Mother Nature looks after all those things for us. Here, she can't — so the keeper has to help."

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