

For viewing only

Near and Far



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Illustrations by
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Hello!



I like to hug,



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I like to touch,



I like to cuddle ...
Sometimes, I am told, a little too much.



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They tell me to keep my distance
When we are out on the street,



And especially at the store,
With whomever I meet.

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Chimps pick stuff off one another,

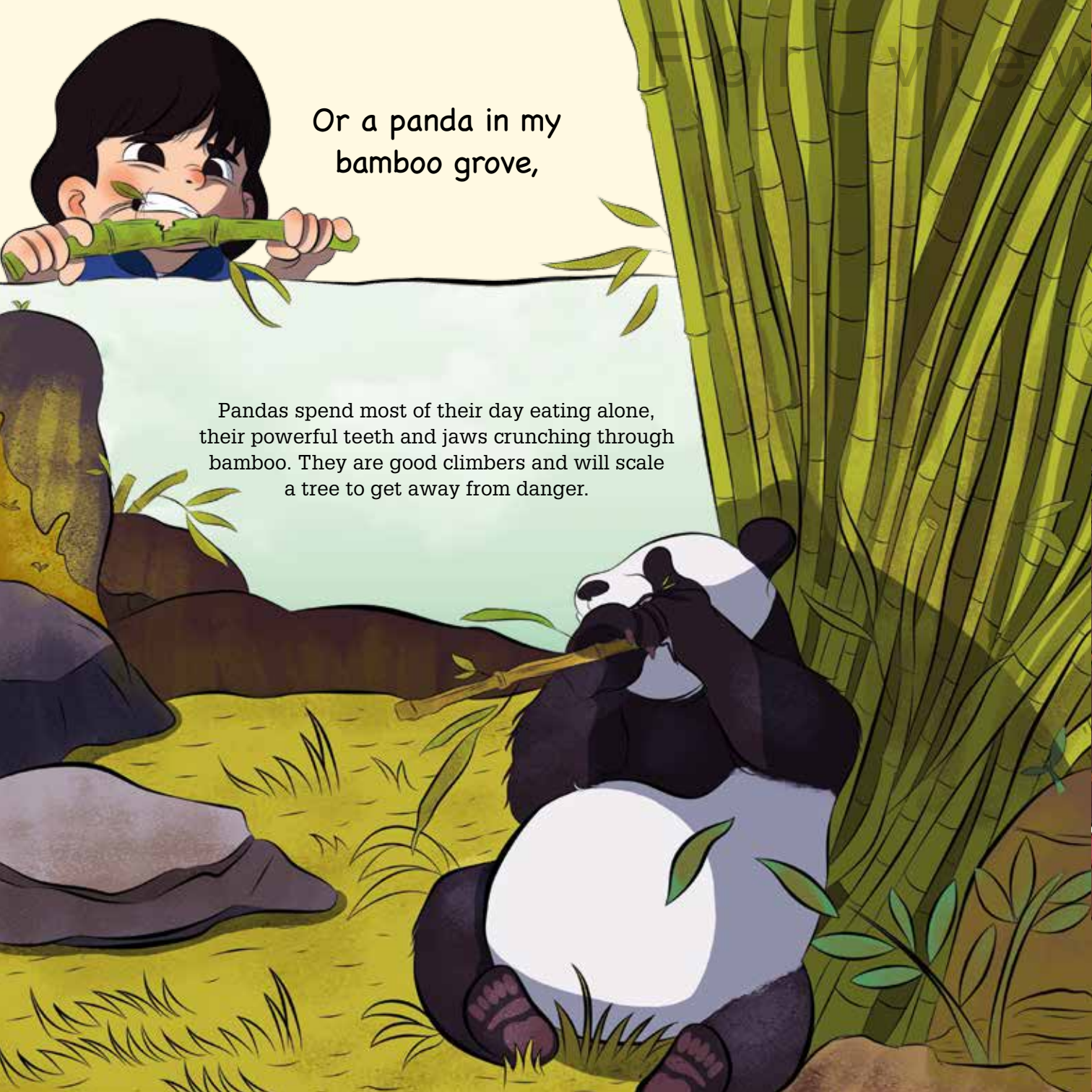


Chimps regularly groom each other, picking off insects, dirt, leaves, and dried skin. Did someone help you bathe or brush your hair today?

And meerkats share their burrow.



Families of meerkats live together in “mobs”, sharing underground burrows made up of tunnels and rooms. When out looking for food, one meerkat always keeps watch for danger.



Or a panda in my
bamboo grove,

Pandas spend most of their day eating alone,
their powerful teeth and jaws crunching through
bamboo. They are good climbers and will scale
a tree to get away from danger.

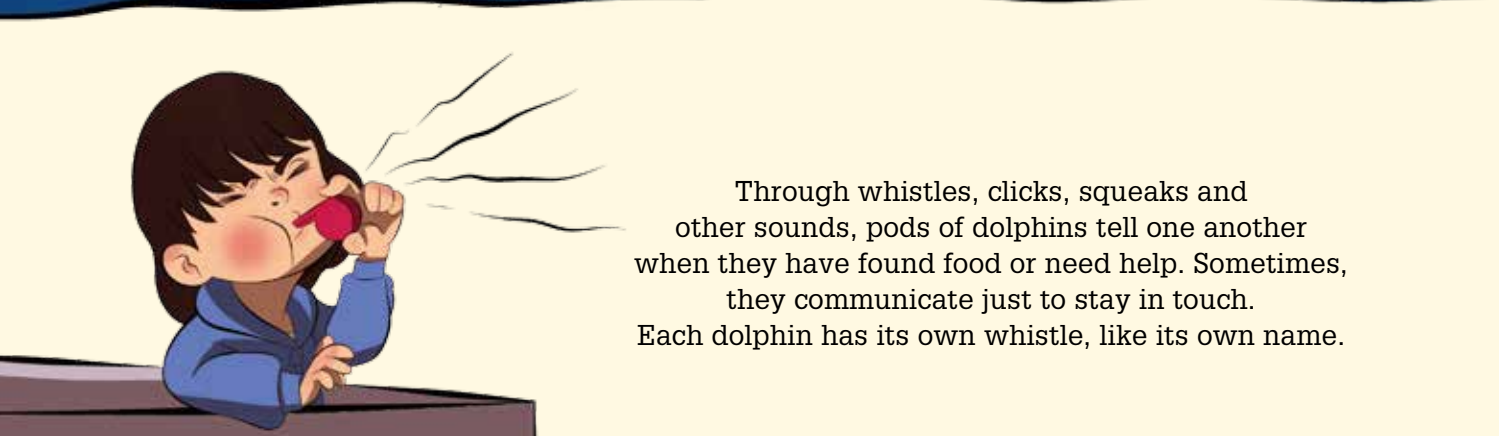


A sloth hanging all day?

Sloths are solitary animals, hanging upside
down from trees and vines high above the forest
floor. They do not have much time to feel lonely,
as they spend most of their day asleep.



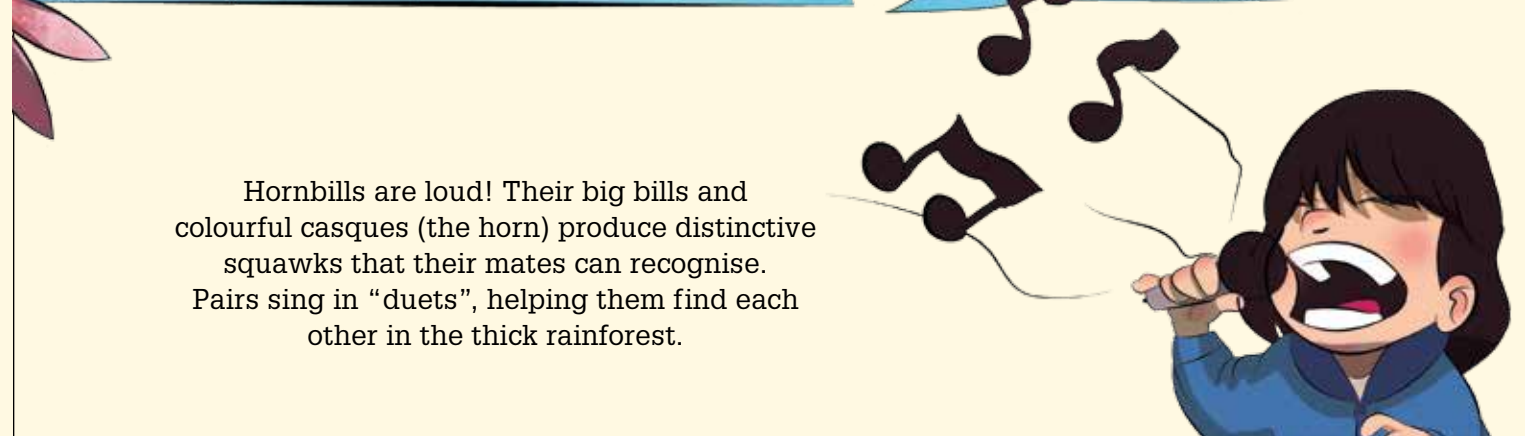
Well ... dolphins talk by whistling,



Through whistles, clicks, squeaks and other sounds, pods of dolphins tell one another when they have found food or need help. Sometimes, they communicate just to stay in touch. Each dolphin has its own whistle, like its own name.



Hornbills know their song;



Hornbills are loud! Their big bills and colourful casques (the horn) produce distinctive squawks that their mates can recognise. Pairs sing in “duets”, helping them find each other in the thick rainforest.

10 ideas to stay connected:



1

Sing out the window (or whistle, like the dolphins).

3

Do a dance for someone you love (like the bees).

2

Record a song and send it to a friend (like the hornbills).

6

Write a note on a paper plane and fly it into your friend's house.

8

If you can see your friend's window from your house, agree on a time to turn off the lights and signal with flashlights - four quick flashes followed by two quick flashes spells "Hi" in Morse code!

9

After dinner, light a candle and think of a friend (ask an adult to help).

7

Draw a picture of a friend or loved one, and send it by post to him or her.

4

Make postcards and send them to your buddies (like spiders).

5

Telephone one friend every day (like the elephants).

10

Plant a seed in a little pot for someone special. Care for it and you can give it to him or her when you next meet!



Author's Note

When schools were closed to stem the spread of COVID-19, more than 1.5 billion children and young people around the world were separated from their friends. This story was written in the first weekend after schools and playgrounds were closed in our community, with national guidelines to stay at home.

The sudden loss of physical contact with family and friends was palpable. To make sense of this isolation, my children and I explored how some animals are very social while others prefer a more solitary life. The conversation moved on to the diverse and wonderful ways that animals communicate with one another. We learnt of the ingenious and special ways different animals use to say "hello".

Nature shows us how we can maintain closeness even if we are not physically together. While social distancing, let's get creative about how to be "distantly social"!

About the Author



Ming Tan was born in Singapore and spent time in England, California, and New York, before returning home with an Australian husband and an American son.

Two Singaporean children later, they are a global focus group for her professional and creative endeavours.

Near and Far is her first children's picture book.