

THE DAY THE ELEPHANTS CAME

Tom and his mum had just moved into a new house. It was on a street of new houses, and they were the first to move in.

A few days later, Tom saw a big van park next door. Their new neighbours were arriving.

Tom watched the men unloading the van.

The first thing to come out was a huge box labelled 'currant buns'.

The second thing to come out was an enormous painting of palm trees.

The third thing to come out was a massive blue plastic paddling pool.

And that was it. No furniture. Nothing else at all.

The removal men carried the things into the house, and then drove away.

Half an hour later, another big van arrived. Out of this van came a family of four.

Four elephants.

"Hello!" said one of the two smaller elephants when he saw Tom. "Do you live here too?"

"Yes," said Tom.

He watched as the elephants squeezed in through their front door. It was a very tight fit. The father elephant got stuck, and had to be pushed through by mother elephant.

Once they were all inside the house, they opened the windows with their trunks. Through the windows, Tom could hear a lot of splashing noises and trumpeting.

He went to tell his mum.

"Elephants?" she said. "Don't be silly!"

About an hour later, another big van pulled up at the house next door on the other side. Tom wondered who was going to live there!

The first thing that came out of the van was a huge climbing frame.

The second thing that came out was an enormous basket of bananas.

The third thing that came out was a massive box labelled 'table and chairs for tea parties'.

The removal men carried the things into the house, and then drove away.

Half an hour later, a car pulled up outside the house. A family of five climbed out.

Five monkeys.

One of them waved to Tom, and he waved back.

The monkeys didn't go in through the door of their new house. They climbed up onto the roof and jumped down the chimney. Then they opened the windows and sat on the windowsills, eating bananas.

Tom went to tell his mum.

"Monkeys?" she said. "Don't be silly!"

Later on, vans came to all the other houses on the street. Tom saw a family of kangaroos, a family of crocodiles, and a family of penguins arriving at their new homes. He was certainly going to have some interesting new friends to play with! He went to tell his mum.

Tom's mother was reading the newspaper in the kitchen.

"The newspaper says the zoo has been moved," she said. "All the animals have been re-housed."

"They've all come to live on our street!" Tom said.

"On our street?" his mum said. "Don't be silly!"

In the late afternoon, workmen came and put high fences in between the houses. Tom thought this was a good idea. Already the crocodiles were chasing the penguins, and the kangaroos were jumping in and out of the windows of the other animals' houses.

The workmen put a sign up outside each house to say who lived there.

Outside Tom's house, they put up a sign that said "Humans".

He went in to tell his mum.

"Mum, we're 'humans' now," he said.

"Humans?" she said. "Don't be silly!"

She stood up and swished her tail to get rid of some bothersome flies. Tom noticed that she had zebra stripes, and the kitchen floor was covered in straw.

He went back to the front door and read the sign again. "Humans" had been crossed out. Now it said "Zebras".

Oh well, Tom thought, if the neighbourhood was going to change, they might as well change too. He trotted back into the house to have his tea.