

The Empty Clearing

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Contents

1

Story
3-10

2

Activity
11-12

3

Fascinating Facts
13-14

4

Complete the Story
15

The morning sun spilled across the jungle,
painting the leaves with gold.

Tiara the bushbuck skipped along the path, ears twitching.
“This is going to be the best picnic ever!” she sang.

RJ padded beside her, tail swishing.

“And the best part is Alina’s food,” he said, licking his lips.
“Honey cakes, berry mash, crunchy beetle chips—mmm!”



Stripes darted ahead, nose sniffing, paws tapping the earth in rhythm. “No one cooks like Alina,” he agreed, breaking into a little rhyme:

“Beetles crisp and berries sweet,
Alina’s food is hard to beat!”

They burst into the clearing and spread out, waiting for Alina to arrive.

But the space was quiet.

No scent of food, no cheerful hum from their aardvark friend. Just the breeze rustling dry leaves.



After a long while, a parrot swooped down with a squawk.

“Alina says she’s sick. Fever, no cooking today!”
Then the parrot flapped away, leaving silence behind.

Tiara’s ears drooped. “No food?”

RJ groaned, flopping onto the ground.
“No fun either. Without Alina, it’s just...an empty clearing.”

Stripes scratched his whiskers.
“We planned a feast, and now—nothing!”

They sat glumly. The clearing felt bigger without the
buzz of their plan.

Boredom crept in, heavy as a cloud.



RJ sighed loudly. “Let’s chase shadows, like we used to.”

He pounced at Tiara’s tail, making her squeal.
For a moment, it felt like the old days.

But after two leaps, RJ stopped, panting.
“It’s not the same. Shadows slip away too fast.”

Tiara pawed the dirt.
“We could throw stones at the tree trunk…”

She aimed, but the stone bounced back and nearly
hit her hoof. She frowned.
“That was never really fun, was it?”

Stripes curled his tail, a mischievous glint in his eyes.
“We could tease the monkeys?” He grinned, waiting for a laugh.

But Tiara shook her head. “That just makes them angry.
We always end up running.”



One by one, their old games crumbled like dry leaves.

What once filled time now felt empty.
Holding on to them only made the clearing feel heavier.

RJ flopped onto his side. “So what do we do, then?
Everything we try doesn’t fit anymore.”

Tiara’s ears twitched. “Then maybe we don’t hold on.
Maybe we try something new.”

Stripes’ whiskers wiggled. “Like what?”

Tiara thought hard. Then she giggled.
“Like...making Alina the strangest picnic she’s ever seen.”

RJ’s eyes lit. “A recipe that makes no sense?”

“Exactly!” Tiara laughed.



They dashed about, gathering the oddest things:
RJ dragged crunchy roots, Tiara stacked berries in lopsided
towers, Stripes proudly dropped wriggling beetles on top.

They mixed them on a giant leaf until the pile looked like a
wobbly, funny mountain of colours and legs.

Stripes recited in rhythm:
“Berries, beetles, roots that crunch,
Here’s a very special lunch!”

The three burst into giggles until their sides hurt.



When the strange feast was ready, Tiara said softly, “Let’s take it to Alina. She shouldn’t think we forgot her.”

They carried their wobbly recipe carefully to her burrow.

Alina peeked out, her nose twitching, eyes tired but warm.

RJ stopped just short. “Don’t worry, we won’t get too close. We just wanted you to see what we made.”

Tiara nudged the leaf forward. “It’s not for us. It’s for you. Because even if the clearing felt empty, it wasn’t empty of you.”



Alina chuckled weakly, touched by the odd gift.
“It’s the funniest meal I’ve ever seen.”

Stripes wiggled his whiskers. “Funny but full of care.”

RJ grinned. “And loyalty.”

Tiara nodded. “We’d rather have an empty clearing
than forget a friend.”

Alina’s smile was brighter than any feast. And though they
couldn’t hug her, the three stood close, filling the air with
laughter that carried more healing than food ever could.

—THE END—



ACTIVITY

The Empty Space Game

YOU'LL NEED:

- A tray, cardboard box, or small open area (this is the “empty clearing”)
- A few random items from around the house — paper clips, leaves, bottle caps, buttons, stones, or twigs

Optional: paper and crayons for decorating

HOW TO DO IT:

1. Show your child the “empty clearing” — the tray or box with nothing in it. Ask, “What could we make out of this nothing?”
2. Together, gather small items and place them in a pile beside the tray. Explain, “These are like Tiara and her friends’ funny ingredients — ordinary things waiting to become something new.”

ACTIVITY

The Empty Space Game

3. Set a timer for 10 minutes. The rule: You can't use any toy – only what's here.
4. Build or design anything together – a funny sculpture, a nest for an imaginary creature, a tiny picnic, or a silly face. Give it a name or story.
5. When done, pause and look at what you made. Ask, "Was it more fun once we stopped saying there's nothing to do?"

What it builds:

This activity transforms boredom into imagination. Children learn that "empty" moments aren't wasted – they're invitations for creativity and connection. Like Tiara and her friends, they'll see that joy doesn't depend on perfect plans but on the care, laughter, and effort they bring to what's in front of them.

5 FUN FACTS

About Big Ideas Born from “Nothing”



The Potato Chip Accident

In 1853, a chef named George Crum got annoyed when a customer complained that his fried potatoes were too thick. So he sliced them extra thin, fried them crisp – and accidentally invented the potato chip!

Imagine making a mistake so tasty that the whole world eats it!

A Sticky Surprise: Post-it Notes

A scientist named Spencer Silver was trying to make a super-strong glue. Instead, he made one that barely stuck at all. Another colleague used it to keep his bookmarks from falling out – and that’s how Post-it Notes were born!

Imagine failing at one idea and sticking to another that changed the world!



The Spark of the Popsicle

An 11-year-old boy, Frank Epperson, left a cup of soda with a stirring stick outside on a freezing night. The next morning, it was frozen solid – and the popsicle was invented!

Imagine finding your favourite treat just because you forgot something outside!

5 FUN FACTS

About Big Ideas Born from “Nothing”



The Bouncy Beginning of the Slinky

A naval engineer dropped a spring by mistake — but instead of stopping, it “walked” down from the shelf. The funny movement inspired the toy Slinky, which has been bouncing ever since. Imagine tripping over a toy that ends up walking on its own!

Velcro from the Woods

A Swiss engineer went for a hike and came back covered in sticky burrs. Curious, he looked at them under a microscope and saw tiny hooks — inspiring Velcro!

Imagine nature quietly handing you one of the cleverest inventions ever made!



The Box of Nothing

Complete the Story

Naru sat on the balcony staring at an empty cardboard box.

The rain had ruined his game cards, and his friends couldn't come out to play. "There's nothing left to do," he muttered, kicking the box gently.

Just then, a breeze lifted one corner, and the box made a whuff! sound like a tiny drum. Naru paused. He tapped it again – whuff! – and grinned.

Maybe this wasn't nothing after all.
He picked up two spoons and began to play.

A neighbour's window opened, and someone clapped. Naru froze. The rhythm echoed in the rain. He wondered – should he stop, hide, or play louder and see what happens next?

What happens next?

- Does Naru turn the box into his own rainy-day drum kit?
- Do the neighbours join in and make balcony music together?
- Or does the sound lead him to a new idea that changes his "nothing" day forever?

See you next Monday
with another interesting story!

Got feedback or a suggestion? We would love to hear it!
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