



**Mিন্ণী's Desire for a**

*Ride*

Minnie was tired of climbing walls and trees. Especially because she always got stuck on top of the poplar tree. It was quite embarrassing to whine and purr and hope people got her down safely. When she saw Grandpa Gomes, she had an idea. “Dear, dear Grandpa Gomes, ppplease may I use Laila's chair just for one day?” she asked Grandpa Gomes.



Grandpa Gomes smiled. “Of course little Minny, but tell me, why do you want to use a wheelchair. You have not two, but four healthy legs?”

“Why, Minny?” asked Grandma Gomes who had so much pain in her knees that it brought tears to her eyes.

“Why, lazy Minny?” asked Guppu, who had broken his leg while playing in school.

“Why, Minny dear?” asked Jhumpa, who never tired of running errands for everyone in the village.

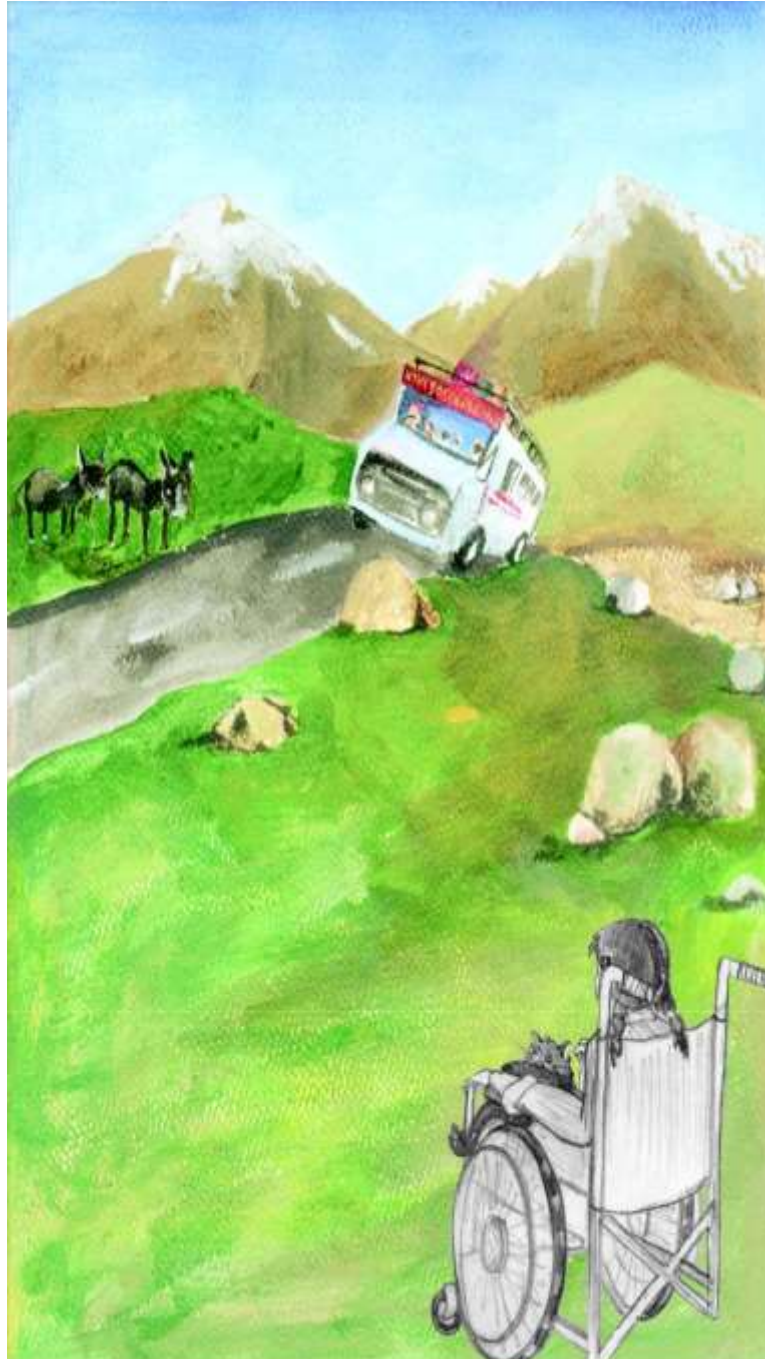




Minnie thought about it. She could not say she wanted to use the chair just for a lark. Or just because she felt tired. Or just because she was too lazy. Or just because she was getting fat.

“Oh, I really want to give Laila company when she goes to school. She gets so sad watching other children run or skip to school, you know,” said Minny with an expression of concern.

Grandpa Gomes agreed. “Fine, Minny, so you can go to school with Laila in her wheel-chair today.”



The world looked beautiful from where Minny sat on Laila's lap. The snow on faraway hills, the birds on the trees, and the shower of blossoms under the trees made Minny smile like a Cheshire cat. Minny saw Uncle Ali taking Mona piggy-back to school. Mona had hurt her toe, and could not walk easily.

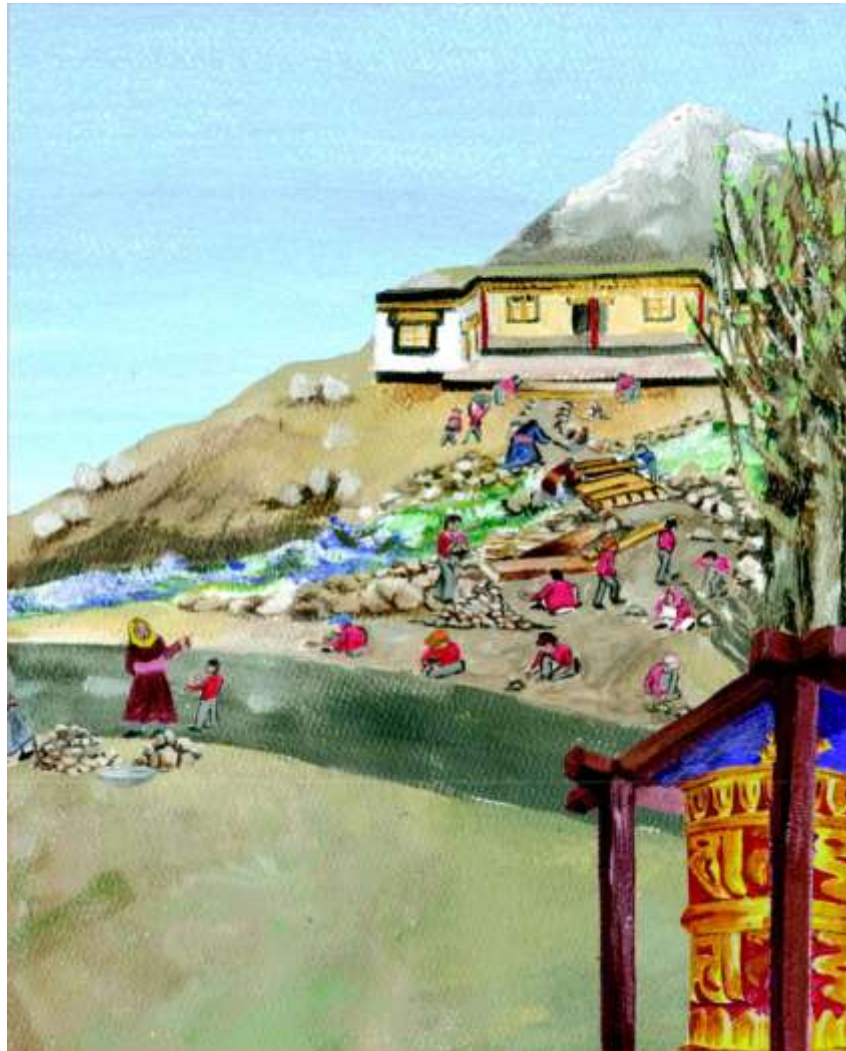


The wheel-chair rumbled uphill, causing Minny's back quite some strain. Then when Laila pushed the wheel-chair downhill, Minny's eyes grew wide with worry. Would they tumble down and hurt her lovely tail, she wondered. Then when the wheel-chair came to a river, Minny nearly jumped off! "I can't get wet! I...I...I'm going right back!" she squealed. "Don't worry, I'll ferry you across," said Kinchuk, the school's top sportsperson.



“I should really build my stamina,” thought Minny, looking at how strong and helpful Kinchuk was.

The school seemed really far, far, far away. On the way, Minny saw a lot of people working. She saw old people digging the land to make roads. She saw young people cutting stones to lay paths.



She realised how difficult it was for Laila to get to school. And she realised that Laila always looked so much at ease, and so happy. No wonder everyone wanted to help her!

Soon Minny was full of remorse. She really was the laziest, vainest, sourest, thoughtless, selfish living being in all of Gompaguri, she thought. She whined, and she purred, and she screeched so much that she was surprised people hadn't thrown her into the Psering River till now!

“I must change,” thought Minny. “I must be a new cat henceforth,” she continued to think.

Mিনny tried her best to be a hardworking, modest, pleasant, thoughtful, unselfish living being like all the others in Gompaguri. Some days later she climbed up Grandpa Gomes' roof to see....well, she had some work. There she got stuck, and couldn't climb down. She tried several times, but decided finally that she needed help.



Remember, Minny was a changed cat. She did not whine. She did not purr loudly. She did not screech. Instead she did what the lovely people of Gompaguri did when they worked. She sang. And very loudly! She sang out calling for help.

All of Gompaguri heard her. They all came out to help, as they always did.

“Dear Minny, you really are a silly-billy. Do try not to get stuck like this, but if you do get stuck, promise us you'll never sing....cats MUST purr, and you purr so much better than you sing!



Mিনny walked away gracefully with her head and tail held high , even as all the children laughed at her affectionately.

