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OUR Teacher COMPLETES HIS JOURNEY

Our Teacher waded to shore with MD in his arms. He placed his dog on the sand.

"There you go, old pal," he said. "Now you can sniff familiar stuff, things you know and trust."

Long ears flapping, tail wagging, MD ran up the beach, chasing seagulls. Our Teacher sat on a driftwood log. The sun was an inch from setting, so he had time before he had to go home. He was watching an army of sandpipers skitter in and out with the waves, when a voice called, "Welcome home."

Our Teacher's friend, the sea lion, bobbed in the water close to shore.

Here is the Sea Lion Our Teacher saw:



"I'm home, but I failed in my quest," Our Teacher said. "The Thinking Cap is lost. My trip was a waste of time. I accomplished nothing."

"Not true," said the sea lion. "You did a great deal."

"I still have no idea what I should do with my life. What path should I follow? What's my calling?"

"You just completed an extraordinary journey. You circumnavigated the world on your own. That's a remarkable feat."

"MD was with me," Our Teacher said.

"Not only did you circle the globe, you saw many remarkable sights. You faced many challenges and experienced many extraordinary things."

"I sure have a lot of stories to tell."

"It takes special skills to complete an adventure such as yours," said the sea lion.

"Skills? Sure, I traveled far, but I still can't do anything well. I have no special skills."

"During your journey you proved that you have many extraordinary talents," the sea lion said. "Let me list them for you."

The creature swam closer to shore. "First, when dealing with the Lazy Reindeer, you were quick-thinking and resourceful," it said.

Our Teacher laughed. "I'm glad reindeer like playing Tag."

"Second, in Cairo, your excellent memory and skill of observation were needed to escape the Bazaar Cat."

"With the help of MD's nose. I shouldn't have trusted that crooked cat in the first place."

"Third, in Athens, you showed empathy helping the Swayback Donkey," said the sea lion. "You put the burro's concerns before your own."

"I hope a kind master finds the brave burro," Our Teacher said.

"Number four, in India, your leadership and planning skills were helpful in managing the Naughty Monkeys."

Our Teacher laughed when he thought about Pan, Pen, Pin, and Pun.

"Fifth, on the Great Wall of China you showed patience and kindness while

listening to the Old Crow."

"And I was rewarded with a ride in the Spouting Whale."

"Sixth, and perhaps your most important skill," said the sea lion. "You had the willpower and grit to complete a long and difficult journey."

"I liked traveling and facing the challenges," Our Teacher said. "But I returned to this beach confused. I feel lost."

The sea lion swam still closer to the beach. "There is a profession where your skills are needed," it said. "An occupation you would excel in. It's known as the *beautiful profession*. In this career, you help others while those you help might help you."

"There couldn't be such a thing."

"This profession is as challenging as traveling around the world alone," the sea lion went on. "But it's an occupation in which you can make a difference. You might even change the world."

"Change the world? I don't know if I want to change the world. So you know my calling?"

"Your calling is an honorable one. You are lucky. You were meant to become a school teacher. Your calling is to teach young children. Great teachers are rare, and it's a rare person who has all your skills."

A wave washed over Our Teacher's feet. "Become a teacher? I've never considered such a thing." He dug his toes into the wet sand. "Being a teacher seems like a lot of work. All the papers to grade. Naughty kids to deal with. Meetings with parents and all that. I don't think I was cut out to become a teacher."

"Ruff! Ruff!" went MD.

"Arf! Arf!" went the sea lion.

The sun was slipping out of sight. Our Teacher, with MD at his heels, started for home.

"It's been a remarkable day, old pal, hasn't it?" Our Teacher said. "After all that, I learned I was meant to be a school teacher."

Again, the beagle barked.

"I'd rather be a movie star or a famous writer."

Our Teacher kicked a pine cone off the road.

"The *beautiful profession*, that's what the sea lion called teaching." He paused to punt another pine cone. "Become a teacher? Maybe I'll think about it."

Here is a picture of Our Teacher today:

