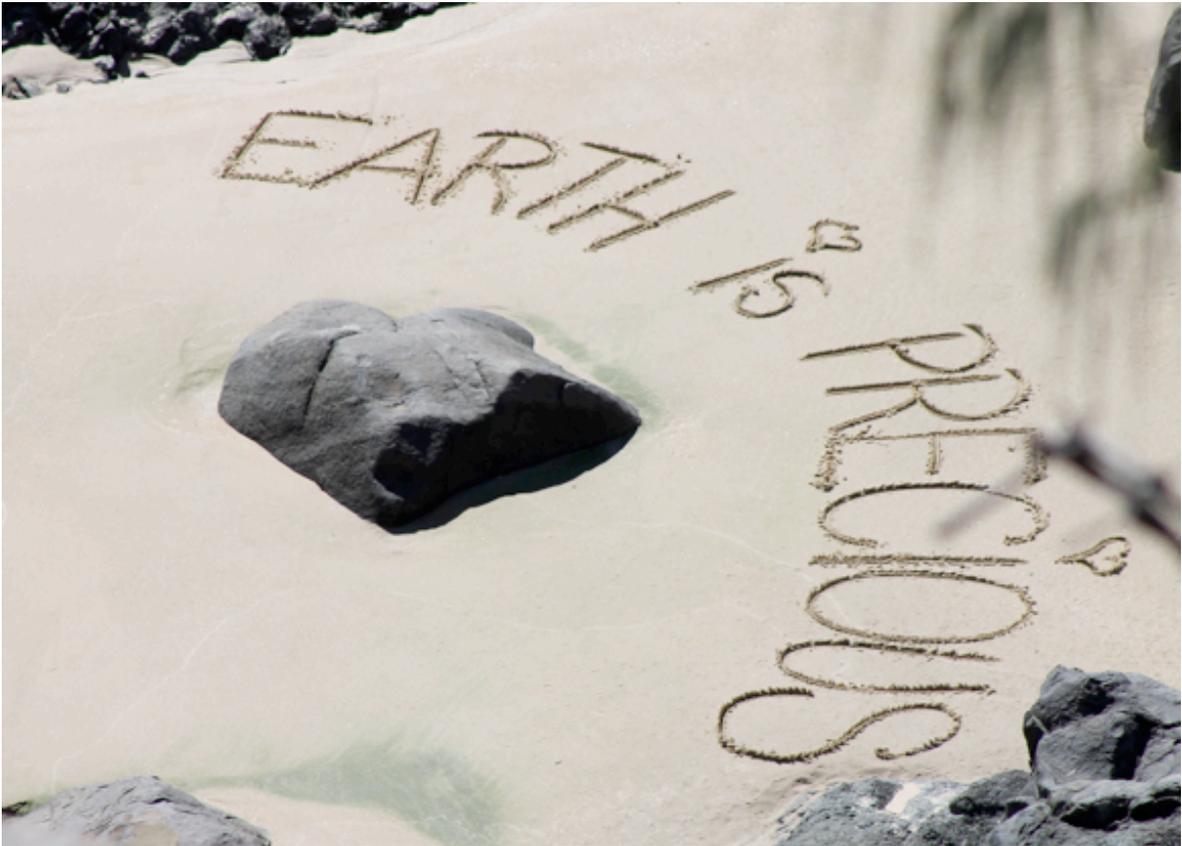


## Helping Mother Earth

(a short fiction about climate change for young children)



Once there was a boy called Rafael.

Rafael liked doing things. He liked to run through the forest and play hide and seek amongst the trees. He liked to plop rocks in the creek and see the trout skid for cover under fallen tree branches. And he liked going to kindergarten – each day learning new things and being a big helper to his teacher.

One day, while Rafael was on the swing under the apple tree in the garden, Mummy told him the world was sick.

Rafael was confused. How could the world be sick when everything around him was so nice?

‘She has a fever,’ Mummy explained, ‘just like you do when you’re sick.’

‘Who’s she?’ Rafael asked.

‘The world,’ Mummy answered. ‘Her name is Mother Earth.’

Rafael thought for a minute and pushed off with his toes.

‘Whose mother is she?’ he wanted to know.

‘She’s the mother of the whole world,’ Mummy said. ‘God made her so that everything here on Earth would have a mother to look after them. She is the mother of the plants and the trees and the animals and the rocks ...’

‘The mountains?’ Rafael asked. ‘The lakes?’

Mummy nodded. ‘And the oceans and the fishes and the beaches. She’s the mother of everything in nature, everything that wasn’t made by people.’

‘So not the cars,’ Rafael said. ‘Or the houses.’

‘No,’ said Mummy and gave him another push. ‘Just nature.’

‘Grass!’ Rafael called out. ‘Bees!’ he remembered.

Mummy smiled each time he thought of something else that hadn’t been made by people.

Rafael swung back and forth, to and fro, to and fro.

‘How do you know she’s sick?’ he asked.

‘Scientists tell us,’ Mummy said. ‘They’re like the doctors of Mother Earth. They measure her temperature, just like the doctor does when you have a fever. When Mother Earth is sick, she can’t look after nature so well. Things start going wrong.’

‘Like what?’ Rafael was curious.

‘Do you remember where the Arctic is?’ Mummy asked.

Rafael nodded. ‘It’s at the top of the world, where Lars the little polar bear lives.’ It was his favourite storybook.

‘Well,’ answered Mummy, ‘Arctic ice is melting because Mother Earth is too hot and has this fever. Polar bears don’t like it when the ice melts – it means their home is gone.’

‘In other parts of the world,’ she continued, ‘like Africa or Australia, it doesn’t rain as much when Mother Earth is sick – and that’s sad for all the trees and the animals and the people who need rain to help things grow and live.’

Rafael understood. He knew where Australia was. They flew there in a big aeroplane each year to visit Grandma. She always called it ‘lovely rain’.

The swing slowed. ‘How did Mother Earth get sick?’

Mummy sighed. ‘Unfortunately, it’s things that people do which make her sick. We make too much, we use too much, and all the pollution that comes out make her sick.’

Rafael cocked his head. He hadn’t heard this word before.

‘Pollution is like germs for Mother Earth,’ she explained. ‘Like the exhaust of cars or aeroplanes, or the stuff that comes out of tall factory chimneys.’

‘It smells bad,’ said Rafael, screwing up his nose.

‘Yes,’ Mummy agreed. ‘It all goes up into the air and Mother Earth breathes it in. That’s what makes her sick.’

Rafael thought hard. ‘Can God make her better?’ he suggested.

Mummy shook her head. ‘No, it’s not God’s job. It’s our job – people have made her sick, so people have to help her get better.’

That made sense, Rafael thought. It didn’t seem fair that polar bears lost their homes because people made Mother Earth sick.

‘Can I help?’ he offered.

‘Of course,’ said Mummy and gave him a big hug. ‘You’re always a big helper. We can start by driving the car less and walking more. And we can start by planting ten trees each time we fly to Australia to visit Grandma.’

That night Rafael had a dream. A woman’s voice called to him.

‘Rafael,’ she said, ‘I have a gift for you’.

Suddenly there was a lady beetle crawling on his hand – bright red, round as a button, with lots of spots. So many spots! He tried counting them.

‘Thirteen,’ said Mother Earth helpfully.

‘I’ve never seen one with so many!’ he cried.

‘There aren’t so many around anymore, now that I’m sick,’ she explained. ‘If people can help me get better, you’ll see more of these special lady beetles in your world.’

Rafael nodded. People would help. He was certain of it. And he would too.

### Parent & Teacher Resources

Learn as much as you can about climate change and how each family can help care for our planet’s health:

[http://www.panda.org/about\\_wwf/what\\_we\\_do/climate\\_change/](http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/what_we_do/climate_change/)

[http://tiki.oneworld.net/global\\_warming/climate\\_links.html](http://tiki.oneworld.net/global_warming/climate_links.html)

<http://climatekids.nasa.gov/>

<http://www.unep.org/tunza/children/>