



Special
Days

LESSON PLANS

for

Internationally recognised

SPECIAL DAYS

[with an animal component]

20 NOVEMBER

The content of this Lesson Plan supports

World Children's Day



Note to teachers



For learners in the Intermediate and Senior Phases

As we celebrate World Children’s Day, it is important, as parents and teachers, that we do everything in our power to **protect our children from the impact of violence in all its forms.**

All too often children are threatened with acts of violence towards their family members or pets if they fail to comply with a demand made upon them.

Now the *Centre for Children’s Justice* in the USA is hoping to make violence — or even the threat of violence — to a child’s pet, an act of ‘child torture’.



Is cruelty to a child's pet an act of child torture?



It should be...

according to the Centre for Children's Justice in Pennsylvania, USA.



www.C4CJ.org

Although Pennsylvania law **prohibits physically harming a child**, it does not specifically prohibit mental torture that occurs when a child's pet is terrorised or harmed by an adult.

Now there is a bill before the House Judiciary Committee which, **if passed**, will make this particular kind of mental abuse into **a crime**.

<https://nationallinkcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/LINK-Letter-2021-November.pdf>

NatureBased EDUCATION

A DIVISION OF THE HUMANE EDUCATION TRUST



believes all countries should follow suit



Note to Teacher

Ask the learners to read this excerpt from
*Magnificent Boy and the
Spirit of the Grey Hare*
about a father's hostility towards the
family dog, and the impact of his violent
behaviour on family members.

After reading the excerpt, invite class
discussion on the questions set out in
Slides 9 - 23 including how non-violence
would have achieved a positive outcome.



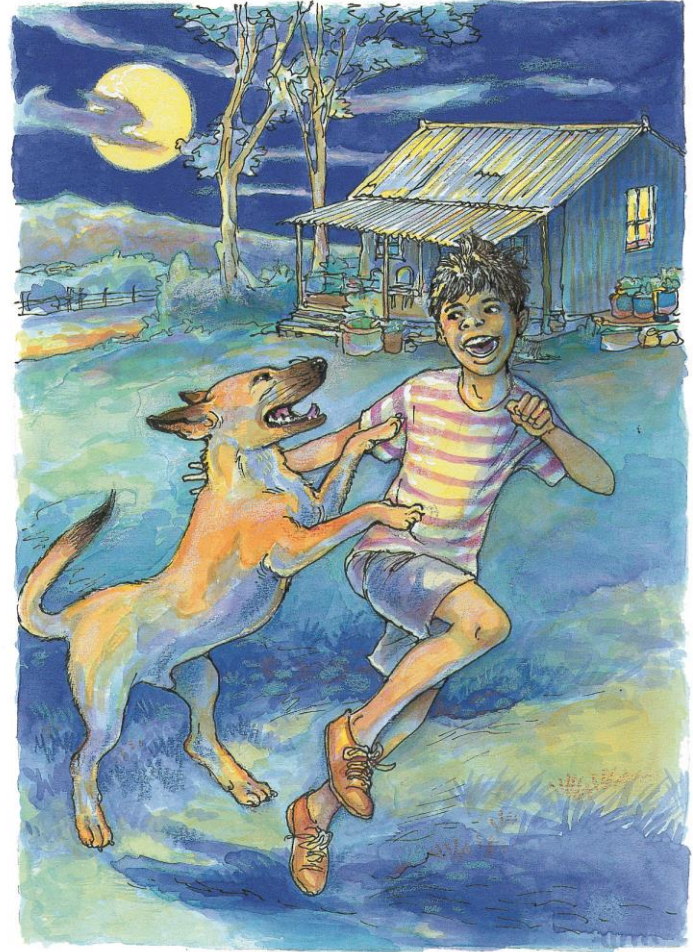
The story so far...

A feral dog survives against all odds and finally finds a friend in Oupa's grandson Boetie.

Boetie names his new companion 'Boy'.

A tragic event unintentionally separates them and Boy finds himself in a new home with the O'Connor family who call him 'Caesar'.

Read on...



A broken heart

Gabrielle O'Connor was elated to find Boy already in the garden when she came home from school. "Oh Mom, what a beautiful dog," she exclaimed. "How clever of you to choose him." She put down her school satchel and spoke gently to Boy. "Hello. Hello beautiful doggy." She stretched out her hand to fondle his head and ears.



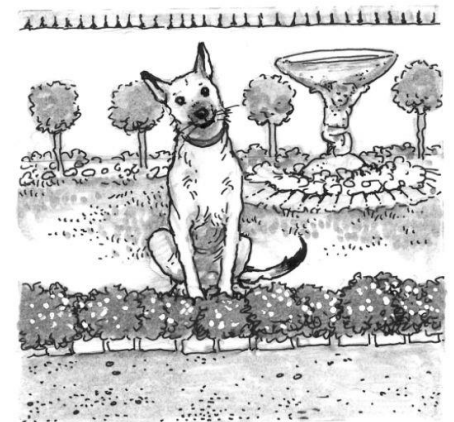
"What do you think of the name 'Caesar'?" asked her mother. "He's handsome enough to be an emperor in dog terms," laughed Gabrielle. "Okay. Let's call him Caesar!"

Later, Mr O'Connor, Gabrielle's father, arrived home with a big, wooden kennel with a red roof that he placed on the stoep outside the front door.

He also brought two new dog bowls. One was for water, he said, and the other for the dog pellets. The family was glad that at last they had a guard dog who could protect their property while they were away at work. Mr O'Connor got out his electric drill and screwed a big sign 'Beware of the Dog' onto the wall outside.

Where was Boetie? Boy sniffed in every corner of the small garden but, in truth, there was nothing much to smell. In the long hours he spent alone, he sat on the grass, frowning, ears cocked, listening intently to the noises in the street outside. People walking past. Cars starting up and driving off. He began to pace up and down along the high garden wall, back and forth. Back and forth.

He was glad when the family came back in the afternoons and evenings but mostly, they went straight into the house and stayed there.



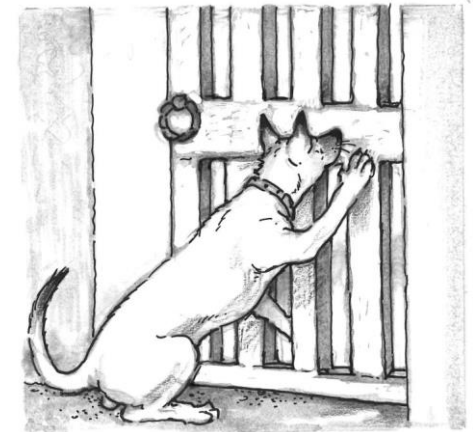
One night when the moon was full, deep ancestral memories flitted through Boy's mind. A yearning and a sorrow beyond his understanding took hold of him and he raised his head to the moon and howled – long, primordial, grief-stricken howls. The lights in the house switched on and Mr O'Connor, in pyjamas and slippers, emerged wielding a cane. "Shut up," he ordered. "Shut up." Tail between his legs, Boy slunk towards the garden wall. He looked back miserably at Mr O'Connor.



Mr O'Connor returned into the house, switched off the lights and had just settled back into bed when Boy's lament started all over again.

This time, Mr O'Connor stormed out of the house, thrashing the air with his cane menacingly. "Shut up, you stupid dog," he commanded. "Shut up. You'll wake the neighbours." Boy slunk into the corner of the wall but Mr O'Connor continued coming towards him, thrashing the air in a warning. At first Boy cringed. Then he stood firm with hackles raised, facing his accuser, his lip lifted to show his teeth. Mr O'Connor backed off. "You dare!" he sneered. "You just dare." Then he went back into the house cursing his wife for choosing such a low-bred dog with vicious tendencies.

The next day, Boy paced back and forth along the garden wall in a mindless sort of occupation. He sniffed at the wooden gate that was built into the garden wall. It had a strong spring on it that made it bang shut on its own accord every time someone passed through it.



When Gabrielle returned home from school in the afternoon, he was glad to see her and greeted her with wagging tail and smiling mouth.

Sometimes, he got a faint whiff of Boetie when Gabrielle came home. He couldn't understand that.

The terrible irony was that Gabrielle and Boetie were in the same class at the school in the village but he knew as little about her life as she knew about his. How could she possibly have known that her dog called Caesar was the same dog that had helped rescue Boetie from the well. Everyone knew about that, because Boetie's picture had been on the front page of the local newspaper.

"When I come home in the afternoons, can Caesar come into my room and sit with me while I do my homework?" she asked her mother one day.

But her mother shook her head. "You know your father doesn't like dog hair in the house," she said.

The months passed and the days grew longer and lonelier for Boy and although Gabrielle and her mother were always kind to him, Mr O'Connor said he disliked the dog and ignored him altogether.

Boy's finely-honed muscles began to lose their shape. He paced along the wall and slept. Then paced and slept again. The seasons changed but still Boy never used his kennel. He dug himself a shallow hole in the earth next to the garden wall and wrapped his tail across his nose to keep out the cold of winter.

One morning, he lay sleeping in the gentle sunlight of a Spring day when a familiar scratching sound penetrated his consciousness. Instantly Boy leaped to his feet, ears cocked. How well he knew that noise. With two leaps he was on top of the mound of sand that was erupting from beneath the soil. Expertly he dug for the mole, grabbed it in his jaws, shook the life out of it and returned to the patch of green grass to devour his tasty meal.

But when Gabrielle returned home, she was utterly dismayed at what she saw. "Oh my goodness, Caesar," she exclaimed. "Dad's going to be cross with you. Look what you've done to his flower bed!"



She knelt down and propped the wilting flowers back into holes in the soil and then watered them, hoping they would revive enough for her father not to notice.

Later, she told her mother in hushed tones about what Caesar had done to the flower bed. Mrs O'Connor went to inspect.

"Oh my goodness. What on earth did the dog do this for!" she exclaimed. Mr O'Connor emerged from the house. "What's wrong?" he asked.

Gabrielle stood next to Boy, unconsciously resting her hand on his back protectively. Boy sensed something was wrong. He looked on, not understanding why the atmosphere was suddenly so charged with anger and fear. He whined quizzically. The recollection of what Gabrielle witnessed next, would make her shudder and recoil for the rest of her life.

It was as if a black cloud settled on her father's face.

Gabrielle knew that face. When he wore that face, she knew he would punch her mother before the day was out and her mother would stifle her screams so that the neighbours wouldn't hear.

Terrified, she watched, as without a word, her father marched into the house and came out with his cane. Gabrielle's heart thumped in her chest. "Dad, don't. Dad, please don't." But her father grabbed Boy by his leather collar, dragged him to where he had dug up the mole, twisted the collar to choke him, then he beat him mercilessly. Holding her hands across her ears, Gabrielle screamed. She screamed and screamed until Mrs O'Connor pulled her by the arm inside the house and shut the door.



Finally, the terrible choking yelping from Boy stopped and Gabrielle sank to her knees and sobbed. Boy's pain and terror was her fault, she thought. If she hadn't told her mother about what Boy had done, perhaps her father would never have noticed. She wished she could have put her body over Boy's body and saved him from her father's terrible beating.

She sat at the supper table, her stomach in a knot. She tried to swallow her food. Finally her mother said she should go and have a bath. Gabrielle waited until her father had settled himself in front of the TV before she slipped outside.

She found Boy in the far corner of the small garden. He'd squeezed himself behind a spiky bush that grew there. He looked at her anxiously, ready to run. She sobbed into his coat and begged him to forgive her.

After a day or two, life returned to normal again in the O'Connor household. Mrs O'Connor and Gabrielle were pleased that Mr O'Connor was in such a good mood.

Each day, Gabrielle quickly inspected the garden when she returned home from school.

When she was sure Caesar had done no digging, she could breathe easy again and say hello in a proper way to him.

One morning, after Boy had knocked over the dirt bin during the night, spreading rotting food and litter across the garden, Gabrielle arrived at school, tear-stained and with a pain in her tummy. She was unable to concentrate on her school-work and kept looking out of the window.

"What's wrong, Gabrielle?" the teacher asked kindly.

But Gabrielle just shook her head. How could she let anyone know what her father sometimes did to the dog?

Boetie looked across the classroom at Gabrielle. It seemed strange to him that a girl with such nice shiny shoes and a brand-new satchel with pockets, seemed so sad.

When she returned home that day, she immediately noticed muddy paw prints on the side of the white garden wall. During the morning, Boy had jumped against the wall in an effort to reach the top.

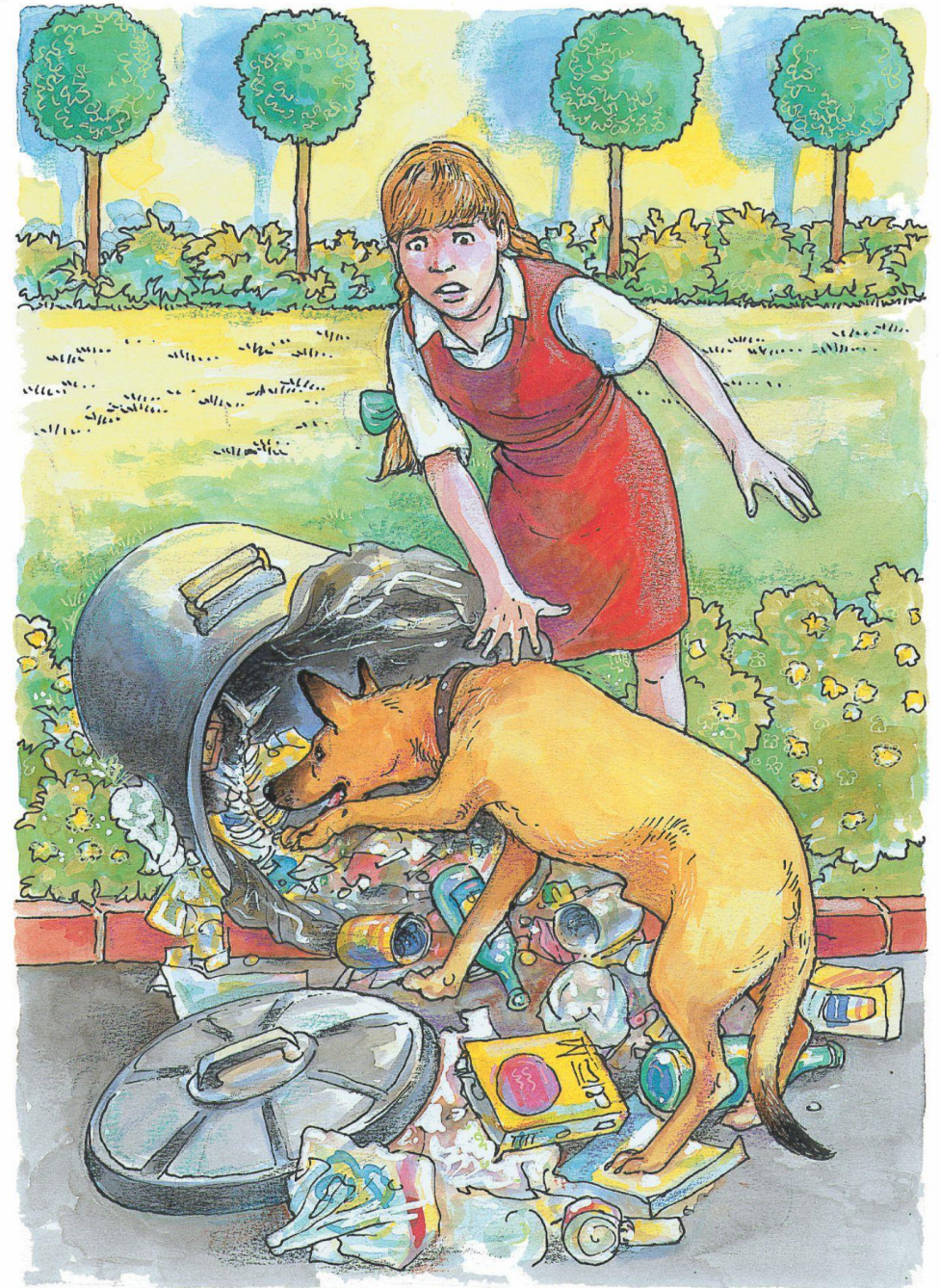


“Oh my goodness, Caesar, you mustn’t do that,” Gabrielle tried to explain to him while stroking his head. She ran to get the garden hose to wash off the prints.

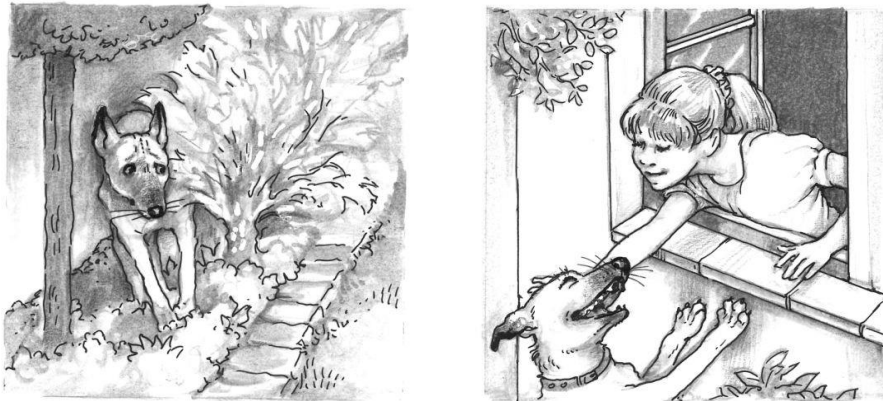
What if her father came home early and saw what she was doing? Again and again her father’s words played through her mind – “How else do you expect the dog to learn?” “How else do you expect the dog to learn?” She began to cry again.

Later, when Mr O’Connor returned home, the wall was clean as a whistle and he didn’t notice a thing. But when he walked into the garden after supper, Boy watched him from behind the spiky bush.

As Mr O’Connor glanced at him, Boy lifted his lip and snarled a warning. “Bite the hand that feeds you! Just try it, you filthy mongrel,” Mr O’Connor muttered under his breath.



Boy had made a new bed for himself. Nowadays, he slept outside Gabrielle's window. He could hear when she was awake and when she slept.



Very often, Gabrielle slept badly. She lay in bed wondering how she could make her father's cane disappear. He kept it behind the front door. Where could she hide it so that it could never be found again?

A neighbour came to speak to the O'Connors. She didn't want to make trouble she said, but in all honesty, Caesar's continual barking during the mornings was becoming a disturbance in the neighbourhood.

Mr O'Connor looked very gloomy.

At the supper table that night, he said: "That dog's been a let-down since he got here. Best we put the darn animal down. Better for him. Better for us."

"Oh, please don't," she Gabrielle alarmed. "Please let's at least try to find him a new home."

There are thousands of dogs needing homes," retorted her father. How do you think you're going to find a home for him? Specially with all his behavioural problems. Who'd want him? Take him down to the vet in the morning," he told Mrs O'Connor.

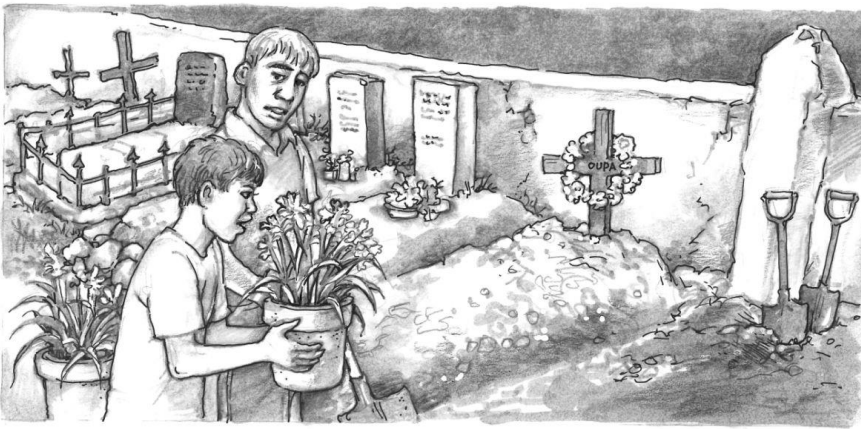
But Mrs O'Connor felt embarrassed about taking a healthy dog to be put down. People might think that she was a bad owner. So the matter of getting rid of Boy was put off on a daily basis.

Perhaps tomorrow, she'd say...



Sorrow and Joy

Just a few kilometers away as the crow flies, Boetie and Klein-Jan put the last clods of earth on Oupa's grave. Groot-Jan's farm had its own graveyard with weathered headstones dating back to the 1700s.



Now Oupa lay next to Ouma and next to Ouma, lay Boetie's own mother who had died when he was just a baby. At Oupa's head and at his feet, Boetie placed flower-pots of glorious freesias. They had been Oupa's favourite flower.

"You're growing up now, Boetie," said Klein-Jan as they stood beside the grave.

"It's time to start earning your own living. You must work hard to pass your exams and also take over the vegetable garden at the big house and do other things to earn yourself money. And Pa has something to tell you. You must come up to the big house tonight in your best clothes. Six o'clock sharp."

So Boetie put on his school clothes and walked up to the big house. Never in his life before had he been summoned to the big house. Grieta met Boetie at the kitchen door and led him into the sitting room.



“Good evening, Boetie,” Groot-Jan greeted him affably. “Sit down. Make yourself comfortable.” Boetie sat on the edge of a fancy chair with fine green upholstery.

“Your Oupa was a very good man, Boetie,” said Groot-Jan gruffly, getting straight to the point. “And he did a very good thing for you. Before he died he came and asked me to give him title to a portion of this farm that was rightfully his because that land was always in your family for generations. It used to belong to your Oupagrootjie before it was expropriated by the government. Do you understand, Boetie?”

Boetie nodded although he wasn’t really sure what Groot-Jan was trying to tell him.

“Anyway, Boetie, the long and the short of it is that in the new South Africa, land can be restored to families who should rightfully inherit it. You know? Land restitution? You understand? So, Boetie, now that your Oupa has passed on, you are the rightful owner of that land that stretches all the way to beyond the wood. Your Oupa left it to you in his will.”

Boetie couldn’t believe his ears! Groot-Jan stretched out his hand to shake Boetie’s hand. “Good. Well, that’s it, then,” he said. “Work hard, Boetie. Farm your land. Make something of yourself.”



That night, amid the scent of Oupa’s pots of flowering bulbs, Boetie stood on the stoep of the shack, staring unseeing into the darkness.



He marveled at how he was now the proud owner of the beautiful land on which he had grown up. Oupa had planted his freesias and ixias, chinchinchees and babianas, before he became too sick to get out of bed. Boetie hoped that somehow, Oupa could smell them and see their blaze of glory from where he was now.

“Thank you, Oupa,” he whispered into the darkness. “You’ll see.... I’ll make you proud.”

In the pines, the guinea fowl started up a raucous evening song. Klara and Heidi cuddled in the rickety old stable, patiently awaiting the births of the snowy-white infant kids they were carrying.

Oupa’s old chair stood empty. Out of reverence and respect for the old man, Boetie did not sit in it. He would keep it free for Oupa to sit in, in case he ever came to ‘visit’.

Boetie knew he would not sleep that night. In the peace and in his aloneness, he stayed there on the stoep – a tiny speck of consciousness in the mighty universe.

He wanted to believe that somewhere out there – under the same stars and under the same big, shining round moon – was Boy.

Boetie lifted his face towards the heavens and shut his eyes.



Escape

Boy was restless. Perhaps it was the influence of the full moon again. He began to pace up and down along the well-worn path he'd made next to the garden wall. Gabrielle and her parents were asleep. The house was in darkness. The street lamp outside daubed its light onto the sharp metal spikes that criss-crossed along the top of the wall. Boy scratched at the garden gate. He began to chew at the bottom edge of the gate, gnawing it away, spitting out splinters of white-painted wood.

From her bedroom window, Gabrielle shone her torch into the garden.

"Oh, my goodness. Caesar stop!" she whispered.

She had to stop him before her father woke up too.

She tip-toed to the front door and went outside.

"Caesar," she whispered. "Caesar, stop!"

She shone the torch onto the damaged garden gate. Boy glanced up at her.



"What are you doing up at this time of night?" Gabrielle started at her father's voice behind her. He switched on the outside light.

"Nothing, Dad," she said quickly. "I was just checking."

"Checking what?" demanded her father.

"Nothing, Dad. Honestly. Nothing. I'm going back to bed now."

Roughly, her father pushed past her and looked outside. Gabrielle saw his face contort with rage.

“Don’t Dad,” she shrieked. “Don’t hurt him, Dad.”

Still fumbling to put on her dressing gown, Mrs O’Connor appeared. “What’s the matter?” she asked in consternation. Gabrielle started sobbing. “Dad’s going to beat him,” she shrieked. “Stop him, Mom.”

Mr O’Connor’s breathing was heavy. He intended taking the dog to the garage, out of the ear-shot of neighbours, to beat some discipline into him.

“Mind out of my way,” he snarled at his wife and daughter as they begged him to calm down.

But Gabrielle slipped past her father.

She ran down the short pathway to the garden gate, pulled back the bolt and held it wide open.

“Go, Caesar,” wept Gabrielle.

“God bless you, dear Caesar.”

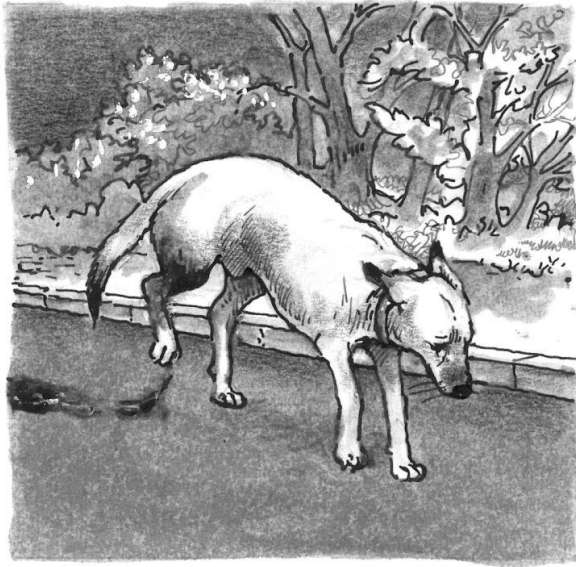


Years later, she would recall that it all happened as if her body had been acting out a role in a play and that she herself had watched it all unfold from a distance.

She remembered feeling Boy brush against her leg as he ran into the street outside. He’d stopped in the light of the street lamp and looked back at her. In that moment, they had connected so profoundly that it awoke in her consciousness that she hadn’t had before.

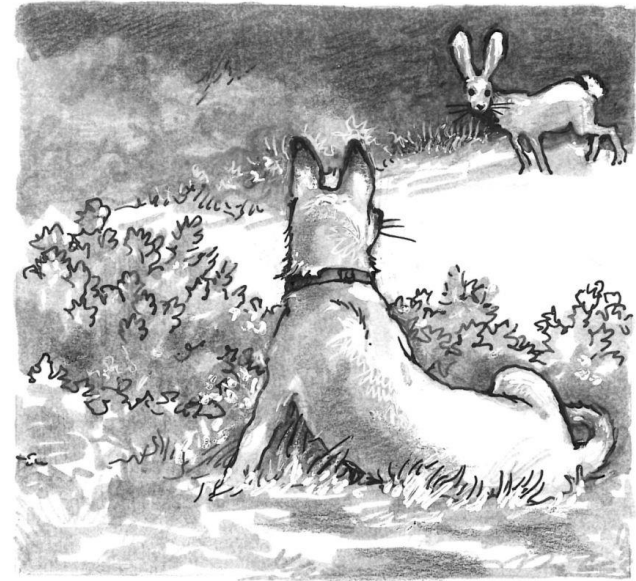
As her father’s painful grip on her arm wrenched her back, she caught a last glimpse of Boy bounding down the street into the darkness. Nothing mattered except that he had escaped her father’s wrath.

Boy ran along the streets of the sleeping suburb. He felt no fear as he dodged between cars with blinding headlights. A car struck him. He stumbled and fell, but he felt no pain. He heaved himself up oblivious that his hind leg dragged and that he was leaving a trail of blood in his wake; unaware of everything except the yearning that drove him forward.



When at last he reached the veld, he smelt the pines and the francolin eggs. He breathed deeply and slumped to the ground. He flinched. For the first time, he felt the searing pain in his leg. He was surprised that the hair all the way down his leg was shiny wet in the moonlight. He licked the deep gash on his thigh. He tried to lick up the blood that trickled continuously from the wound. He felt very tired and lay back to sleep.

In the moonlight, something caught his eye. There, in the long grass in the distance, he thought he saw Grey Hare. Boy struggled to sit up. He frowned.



True enough, in a shaft of moonshine, he glimpsed Grey Hare running like the wind, zig-zagging in and out of sight. Boy rose unsteadily to his feet. His head was dizzy. Grey Hare stopped and looked back at him, willing him to follow.

Then Grey Hare flitted across the veld, teasing Boy, taunting him, challenging him to run like the wind.



Footsore

The morning star was alone in the sky. On Oom Groot-Jan's farm, cocks stood on their toes to crow. Birdsong filled the trees. Hadedas cried to each other overhead as they made their way to their feeding grounds for the new day. Boetie was already hard at work. He'd swept out the goats' bedding and given them their morning rations. Now, pitchfork in hand, he deftly turned the compost heap behind the shack. Then he stood back to watch the steam rise from the heap into the cool morning air.

When he had been a small boy, Oupa had told him to stick his arm into the compost. Oupa had laughed when he'd withdrawn it quickly, exclaiming "*Jissie*, it's boiling hot, Oupa!" As he stood there, he thought fondly of his Oupa.

For Oupa, 'digging for treasure' had meant helping him to lift potatoes out of the ground without damaging any one of them through carelessness. In those days, when Oupa was still alive, Oupa had had a good sense of humour. Only afterwards, did he become so moody and gruff.



Boetie wished he could have done something to make his shrunken old Oupa's hands and feet warmer as he lay in his bed during those last few days. They remained icy cold even with Boetie's own blanket on top.

Now, as he turned the compost again, he knew that he would use all the little bits of knowledge that Oupa had given him over the years to make this beautiful farm of his into the talking-point of the town. Klara and Heidi bleated. Boetie looked up. He understood those bleats.

They were the bleats of greeting. Boetie followed their stare. In the distance, over near the pines, he saw a disheveled dog, limping unsteadily towards him. Boetie dropped the pitchfork.

Disbelieving his own eyes, he began to run. He ran faster. "Boy?" he called. "Boy?"



Boy began to bay a heart-wrenching greeting of overwhelming emotion – a yodeling that tore through the crisp air. Boetie ran. Boy hobbled. Then Boetie reached him and dropped to his knees on the sandy soil, drawing the dog to his chest, burying his face in Boy's hair, holding him, caressing him, saying his name over and over.



Then carefully, he lifted Boy onto his shoulders and carried him home.

A true friend leaves
paw prints on your heart.



Class Discussion

What did Caesar do that caused Mr O'Connor to lose his temper?

Should he have been punished for doing what came naturally to him?

What was the impact of Mr O'Connor's behaviour on Gabrielle?

Give details.

How did Mr O'Connor's behaviour affect Mrs O'Connor?

Why was she afraid of going to the vet.

Instead of reaching for his stick to punish Caesar, Mr O'Connor could have responded differently.

Suggest ways in which Mr O'Connor could have behaved in a positive manner.

**For example...
he could have remained calm and discussed the problems with his wife and daughter in order to get their opinions.**

**For example...
He could have consulted an animal behaviourist on how to understand Caesar better and how to help him release his energy through other means.**

**If Gabrielle had felt free to speak about her new dog to her school mates, Boetie would probably have been reunited with his best friend much earlier.
Why didn't Gabrielle talk about her new dog at school?**

In the end, how do you think Mr O'Connor felt about himself?



We may not be to blame for the history of violence handed down to us, but it is our duty to do everything we can to protect our children from inheriting it too.