

Bilby Saves Easter **by Nell Bell**

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Everyone was concerned. The chocolate makers and the shopkeepers called a meeting. What could be done? No one had an answer. It seemed that this year there would be no Easter. The meeting of chocolate makers and business people went on and on. They sat and stared at the table. They argued. They worried. But no one had an answer.

The problem was the Easter Bunny had the flu and couldn't deliver Easter Eggs to all the children of the world. Also, as the bunny pointed out, there were millions of children now and more were being born every day. He just could not cope any more. He needed help quickly. It was the smallest and youngest chocolate maker that finally said in a quiet little voice.

"Couldn't we get some one else to deliver them?"

"Never! Never!" the shopkeepers thundered. "We always have a rabbit. Whatever would the children say?"

Silence fell over the meeting. Finally a suggestion was offered.

"I could ask the gnomes," said the man from Germany.

We could ask the Leprechauns of Ireland," said another.

"The fairies." said another.

"The elves," cried another.

So that's what they did. Soon every country in the world had some form of fairy or animal helper. In China and Japan they found dragons that were glad to help.

"But what about Australia?" asked the man from Africa.

They were not sure what do about delivering Easter eggs in Australia. They decided the best solution was to ask the animals themselves. The business people advertised that they would hold trials to decide the best and safest runners. Those chosen would have the honour of delivering the Easter eggs.

All the animals wanted to be chosen but some were not suitable. Some were too small, like the frill necked lizard. Some were too slow, like the echidna.

Kangaroo said, "I've got a pouch to carry the eggs and I can jump fast. I'll be the best."

It was time for the trials. Kangaroo had to deliver five eggs to a small house across a paddock. He would be timed to see how fast he was. Off went Kanga as fast as he could. Boom! Boom! Boom! His feet thudded on the ground. But, oh dear! The eggs bounced up and down. When he reached the little house all but one of the eggs were smashed.

"It's no good," said the shopkeepers.

"Thank you for trying, but broken eggs will never do!"

"Let me try," said a little voice. "Please. Please."

They looked around but could see no one.

"How about Wombat going next?" someone suggested.

They made two cloth bags to hang on either side of Wombat's broad back and packed them with eggs. Off went Wombat at his fastest gallop. But soon he had to slow down. He stopped under a gum tree to rest for a second.

"What's in the bag, Wombat?" It was a rosella on a branch overhead.

"Eggs," said Wombat. "I have to take care of them and not bounce them."

"Silly," said the rosella. "That's not the way to look after eggs. You have to make a nest, line it with grass and then sit on the eggs to keep them warm."

"Oh, my," said Wombat. "No one told me that."

Wombat quickly scooped a shallow hole in the ground and lined it with grass. He placed the eggs in it carefully then sat on them, scrunching them down to keep them warm. After a while when Wombat did not return the business people went to look for him. They found him sitting on the ground under a gum tree.

"I'm keeping the eggs warm," Wombat called.

"Get up! Get up!" they yelled. Wombat lumbered slowly to his feet. He turned round to look at the eggs.

"Oh no!" cried Wombat.

Everyone groaned. There, plastered all over his furry bottom, were the melted chocolate eggs. All of them were ruined. Nobody knew what to do. They all just stood and stared. Then they heard the little voice again.

"Please let me try. I can run like the wind. Please! I want to help the children."

They looked everywhere. At first they could not see any trace of an animal. Then from under a bush they saw a furry tip of a tail. One of the men crept up to the bush and parted the leaves. A little face, with a sharp pointy nose and big ears, gazed at him with wide eyes.

"Did you speak?" asked the man.

"Yes. Please can I try? I am very good at doing things," begged the little creature.

"Who are you?" he asked, gazing at the animal in amazement.

It had a long nose with a pink tip, two big ears both pink inside, little white feet like socks

and pink claws and fur tinged with blue.

“I’m a bilby! There are not many of us but we can run.”

So they decided to give Bilby a chance. They made little bags for him to carry the eggs. Then they told him what to do.

“When we count up to three run as fast as you can to that little house over there. Leave the eggs on the doorstep and run back as fast as you can.”

Bilby was very excited but also very serious as he toed the line.

“Ready. One. Two. Three. Go!” yelled the man.

There was a little puff of dust. The man glanced down. Bilby was still there looking up at him.

“Bilby,” he said. “You were supposed to run.”

“I did,” said Bilby. “Look! The eggs are gone.”

“Rubbish!” said the man. “No one could run that fast. Now do it again. Do it properly this time.’

Once more Bilby stood on the line. Once more he had eggs in his bags. Once more the man counted. “One. Two. Three. Go!” Again there was a little puff. Again Bilby was still there in front of the line.

“Bilby,” roared the man.

“I did it! I did do it!” Bilby cried.

Sure enough the eggs were gone. The man did not believe Bilby. He set off followed by all the animals and the other men. They walked across the paddock to the little house. There on the veranda next to the door were the Easter eggs; all packed carefully on the doormat. Everyone cheered.

“Well done Bilby. Well done.”

So that’s how it happened. To this day, in Australia it is Bilby and his friends that leave the Easter eggs for boys and girls.

One day if you are fast enough you might see Bilby. Maybe this Easter!

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