

The Elephant Who Wanted to Become a Rabbit

by Jim Gold

Once upon a time there was an elephant who wanted to become a rabbit. All the other elephants laughed at her.

"Elly," they asked, "why do you want to become a rabbit? You can't hop like a rabbit. Rabbits don't have a trunk, tough skin, or big floppy ears. You're too big to be a rabbit. Besides, you're an elephant. It's best to accept what you are.

"That's ridiculous," Elly answered. "I can be whatever I want to be. I hate elephants. I want to hop around, have fur and a short nose. I want to be a rabbit and you can bet I'll try to change."

Then Elly tried to hop. She rose about a foot in the air, then crashed to the ground. The elephants laughed at her and walked away. A few nodded sadly and said, "It's tough when you don't like yourself."

While Elly was lying on the ground a rabbit hopped by. "Can you show me how to become like you?" she asked the rabbit. The rabbit didn't understand. As it hopped away, Elly realized she'd have to learn Rabbittilli.

She began studying right away. After two years she spoke the rabbit language fairly well.

One hot July day she tried hopping again. Again she crashed to the ground. But this time, when a rabbit came by, she was able to say in Rabbittilli, "Can you teach me to become a rabbit like you?"

"Illi fortrattimucutti calducky plook," muttered the rabbit. "I must be nuts. How can an elephant be talking to me?"

"How can I become a rabbit?" Elly repeated.

The rabbit blinked his eyes a few times, then said, "I cannot teach these things. Most rabbits are happy just being rabbits. However, on rare occasions when another animal seeks to join our ranks, we generally send them to the Russian Rabbit Dr. Hopquick Stepsky. He is an excellent teacher although many think him unethical. He will teach anyone to be a rabbit if they can pay his fee of four hundred carrot pounds."

"Please take me to him," Elly pleaded.

"If you insist," said the rabbit. "Follow me."

The rabbit hopped across a field, brook, and hill, and finally came to a wooded grove. There, sitting on top of a rock, was the famous Dr. Hopquick Stepsky. The rabbit introduced Elly to Dr. Hopquick.

"This elephant wants to become a rabbit."

"Very well," said Dr. Hopquick as he studied Elly. "I can teach you to become a rabbit. In my ten week course you shall learn the complete Rabbit Method including hopping, nibbling at green vegetables, ear wiggling, fur combing, and relating to other rabbits as equals. I shall not teach you to become an inferior rabbit or a superior rabbit, but only an ordinary rabbit. Although most rabbits are content in the knowledge that they are what they are, I shall teach you to be happy in the knowledge that you are what you are not. My fee is four hundred carrot pounds. Our lessons begin tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock. "Thank you, thank you!" Elly left beaming happily.

She studied her lessons every day. After ten weeks, she completed the entire Rabbit Course, and received her certificate in Rabbitology from Dr. Hopquick.

"Now it is time for you to make your own way in the world," said Dr. Hopquick knowingly. "What I have taught you is only how the rabbits in the past have handled the problems of Rabbithood. However, the future is ever changing. Your problems will be different from those of other rabbits. Use the core of my teachings to help you hop over the hills of life and may you land safely in the carrot patch of your choice."

Then Dr. Hopquick said goodbye and hopped across the field. As Elly saw him disappear behind a tree, she thought, "At last I have accomplished what I wanted. I feel so proud!"

Elly worked with Dr. Hopquick's methods, but she still had trouble. She hated carrots and lost weight eating them. When she hopped, she still came crashing to the ground. She still couldn't nibble at green vegetables or wiggle her ears. Now the elephants in the neighborhood had nothing to do with her, while the rabbits paid no attention to her either. Finally one day she tried hopping across a stream and fell on her head. As she lay semi-conscious in the mud only the flies settling on her hide seemed to notice her.

Three of her old elephant friends saw what happened. They came over, dragged her out of the mud, and laid her down in the grass. As one elephant stroked her head with his trunk, the other blew cool water across her body and the third whispered in her ear.

His whispers made her dream a strange dream. She was on a hill overlooking a field of

rabbits. All the rabbits were sitting absolutely still and looking at her. Slowly the rabbits began changing into elephants. Then the elephants changed into an enormous elephant as big as a mountain. The enormous elephant looked down on little Elly with a kindly expression on his face. He stroked her, saying in a soothing voice, "Elly, you are beautiful. No matter how you act or what you do you will always be beautiful to me. If you are a rabbit, to be a rabbit is beautiful. If you are an elephant, to be an elephant is beautiful. And if you are Elly, to be Elly is beautiful. Go and enjoy yourself. No one can take your beauty away."

Elly woke slowly from her dream. Her eyes blinked. She lifted her head. Gently her friends helped her up. She seemed different now. Her burdens had been lifted. A strange peace came over her. Her trunk swung from side to side as she walked down the road with a new freedom. She felt there could be nothing better in the world than being an elephant.

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