

ALL CHANGE

It was a warm afternoon; Henry lay on his back, looking up at the sky. He saw the birds flying past. "It must be great to be a bird," he thought; "to be able to fly through the air wherever you want to."

A pigeon had settled on the apple tree. Henry looked at it. "All change," he muttered to himself. Suddenly he was in the tree, looking down at himself!

"This is weird," thought Henry. He went to move his arms and discovered they were wings. He then looked at the 'Henry' in the garden; that Henry had got up and was flapping its arms, obviously trying to fly. It made strange noises as it flapped round in circles on the lawn.

Henry realized that what he was looking at was his old body, but he was not inside it. He was up here on the branch. He had wings and he could fly. He and the pigeon had changed bodies!

"Oh," thought Henry, "this could cause problems. But I really do want to fly!"

So, forgetting the pigeon in Henry's body, and the problem this might cause his family, he flapped his new wings and flew up into the air.

"Wow!" thought Henry, "this is great."

He joined other pigeons as they foraged for food in the town, pecking at fast-food remains dropped on pavements and in other places. "The food's not too bad," he thought.

But at evening, the other pigeons were finding places to roost. Where should he go? He wasn't sure. He tried one spot where there were some others; they drove him away. It was not his territory. Where was his territory? He did not know.

He flew back to his garden, hoping to find the old Henry so he could swap back; but the old Henry was not there. It was getting dark. What should he do?

He noticed a cat approaching. "Uh huh," he thought. He looked at the cat and cooed "All change."

He found himself stalking the pigeon. But the pigeon did not move away; it advanced aggressively towards him. He realized the cat was now inside the pigeon's body. Should he pounce on that pigeon? He could, for he was now in the cat's body. "No," he decided, "that would not be right."

Henry ran out of the garden; the cat in the pigeon's body had no chance of catching him as it hopped along on its two legs, brushing the ground with its wings. "I wonder if it will discover it can fly," he thought to himself as he scuttled away.

He started to prowl the neighbourhood, thinking it was a great lark to be out at night and to spy on his neighbours. By morning he was feeling hungry. "I wonder where I belong," he thought. "How am I going to get fed? I don't fancy catching mice."

Just then a door opened and a voice called out: "Ah, there you are, Tigger, you naughty cat. Come in; your breakfast is ready."

Henry needed no second invitation; he rushed on in. But he found no frosties – just a bowl of cat food and a bowl of milk. He did not like the look of

the cat food; but he was hungry. After tasting it, he found it was not so bad and the rest quickly disappeared. He went to lift the bowl of milk, but remembered in time that he was supposed to be a cat and lapped the milk up instead.

Now, with a full stomach, Henry felt tired after prowling around the neighbourhood all night. It was going to be another warm day. He sauntered out into the garden and curled up in the sun near an old pear tree. "It must be nice being a tree," he thought, "just standing there soaking up the sun all day."

"All change," he purred drowsily, as he gazed dreamily at the tree.

The next moment he was looking down on the garden. He could see the cat curled up asleep. He realized he was now the tree! But the tree's personality or whatever it was must, he thought, have entered the cat. He wondered about this a bit and how a tree would get on inside a cat's body; he wondered too how he could see all the gardens around since, as far as he was aware, trees have no eyes. His thoughts became confused as he got drowsier and drowsier; he was soon fast asleep.

When Henry woke up again in the late afternoon, he wondered at first where he was. Then he remembered: he was tree in someone's garden.

It occurred to him, as he stood there thinking, that some of the swaps had been unfair on the creatures concerned; he was worried particularly about the cat stuck in a pigeon's body. "Maybe," Henry thought, "the best thing would be to make the swaps in reverse."

He looked round for the cat. It was not there. "The tree must have liked the idea of moving around, I guess," he thought to himself. "Well, I don't want be stuck here for ever as a tree."

Henry looked around for something that might not mind being stuck in the body of a tree. He saw a large rock on the rockery. "I wonder," he thought and, looking at the rock, he murmured in his leaves, "All change." But nothing happened; he was still a tree.

For a moment Henry panicked, thinking this ability to change had worn off. Then it occurred to him that it probably worked only with living things, not with rocks. He saw a snail creeping across the rock. "Yes," he thought, "I don't suppose a snail would mind not having to move." So, looking at the snail, he murmured again in his leaves: "All change."

Henry found himself crawling slowly over the rock on one foot below his stomach. He was, apparently, nibbling the algae on the rock. He did not fancy that. He heard a tap, tap, tap nearby. Looking round he saw a starling tapping a snail against another rock to break its shell. Henry suddenly felt very small and vulnerable. "I'd better get out of here," he thought, "and fast. I don't want to become bird food!"

Just then a dragonfly alighted on a nearby flower to catch the warmth of the afternoon sun. "That'll do," thought Henry. Turning both eye-stalks towards the dragonfly, he whispered "All change."

There Henry was, sunning himself on the flower. But he had only just been in time; he looked in horror as another starling picked up the snail he had been and began tapping it against the rock.

Henry tried flying. He found that looking through large compound eyes

needed a bit of getting used to. So, feeling a little giddy, he settled again and warmed himself in the sun as he got himself more accustomed to his new eyes.

"I had better look for home while it is still light," he thought to himself.

He darted through the air; he saw another dragonfly snapping at smaller insects as it flew along. He thought he would give it a try and found it both exciting and satisfying. But as he gorged himself, he watched his surroundings.

After darting across gardens from street to street, alighting occasionally here and there, Henry came to a garden he recognized. It was their neighbours'. He darted across into his own garden, hoping the old Henry might be there. He was not.

Henry alighted by an open living-room window and listened. He soon learned that his family thought he was upstairs in bed and very ill. Somewhat concerned, Henry flew up to his bedroom and landed on the sill outside. He hoped the 'all-change' thing worked through glass. He reflected that what was in the bed, was a pigeon in his body. "Oh well," he thought, "so the pigeon will, I hope, enter this dragonfly body. It could be a lot worse."

So looking very intently at his former body, Henry clicked "All change."

He found himself in his bed looking at the window where a large dragonfly took off immediately. He wondered why he was in bed and what all the fuss had been about.

Then it occurred to him that if what they thought was Henry had been going around cooing, flapping its arms and picking up food from the ground with its mouth, he might very well have finished up in hospital rather than in bed in his own house. He decided to stay there and see what would happen; so he sat up and found a book to read.

Very soon his mother came in and seemed to be very relieved when she saw him. She felt his forehead.

"You're not hot any more," she said.

She insisted, however, on taking his temperature with a thermometer and was relieved to find it was normal.

Henry learnt that she had found him the previous afternoon waving his arms about in the garden, making moaning noises and found he had a high temperature.

"You became delirious," she said. "We couldn't get any sense out of you. The fever was very high last night and the doctor was very puzzled this morning. But after a good sleep you seem to be back to your old self."

"Yes, I am," he thought.

He did wonder if it had all really happened. But when, a few days later, he heard on the local news about a strange pigeon that flew around at dawn and dusk, hunting mice and other small mammals, he thought to himself: "So the cat did learn to fly then. I'm glad of that."