

Visit Day and the 'Me' Tree:

by Hazel Edwards

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Written at the request and with considerable input from child support workers concerned there were few 'realistic' picture books which portrayed the worlds of some of their clients.

Themes: People like me. Fostering. Families. Relationships.

ART BRIEF: Suggest using cats rather than people.

Important to get quirky, endearing humour into illustrations.

Check out cartoon style of 'Just In Case' (Legal Aid) written by Hazel Edwards and illustrated by Michael Salmon for children visiting the courts.

Visit Day and the 'Me' Tree:

'Is it Friday yet?'

'No.'

'How many more sleeps?'

'One. Today is Thursday.'

Zoe knows everything.

And she has smiley eyes.

On Fridays I visit my Mum. Zoe has to go with me.

Zoe drives me to places. Her car has a number plate, a rainbow umbrella and a box of toys. She calls it her Wildcat Taxi.

Fridays are Visit Days.

Sometimes Mum is there.

I hope she is there on Friday.

I need to ask her something.

I have to make a 'ME' tree. With pictures.

For my new school.

It's for their Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day.

And I want to show her my fluffy baby tiger.

The family, who look after me, gave the toy to me.

We don't go to Mum's new place where she lives now.

Because last time, her boyfriend was there.

We meet in the park.

Or at the beach.

Or in the special room with the web-cam, so I am on screen,

Like a film star.

Once we went to the library.

I like the squashy pillows on the floor.

Big Cats live outside.

But now I move around a lot.

I have lived in lots of places.

A long time ago, I lived with my parents.

But they split up.

Then I lived with Nan.

I liked her place. She had a dog called Smelly.

And chickens called Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

That's why I know the names of the days.

But Friday is my 'best' day.

Unless Mum forgets, again.

Sometimes Mum is too happy.

Other times, she's a bit mad.

Then she gets help at the health farm at the zoo.

Or she gets sick and has to go to hospital.

That's scary, but I still love my mum.

I just wish we could go back to live in our OLD home.

But Zoe says, 'After the visit, you will come back to the Tigers' place with me. Your Mum isn't well enough to look after you yet.'

'It's not fair!' I cry.

I get a bit cross with Zoe.

I want to go home with my REAL Mum.

'There's the playground.' Zoe parks the car.

There are funny-shaped people slides and animal swings.

It's an adventure playground.

There's even a big tree to climb.

The Tiger family taught me to climb.

I remember this park, from last time.

Mum brought her boyfriend and Zoe said we had to go, 'Now'.

Today, Zoe plays ball with me.

She looks at her watch a lot.

Zoe unpacks the sandwiches. 'Are you hungry?'

'Let's have a picnic.'

I like sandwiches but today I have only one bite.

It's getting late. No Mum. Has she forgotten which park to meet?

Or has her watch stopped?

I look up every time a bus stops near the park.

'Doesn't Mum love me any more?'

Zoe says, 'Your Mum loves you, but she hasn't been well.'

Maybe today she had to stay home to rest.

She wants to see you, but problems get in the way.

She still loves you, even if she's not here.'

We play hide-and-seek. It's fun. I hide behind the tree.

Zoe finds me. 'You were hiding in the same place!'

'Yes.' I like things to be the same.

'Your turn. Will your fluffy tiger hide too? Does he have a name?'

‘I’m going to call him Friday.’

‘That’s a good idea,’ says Zoe. ‘Friday will stay with you.’

‘Would Friday like an ice cream too?’

‘Yes.’

We were walking across to the ice-cream place, when I saw her.

‘MUM! Over here!’

My Mum was running towards me across the park, in her best, sparkly shoes.

‘Sorry I’m late. Daylight Saving last Sunday. Forgot to change my watch.’ Mum hugs me.

Mum smells of flowers, not anything else. So this Visit will be happy.

Zoe’s eyes were smiley again. ‘Good to see you on Visit Day.’

I need some family photos to stick on my ‘Me’ tree for school.

I ask Mum.

‘Have I got Grandparents? Do you have any old photos?’

‘No. But you’ve got Special Friends.’

‘I haven’t got any photos.’

‘Would you like me to take one, today?’ offers Zoe.

This Friday is my best day. I love my Mum. And I hold up my fluffy tiger so we are all in the photo.

‘Friday, meet my Mum.’

‘Hello Friday,’ said Mum. ‘Want to play hide and seek with us?’

So we did.

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In our classroom, our teacher puts up the family trees we have made.

Mine has cats on lots of branches. I drew them. And I stuck on some leaves and twigs.

My Dad is there. So is Nan. And Mum from the photo in the park.

And the Tiger family who look after me.

And a photo of me in front of Zoe’s Wildcat Taxi, after we collected the leaves for my ‘Me’ tree. My ‘Me’ tree is different, but it’s cool.

