

The Story of the
**Crystal
Brook**

Vladimir Verdnik

Illustrations:
Miro Hajnc

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Somewhere in the high mountains lies a miraculous valley.

No one knows the way to this valley.

For many years many people have been searching for this way, but it has never been found, and the valley still exists to this today.

This is the Valley of Dreams.

This is the place that can only be found with kindness and sincerity in our hearts.

And this is the story of the Valley of Dreams.

Anyone who reads it may someday find the way into the Valley.

The Valley of Dreams has been quiet and peaceful for almost a thousand years. Over the centuries tall trees have grown over abysms and cliffs. Many animals have found shelter in the Valley. Beautiful birds of all colours and kinds have built their nests in the treetops. Deer have grazed in forest clearings, and squirrels scampered and darted around trunks of trees. All kinds of animals were living in the Valley.

Time was passing by slowly and peacefully.

It seemed like nothing could disturb the peace in this beautiful valley.

Years, decades and centuries had passed. And then the day came when peaceful life in the Valley had lasted for exactly thousand years.

On that very night, heavy dark clouds covered the sky across the Valley of Dreams. A storm was approaching. Something was gleaming behind the mountains. Fiery flashes of lightning were illuminating the sky, and then a hurricane wind started to blow, such wind as these mountains had never seen before.

Animals were hiding in their lairs and nests.

People were looking at the flashes of lightning striking the mountains. Hiding in their houses, they carefully closed and locked their windows and doors, waiting for what would happen.

“This is Judgement Day, it’s the end of the world,” the old men said. Children started crying. Mothers were comforting them the best way they knew, but they couldn’t calm them down. Children were trembling with fear of the hard wind blowing through the forests and wailing angrily around the houses.

There was a cloud-burst, and it started raining as if a waterfall was crashing down on the earth.

As the storm became most impetuous, a huge rock broke off the mountain and rolled away. Water started pouring out from the underground – slowly at first and then harder and harder.

A mercurial jet of water slipped from the warm underworld and was caught outside by the furious storm. Instead of the brightness it was embraced by the dark, instead of the warmth it was embraced by the cold, instead of a sunny day there was a wild and powerful storm.

This is what the night was like when the new brook was born; the brook that was miraculously clean, the brook that was glimmering like crystal, the brook that was different from any other brook on the earth.

And then the sky brightened again and a lightning struck directly in the top of the mountain.

The new, crystal-clear brook was born. And the final stroke of lightning inspired this brook with the greatest secret on earth – life.

But, as quick as the storm started, it soon ended. Clouds were torn apart and blown away to the south. Only one big black cloud was left hanging over the mountain.

As the sky opened, billions and billions of stars brightened the Valley of Dreams.

The brook saw the sky for the very first time.

He got worried. It was so dark and mysterious.

He was sensing his surroundings. There had to be someone somewhere to hold and protect him. Unsure, he leaned closely against the rock.

He felt something big and comfortably warm.

He started to murmur loudly, speaking a mysterious water language. He wasn't like people who need to learn language over a long time; he began speaking the moment he was born with his voice of murmur and of rolling and crashing waves, with words of droplets falling into the pool one by one...



He spoke the language of nature, the language of animals, plants, rivers, mountains, the moon, the sun and the stars in the sky...

The language helped the brook ask his very first question:

"Who are you, the warmth I feel?"

A comforting voice responded from the top of the mountain:

"I am your mother."

"You are...my mother?" he whispered.

He thought he understood.

He took the word "mother" close to his heart.

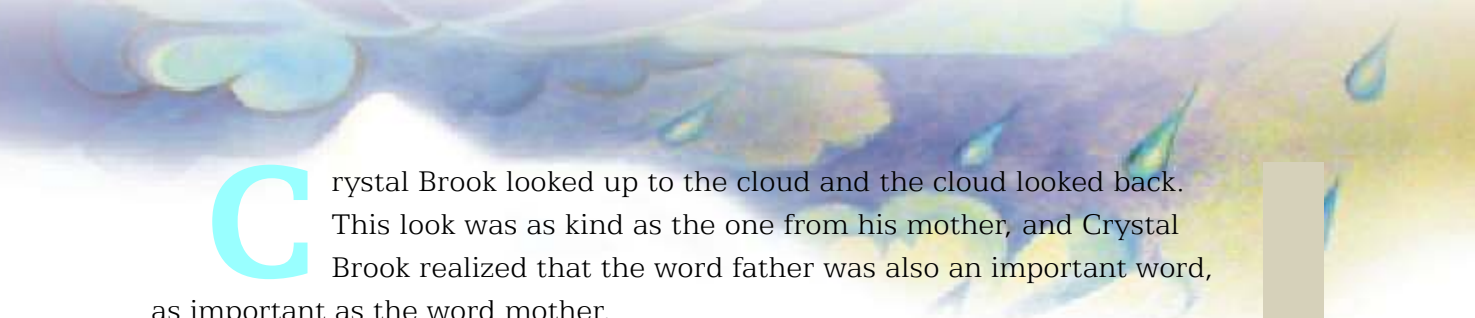
The mountain touched him. The brook snuggled closely to the mountain and tried to understand where he was and who he was. He gazed upwards.

"Mother, who am I?" was his second question.

She caressed him again and said:

"You are a brook; you are water, crystal-clear water. Your name is Crystal Brook. That dark cloud up there is your father."





Crystal Brook looked up to the cloud and the cloud looked back. This look was as kind as the one from his mother, and Crystal Brook realized that the word father was also an important word, as important as the word mother.

“Mother, where am I?” he wanted to know.

The mountain touched the pure transparent droplets in the Crystal Brook’s spring.

“You are at home. This is your home.”

“Home,” Crystal Brook repeated.

“What is home?”

This time the cloud replied:

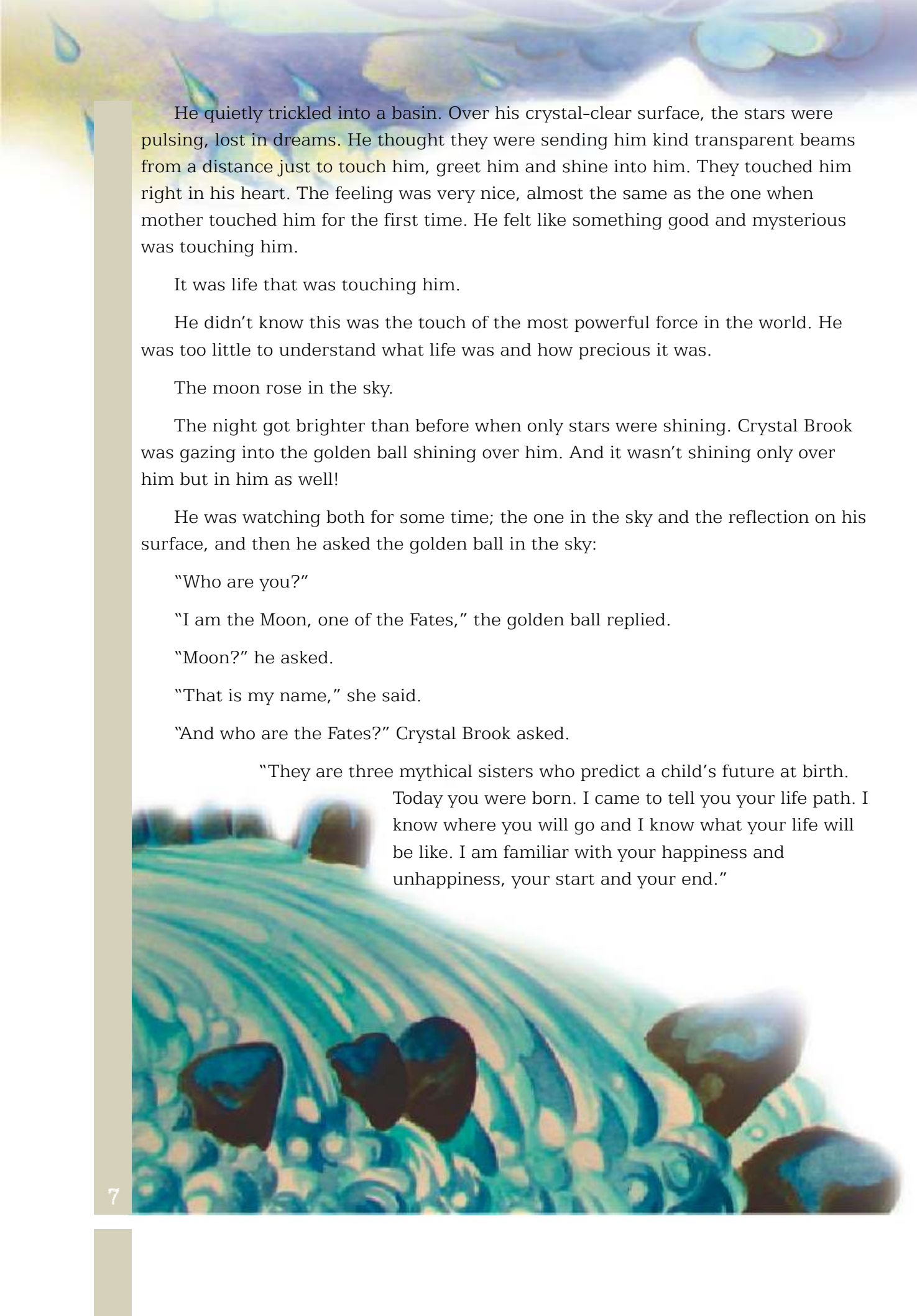
“Home is the place where your mother and father are; it is the place where you feel love and happiness.”

Crystal Brook was lost in his thoughts.

Inside himself he repeated all five important words: mother, father, home, love and happiness.

He slid slowly into a pool.





He quietly trickled into a basin. Over his crystal-clear surface, the stars were pulsing, lost in dreams. He thought they were sending him kind transparent beams from a distance just to touch him, greet him and shine into him. They touched him right in his heart. The feeling was very nice, almost the same as the one when mother touched him for the first time. He felt like something good and mysterious was touching him.

It was life that was touching him.

He didn't know this was the touch of the most powerful force in the world. He was too little to understand what life was and how precious it was.

The moon rose in the sky.

The night got brighter than before when only stars were shining. Crystal Brook was gazing into the golden ball shining over him. And it wasn't shining only over him but in him as well!

He was watching both for some time; the one in the sky and the reflection on his surface, and then he asked the golden ball in the sky:

"Who are you?"

"I am the Moon, one of the Fates," the golden ball replied.

"Moon?" he asked.

"That is my name," she said.

"And who are the Fates?" Crystal Brook asked.

"They are three mythical sisters who predict a child's future at birth.

Today you were born. I came to tell you your life path. I know where you will go and I know what your life will be like. I am familiar with your happiness and unhappiness, your start and your end."



Then she looked at him and asked:


“You are happy now, aren’t you?”

Crystal Brook reflected intensely. The feeling was so nice... He was trickling into the basin and he almost filled half of it.

“Hey, I am getting stronger and stronger,” he thought. “Soon I will reach the brim of the basin. And how shiny I am...”

He felt the warmth, home... This is happiness. Happiness is to have a mother and father and home. But what do words like: life, unhappiness, start and end mean? He didn’t know that, but he knew he was happy at the moment.





Hmm, it would be nice to be happy all the time, he thought, and therefore he asked curiously:

“Moon, am I always going to be happy?”

“I can’t tell you that,” she said.

“If I told you, I would have chased away all the happiness you feel right now. The only thing that is important for you right now is to be happy. Remember this moment because tomorrow you will draw your life energy from it. Even a single memory of the time you were happy will give you your life energy.”

Crystal Brook tried to understand what the Moon was telling him. The Moon seemed nice, but the words she said meant maybe he wouldn’t be happy all the time. Happiness may be replaced by unhappiness, and unhappiness is probably something bad. He was too little to understand but smart enough to know life consisted of happiness and unhappiness and from a start and an end.

But there was still a lot he had to learn.

He gazed at the Moon again, watching her attentively.

He noticed her sliding slowly from the sky.

“Moon, where are you going?” he asked.

“I am travelling, travelling from one side of the sky to another. Night is my day, my life, and day is my night, my death...well almost as death. I live at night, only at night.”

Crystal Brook was listening carefully. He was thinking about the words: life, day, night, and death.

“Do I live only at night?” he asked all confused because some words were too complicated for him.

“You live during the day and during the night,” the Moon answered softly.

“So, this is the night,” Crystal Brook concluded smartly.

The Moon nodded and smiled. The sudden brightness of the scarcely born brook cheered her up. She waited quietly for the next question.

"And what is the day like?" he asked.

She knew he would ask her that, therefore she answered thoughtfully.

"The day is like crystal, glittering and bright. During the day the sun is shining in the sky; it's a big glowing ball, much bigger than me. In the daytime you need to do as much as you can. You have to learn. You have to search for happiness and always try to find it. Remember this well, Crystal Brook! The day doesn't last forever. Sometimes it is longer, sometimes shorter. But you should always, always seize the day.

During the day observe attentively everything around you. Be happy of what you will feel and live during the day. Be happy, because the purpose of the day is to find happiness in it."

"And when the day is over?" he asked.

"Then the night comes, and I come with it," she said.

"And when the night is over, another day begins," Crystal Brook added.

"Yes or no," said the Moon seriously. "Each living creature has its own destiny: each of us lives an exact number of days and nights. And when those days pass, the life is over. Some creatures may live for just one day or just one night; others live thousands of days and thousands of nights."

"And how many days and nights will I live?" he asked.

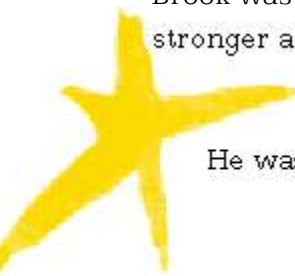
"I can't tell you that either," the Moon whispered. "If I told you, I would make you unhappy. Each moment in life is a happy moment, even though sometimes it might seem unhappy. Enjoy this happiness, Crystal Brook; enjoy it every moment and never think of how many days and nights you are going to live. Live only now!"

That was the last thing Crystal Brook heard. The Moon was far away, hiding behind the clouds. It was dark and lonely in the mountains.

Crystal Brook curled himself around the pool pondering everything he heard and saw that night. He didn't calm down and fall asleep until the morning came.

The Mountain was listening to the quiet murmur of the spring. Crystal Brook was trickling into the large basin, filling it up halfway. He became stronger and louder.

He was shining in the brightness of the stars like a diamond.





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in ga pošljete na naslov:

Vlado Verdnik, Tomšičeva 10a, 3320 Velenje

Vladimir Verdnik is a well-known author among young Slovenian readers. *The Last Dwarf*, *The Lonely Fir* and *The Mysterious House* are some of his works for children and their parents, who prefer more demanding and pedagogical fairy-tale literature.

The author is distinguished by his smooth narrative language. With his numerous educational messages about the values of life and the importance of family in his stories, he remains faithful to his pedagogical mission.

The Story of the Crystal Brook has found its way into wider world literature with the help of its international publisher and because of its key message strongly connected to the environmental problems of the modern world.

“If many children read *The Story of the Crystal Brook*, our world tomorrow will have more chance to preserve its natural resources,” says the author, deeply convinced that acquainting young children with environmental issues is the key for the preservation of the natural balance on our planet when they grow up.

The Story of the Crystal Brook is a tale from the Valley of Dreams, full of truths about life. It invites us to have a sip of clean water from the Crystal Brook – today, tomorrow and over many years.

The original illustrations were done by a Slovenian painter from the Koroška region, Miro Hajnc, a late friend of the author. His illustrations conjure a fairy-tale landscape of their native town by the Drava River.

The book you are holding is an educational fairy-tale of imperishable values of life among us and around us.

Ivo Stropnik

