



## Vana's Adventure with Mother Earth

**Dana Petrovic**

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*Vana's Adventure with Mother Earth is a thoughtful and informative children's story that highlights the importance of love and consideration for oneself, others, and the natural world.*

In Dana Petrovic's children's book, *Vana's Adventure with Mother Earth*, a girl decides to explore a far-off corner of her grandmother's orchard, where Gaia introduces her to nature's wonders.

Vana, a young city girl, loves visiting her grandmother's farm. She often takes a sketchbook and pencil with her as she explores, filling it with drawings of interesting birds, animals, and plants. One day, Vana ventures farther than she ever has before, finding herself in a beautiful orchard in bloom. Enchanted, she lays down to rest beneath the largest of the trees, letting the fragrant blossoms fall on her.

Vana is awakened by a beautiful woman who introduces herself as Gaia, or Mother Earth. She invites Vana to accompany her on a journey through her realm. All the creatures she meets, including a tiny mole, giant sequoia trees, a busy bee, and a large bear caught enjoying the bee's honey, say they are happy to play their roles in maintaining the balance of nature. Vana learns that even the humblest of Mother Earth's children had lessons to teach, and that she can use her own gifts to help the planet thrive.

This fun, informative book is illustrated with engaging drawings done in the style of a child. It includes nature facts—some surprising—about the role of each animal, mineral, and plant encountered, and it is strong in arguing that human activities can harm the planet and its inhabitants. Gaia expresses her grief that humans can, in just a few hours, cut down a tree that has lived for three thousand years; allow pesticides to destroy pollinators; and kill each other to acquire the gemstones that they crave. Vana expresses surprise about how some of her daily habits affect the balance of nature, making the book's lessons relatable.

The narrative maintains a steady pace through its scene changes, and the friendly dialogues between Vana, Gaia, and the inhabitants of Gaia's realm convey facts well, but also the emotions of the characters. Gaia is positioned as a wise and patient mentor and friend; she teaches Vana to see and appreciate the beauty all around her, also building Vana's self-esteem by affirming her sensitivity and artistic abilities, encouraging her to use them to play a role in caring for the planet.

The book's punctuation, spelling, and agreement errors, as well as its use of italics, mar the text. Its confusing sentences, and a passage that declares that Vana does not know the name of a tree whose name she's just been told, are distracting.

*Vana's Adventure with Mother Earth* is a thoughtful and informative children's story that highlights the importance of love and consideration for oneself, others, and the natural world.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July 3, 2020)

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