

Once upon a time there was a sculptor. Do you know what a sculptor is? He's a kind of artist, except that instead of using paints or crayons, he uses solid things like wood or stone or clay.

Have you ever noticed that when your teacher asks everyone to draw or make or write about the same thing, what she gets is a whole classful of different things? That's because we can't make anything without putting a bit of ourselves into it. There's a special bit inside each of us - something that makes us different from everyone else in the whole world. Anyone can write a story or draw a picture. But nobody can write *your* story or draw *your* picture, because nobody else has that special bit inside that makes them *you*. In a funny sort of way, everything you make has a little bit of *you* in it. That's what makes it special.

Just like you, this sculptor put a little bit of himself into everything he made. And he made *lots* of things. He *loved* to make things - and he loved everything he made!

The sculptor made a whole world of things. He took solid, hard-wearing clay, and he crafted it into land. He took liquid, shimmering clay, and he poured it across the land, where it gathered in great oceans, and splashed and gurgled in dancing streams. He took bright, shiny clay, that burned like a flame, and he flung it high into the air, where it lit up the land by day and scattered at night into a thousand twinkling flickers of hope.

But remember - we can't make anything without putting a little bit of ourselves into it. Have you ever had a really good idea for a picture or a story, but what came out on the paper wasn't half so good as what was in your mind? And have you ever started again, or changed it a bit, and kept working at it, until it's just like you imagined it would be? That idea, that little bit of you, was like a seed hidden inside your first attempt. It just needed a bit more effort to grow into what you wanted it to be.

Well, the sculptor kept loving the world he had made. He knew just what he wanted it to be like, and he stayed with it and kept loving it until gradually, as time went by, everything began to change.

Plants and trees began to grow on the land. Fish and sea creatures filled the oceans, birds and insects whirled through the air, and all over the land creatures began to slither and crawl, hop and run and jump.

Have you ever drawn a picture, or made a model, or written a story that was *just* how you imagined it would be? Something that made you so proud that it's still hanging on your wall or standing on your shelf for all to see? Something that perfectly expressed the little bit of you that you put into it?

Well, one day, in the world that the sculptor made, some creatures were born that made him feel just like that. These little clay figures didn't look very different on the outside from some of the other creatures in his world, but on the inside each one of them had a little bit that was just like the special bit inside the sculptor. Every one of them was different, but each was made with the special bit inside that was full of love and life and hope; a bit that was so much like the sculptor that it helped the creatures to *hear him* when he spoke to them.

And the sculptor did speak to them. He said, "I love you! Look - I'm giving you this beautiful world. Look after it for me, and be kind to each other."

And because he loved them, he warned them what would happen if they didn't obey him. He said, "Inside every one of you there's a special bit that's just like me. You can't see it, but it's the most important bit of you. It's like a seed that's hidden inside you, and it needs my love to make it grow. When you're good and kind, I can pour my love into you and give you everything that you need. But when you're bad and unkind, that seed grows a shell so hard that my love can't get through it."

Some of the new creatures listened to their maker, but some of them weren't interested in what he had to say. They were very happy in the lovely world that he had given them, and they thought they didn't need him any more. In fact, some of them stopped listening for so long that they forgot he was there.

Have you ever made something so lovely that you were bursting with pride - only to see it spoilt? Perhaps you spilled the paint water all over your picture. Or maybe you tried your best to write a story or build a model, and then someone said it was rubbish. Do you remember how that felt?

When the sculptor saw how his creatures were behaving, it broke his loving heart. He kept talking to those who would listen to him, and they kept trying to tell the others what he said, but it was no use. Even the ones who tried their best couldn't obey him all the time. Every single one of them was sometimes bad and unkind.

And so the shells grew around the sculptor's seeds inside his creatures, and they were cut off from all the love and life and hope that he longed to give them. And even when they felt sorry for what they had done, and longed to receive his love, the shells that had grown were still there. It was no use.

What did you do when your picture or story was spoilt? Did you throw it away and start again? Sometimes, that's the only thing to do.

But the sculptor was full of love for the world he had made, and he couldn't bear to lose even one of his little clay creatures. He knew just what he needed to do.

The sculptor made a new clay creature. This new creature was like nothing he had made before, because he didn't put a little bit of himself into it. Instead, he put in his *whole* self. Into the little clay creature he went, and into his world he was born.

We can't do this, of course. No matter how hard we try, and no matter how much we'd love to do it, we can never really jump into our stories and pictures. And probably that's a good thing. I bet you've written stories or drawn pictures about things that are scary or dangerous or disgusting. You wouldn't want to be in those!

But that's just what the sculptor did. He went right into the world that he'd made, the world that his creatures had spoiled, and he lived with the other clay creatures. That way, they could see what he was really like - and when they saw how he lived in their world, they could see what he wanted them to be like, too.

Some of the other clay creatures understood. They loved him, and they listened to him and tried to obey him.

But some of them hated him. They didn't want to hear what he had to say. They didn't want anything to change. And so they plotted to kill him.

One terrible day, they trapped the little clay creature, who was really the sculptor who had made and loved them all. His friends were so scared that they ran away. And when his enemies had killed him, they hid his little clay body in a cave.

And they thought that was the end of the little clay creature, who was really the sculptor who made and loved them all.

But inside this little clay creature was a seed. When a seed falls to the ground and dies, a miracle happens: new life is born. And this was the most extraordinary seed that had ever existed! Because the seed that had died inside this little clay creature was the sculptor who loved everything he'd ever made. And remember: there was a little bit of this seed inside every one of his creatures.

So when the miracle happened, and this dead seed came back to life in a glorious explosion of love and hope, it shattered the shells around every seed in every little clay creature that the sculptor had ever made.

The special bit inside every creature that was just like the sculptor, the bit that was full of love and life and hope, was freed and danced for joy.

The little clay creature who was really the sculptor left the world that he had made. He had done what he came to do. But his friends never forgot him. They told other people about him, they did their best to obey him, and whenever they forgot and were bad or unkind, they said sorry. And because of what their sculptor had done, whenever they said sorry, the shells that blocked out his love would disappear again.

Many people became the sculptor's friends. Now that they were free of the shells, they found that they could hear his voice more clearly. There was nothing to stop them receiving his love. And then they found that he had not really left them at all. They couldn't see him with their eyes, but they could feel him living inside them, loving them and helping them to be everything he'd ever made them to be.