

# The Return



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The trumpets sounded on the Savanna tanoy signalling an important message from the King and Queen. The Queen cleared her throat and spoke in a delicate voice, “we decree that it is time for the youngsters to return to school. We know that the sickness is still with us but as some of the older herds have had the vaccine we feel it is now safe enough the youngsters to go back”. The King added in his gruff voice, “remember stay safe, remember to keep your paws clean and stay in your bubbles”. Gerry turned to his parents with a frown on his face, his mother said “this is good news Gerry. You will be able to see some of your friends again”. Gerry slowly started to smile and excitedly began bouncing around thinking about all the games they could play.

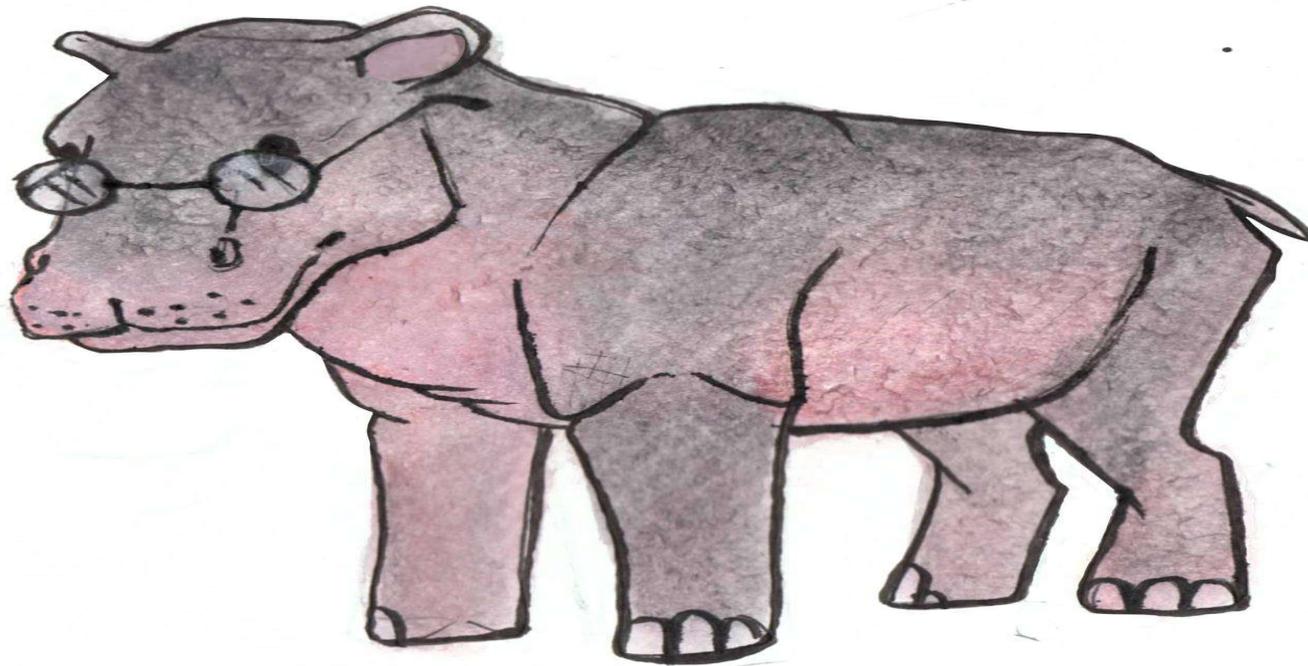


The first day dawned bright and sunny with a clear sky. Gerry put on his school uniform and walked with his mother across the big field to school. He could see lots of his mates making their way across the field. Suddenly he looked up at his mum with a startled look, his mum said, "Gerry it's okay to feel a bit nervous about going back to school today. It will be a bit strange for everyone." She then gave him a reassuring hug; along with his bag, his lunch and pencil case. Gerry took a deep breath and went forward to line up where the teachers showed him.

Silo the lion cub, Hetty the Hedgehog and Peter the panther all waved at Gerry excitedly, shouting that they all needed to have lunch together so they could play hide and seek. Mrs Springbok the headteacher looked down at them with a smile on her face and a wink in her eye and said, "Remember little ones, there are a few new rules today" and with that, she bounded to the front of the line, waving the parents off and turned to address the children. In a clear but reassuring voice Mrs Springbok explained to the animals "coming back to school is a bit different as the sickness is still around and the school day might feel a little bit strange or odd, but all of your teachers are here to take care of you".



The animals were all led into school and told to wash their paws. Silo and Hetty went off in one group and Peter and Gerry in another. They waved to each other as they went to their lessons going into their classrooms to their new seats. Mr Hippo reminded them that every day when they arrived at school they had to clean their paws before coming into class, before eating and once again before going home. Mr Hippo then drew out of his special bag the name of Gerry to be his special helper to put the new liquid soap on the animals paws as they came in from play.



At lunch time, Silo and Hetty ran out excitedly to see where Peter and Gerry were but were immediately disappointed to see their group was the only one in the playground. Their teacher explained that they were divided into bubbles to keep them extra safe but that when the new moon rose it would hopefully change to what it had been before the pesky sickness had come.



At the end of their first school day, after cleaning their paws and collecting their belongings, they ran out to meet their parents who were excited to hear about their first day back. The animals all spoke at once as they made their way across the field explaining to their parents about the changes. Gerry's mum asked, "So Gerry, what was it like for you?"

Gerry looked at his mum with a serious face and said, "Well it was school wasn't it, too much learning and not enough time with my mates." All the parents looked at each other and laughed. They all waved to each other as they went home as the sun set across the Savanna.

