DAVID

I.

The world was dying.
The trees were almost all gone, the rivers were poisoned and the fish were drowning.
Winter had turned to summer and summer to winter. The floweres came out of the ground too early and died suddenly in the bad weather. The birds sat in the trees not knowing wether to build their nests or not, and men spent their time fighting eachother, too busy to notice that no one had seen an elephant in years.
A meeting was called.
Everyone was to be represented.
The animals, the fish and the birds. The mountains, the rivers, the soil and the sea. The air was coming in his big billowing coat, and a small star who was not invited atall came along and pushed in.
The meeting was to be at the edge of the river, by the foot of the mountain, near the mouth of the sea, far from the eyes of men.
The moon shone brightly, and after the mountain cleared her throat and coughed again, because she said she had a cramp in her bottom from sitting in the same place for so long, the whale called the meeting to order from his home far out in the sea. Everyone was hushed, the zebra, the crocodile, the bear and the housefly, the mountains, the rivers, the worms and the grass, the clouds themselves were silent and listening.
For many hours the talk continued of how the world was suffering at the hands of men, but what was to be done ?
It was decided that only one from the herd of men could provide the answer as it was men who were killing the world in the first place.
So the animals and the mountains and the rivers and the sea sent for a child, because children can understand the language of all things in the world, and when the child came they asked it to go out into the world of men and find a man who could make the world well again.

Far, far away lived a man, in his office, in a tall building, surrounded by tall mountains of paper, a ringing telephones, and people shouting, and fax machines, and teletypers, and people shouting, and ansaphones and people shouting. When he looked up from his desk, which he didn't do very often, he saw the child standing there.
The child told the man that the world was dying and no one had seen an elephant in years. The world needed help from the herd of men to find who was killing the world and to triumph over him. But the man was afraid.
'You've got the wrong person' said the man 'You need a hero. I'm afraid of the dark. I don't like meeting new people. I like it here, I hate snakes and loud bangs. You must be looking for someone else.

'No' said the child, 'It's you. It's time to go'
The child took the man by the hand and led him to the office window.
'Look outside' said the child 'What do you see ?'
'Office blocks and traffic'
'Ah, you don't remember yet. Long ago when you looked out of the window, you would always see the sea'

And the the sea was outside the window and on the other side of the window sill a little blue boat was moored with a yellow sail, and the child and the man climbed through the window and into the boat and they set sail upon the foamy waves.

THE VOYAGE ACROSS THE SEA

'Let us fish' said the man 'for our journey might be long and we could get hungry'
'There are very few fish left' said the child and the man leant over the side of the boat and gazed deep into the sea, but there were no fish swimming beneith the silver waves.
'Where have they gone ?' asked the man who had not been out of his office for years and years.
'They have all been killed by men' said the child who was taking a net out of his back pack.
'Why have you a net if there are no fish ?' asked the man.
'We can fish for stars' answered the child 'You used to fish for stars all the time
'But there are no stars in the sea' said the man
'Have you never seen a star fall from the sky ? Well, naturally they don't all fall onto the land, some fall in the water.
'Did I ever catch one ?' asked the man eagerly, but the child was too busy casting his net on the water to answer.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE MOUNTAIN AND THE RIVER AND THE SOIL

When the little boat with the yellow sail came to rest again it was dawn. The man was frightened to leave the boat but the child took him by the hand.
'What is that' asked the man who had not been out of his office in years.
'That is a river' said the child 'You used to love rivers'
'Did I ?' the man looked puzzled, the child continued 'You had a river that would speak to you '
'How wonderful ! ' said the man and he ran to the waters edge
'Speak to me ! ' he shouted, but the river did not reply 'SPEAK TO ME !' the man shouted again
'Why won't it speak ?'

'You're shoutin at it ' said the child.
The child and the man sat by the river.
'What is that ?' asked the man.
'That is a mountain ' answered the child
'You used to speak to mountains'
'Did I ? I don't remember' said the man and he shouted 'Speak to me !' but the mountain said nothing.
'What is that ?' asked the man who hadn't been out of his office in years.
'That is the soil' answered the child. 'You would often come here and speak with it'
'I can't remember' said the man and he looked even more puzzled.
The child looked at the river and the mountain and the soil and he spoke to them in their own language and soon the man remembered and he too spoke to the river and the mountain and the soil and he smiled for the first time.
'Come' said the child
'We must find the one who is killing the world'.

IN THE DYING FOREST

They walked along the river deep into the forest.
Soon everything had become dark and the trees looked frightening.
'Why do they look so strange ?' asked the man.
'Because they are all dead ' answered the child.
'Are there any trees left ?' asked the man
'Not many' said the child, and on nearing one of the trees he put his arms around it
'This one is, just barely, it might be the last one'.
The man touched the tree with his hand.
'You used to talk to trees ' said the child.
'I'd forgotton' said the man.
Just then, very quietly, an elephant crept by, hoping the man and the child wound not notice her. She carried a rose in her trunk and in her tail and when she realised that she had been seen she stood quite still.

'What is it ?' asked the man.
'It's an elephant' said the child looking closer
'Why has it got a rose in its nose and its tail ?' asked the man.
'I don't know' said the child 'but it is an elephant'.
'I AM NOT AN ELEPHANT !' hissed the elephant
'I am a rose bush, see ? Roses ! Since when do elephants carry roses ? The very idea is ridiculous ! Now if you'll excuse me.....' the elephant started to tiptoe away.

'Please wait ' said the child
'I thought there were no elephants left '
'NO, NO, NO, there aren't' said the elephant tip toeing further away
'Terrible business, not a single elephant anywhere, now I really must be.....'
'Wait a minute!' said the man
'Rose bushes can't walk ! and with that the elephant noticed the man properly for the first time and she let out a scream
'AHHHHHHHHHH ! A MAN !' and she trumpeted and ran away.
'I wish she'd stayed ' said the man
'She was afraid of you' said the child
'Come, we must find the one who is killing the world '
The child started to climb the tree that was still living
'Come on !' he called
'You like climbing '
'Do I ?' said the man
'I've forgotton how '
'I'll help you' said the child and he gave the man his hand and pulled him up and soon they were high in the branches.
'Where are we going ?' called the man to the child who was now high above him.
'Up here !' called down the child.
'Where ?' called the man.
'Through this hole in the sky ' and the man could just see the childs foot disappearing through the hole.

THE MAN AND THE CHILD SIT IN THE SKY

When the man and the child had climbed through the hole in the sky they sat down and rested on a cloud. Below them they could see all the oceans and countries and peoples of the world. Many languages were being spoken and many wars were being fought.
'Why are they all fighting ?' asked the man.
'That is what men do ' answered the child.
'STOP ! ' the man called down to the warring peoples from his seat in the sky
'Can't you see the world is dying ?'
'They can't hear you' said the child.
Just then an elephant floated by on a cloud, she had a piece of cotton wool in each ear.
'Why has that elephant got cotton wool in her ears ?' asked the man.
'SHUSSSSSSSSSH !' said the elephant
'I am not an elephant, I'm a cloud, look, white fluffy bits see ?'
'You're an elephant ' said the man.

The elephant looked at the man
'AHHHHHHHHHHHHHH ! A MAN ! ' and she ran away across the sky trumpeting.

Far away the man and the child could see an icey mountain top sticking up out of the clouds.
'That is the ice mountain where the one who is killing the world lives ' said the child.
They walked across the sky towards the mountain of ice.

DESCENDING THE MOUNTAIN

When they came to the tip of the ice mountain which stuck into the top of the sky, the child and the man stepped off a cloud and onto the mountain path.
The path was steep and it twisted round and round the mountain, leading straight down to the bottom.
As they walked along the path they heard a terrible roaring.
'That will be the roar of the one who is killing the world' said the child
'It sounds big' said the man as the path narrowed and the roaring got louder.
They came to a bush where daggers grew.
'You must pick one so you are protected when you fight the one who iss killing the world ' said the child.
'ME ?' said the man, all colour draining from his face
'Me fight the one who is killing the world ? I can't ! I'm not brave, I told you. You'll have to find someone else.
The beast inside the mountain roared again.
'I can't !' the man stood trembling.
The child picked a silver dagger from the bush
'There's no one else' said the child and he handed the man the dagger.
The mountain and the river and the soil spoke also
'There's no one else' they said.
The child and the man approached the mouth of the mountain.

IN THE MOUNTAINS HEART

The tunnel that lead into the heart of the mountain was dark and slimey.
'I'm afraid of the dark ' said the man as water dribbled off the ceiling.
'You used to tell it out loud' said the child.
'Did I ?' said the man 'Did it help ?'
The man and the child walked further and further into the heart of the mountain, whispering to the darkness and slashing at the strings of slime that hung

down from the ceiling.
Then there was another roar. The man and the child froze.
Something was coming.
'WATCH OUT !' called the thing that was coming 'I'M COMING'
'Lets run away !'said the man getting ready to run.
'We can't ' said the child
'Remember the poisoned sea and the dead forest, we must go on or the world will die'
The thing in the tunnel roared again
'I AM THE ONE WHO WOULD KILL THE WORLD !'
'Here' said the man
'Take the dagger, you fight it, you're much braver than I am' and he gave the child the dagger and the child walked into the darkness alone and the man covered his eyes with his hands.
After a little time the man called after the child.
'Where are you ? Have you found it ?'
Then there was a terrible roaring and the man ran back down the tunnel until he reached the outside again.
'Why me ?' he shouted to the mountains, the rivers and the soil.
'I'm not brave. Why did you choose me ?'
The man turned and walked back inside the mountain.
Hecalled in the darkness
'Child ? Where are you ?'
Suddenly he was grabbed around the waist by a big grey arm.
'Where is my friend ' the man demanded as he struggled with the big grey thing.
'How dare you make the world die. Now tell me where my friend is or I'll,,,,I'll bite you !'
'DON'T DON'T' said the monster very quickly, in a different voice to the one he had been using
'Let go of me then, and come out where I can see you'
The monster let go and stepped forward into the light.
'You're an elephant !' said the man.
'NO, NO, NO,' said the elephant
'I'm the one who would kill the world. Now go away, I'm very fierce'.
From the shodows the child stepped forward.
'You came back for me ' he said.
'Yes' said the man
'And this is an elephant '
'Alright ! Alright ! I admit it ! I am an elephant. I've been in here for years pretending to be the one who would kill the world so that men won't find me.
You see, I'm the last one'
'NO YOU'RE NOT !' the child and the man said together.

'We've seen at least two others' said the child.
'Outside' added the man.
'More elephants ?' said the elephant
'Are you sure ? Tail at the back ? Nose at the front ? FRIENDS !'
She gave a great sigh of pleasure.
'Thankyou' she said at last when she had composed herself
'You were so brave to come and tell me, goodbye !' and she ran away down the tunnel and into the daylight.
'Can we go home now ?' asked the man.
'No' said the child.
'The one we have come to find is still here'.
'I thought you might say that ' said the man.
Further and further into the heart of the mountain they travelled.
It was silent.
'I must go alone now' said the man
'Can you remember what I used to do when I was afraid to be alone'
The child didn't answer.
'Never mind ' said the man
'It doesnt matter'
The child offered him the dagger.
' I don't want it' said the man, and he turned and walked into the deepest part of the mountain alone.

THE MEETING WITH THE ONE THAT WOULD KILL THE WORLD

The child waited for a long time.
When the man had not returned the child followed him and found the man sitting by a great black pool.
He was weeping and his tears were falling into the water and making small waves that broke against the black rocks.
'Did he hurt you ?' asked the child, but the man could not speak.
'Did you chase it away ?' asked the child, but still the man said nothing
After a long time the man took the child to the waters edge and pointed in the water.
'Look !' he said.
'The one who would kill the world. It's me !'
And in the water the child saw the mans reflection staring back at them.
'I don't understand it ' said the child
'What does it mean ?'
'I understand it ' said the man sitting down by the waters edge.
'I let everything die, and I did nothing. I never even noticed , I forgot everything'

'Theres still time' said the child taking his net from his back pack.

'Do you think there is? ' asked the man.

'I think so ' said the child.

'If only you were right ' said the man.

'How is it you know so much about me ' asked the man as the child cast his net into the water.

'I was a part of you long ago, but you forgot me ' answered the child.

'Will we find stars in this pool ?' asked the man.

'Perhaps' answered the child, and as the moon rose on the outside world the man took the net and cast it across the water of the pool himself.