

Sweet Dreams

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When I was a little girl, every so often, my younger sister and I would be taken to my Aunty and Uncle's for the weekend. My Aunty is my Dad's sister and we were very close with her and her husband (my Uncle) throughout our childhood. I am from a family of six and at times it could become very busy in our household. I have an older brother by seven years, an older sister by five years and a younger sister by sixteen months. I think it was a nice break for my parents and two eldest siblings to be able to take us to our Aunty and Uncles for a night or two. My Aunty and Uncle had no children at the time and just adored having us come over for the weekend, the best part being they could give us back when we started to argue and bicker like sisters do. I remember waking up on a Saturday morning, when it was a weekend that we were due to go to Aunty and Uncles and being so excited. We had our own little traditions that we had instilled throughout our continuous weekend visits. One was that every Sunday morning when we awoke we would get up early and cook pancakes or waffles with my Aunty. The first one who awoke would get to choose what type of pancakes or waffles we were going to make, we would sometimes choose banana, honey, chocolate chip, pink or a lot of the time just regular pancakes or waffles. I loved watching Aunty flip the pancakes in the pan as they were cooking. As I got older I was able to have the control of cooking the pancakes and practiced flipping them as my Aunty once did. My Uncle would wake up and come out to the kitchen taking in big deep breaths, consuming the beautiful aromas coming from what was cooking and would always comment on how good they smelt and that he could not wait to eat them. The second was that every night after we had eaten dinner, brushed our teeth and changed into our pyjamas we would snuggle up in bed and Aunty would read us stories.

I remember lying in bed next to my younger sister, listening to my Auntie with her soft and soothing voice as she would read my favourite stories, determined not to fall asleep so I didn't miss any of the wonderful stories that I truly loved. These stories were ones like *Rumpelstiltskin*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, *The Goose That Laid the Golden Egg*, *The Lion and the Mouse*, *The Tortoise and the Hare* and many more. My Auntie started reading these stories to me when I could not yet read. As time passed and she continued to read these stories my knowledge of language was growing and I was slowly learning to read. I asked one night if I could have a turn of reading the stories to her and my younger sister. I was not very confident at reading at this stage but my Auntie of course was extremely excited that I had initiated this and was so supportive with my endeavor. I moved closer to my Auntie so she could help me hold the book as it was extremely heavy and slowly began to read. With my Auntie looking over my shoulder and reading along with me, I would point my finger to each word as I would attempt it and very slowly but surely I was now the story reader. My younger sister would complain and get frustrated because my story reading did not always make sense. I, myself would get very frustrated when I would get stuck on a word for too long and Auntie would not just tell me the word, she would make me sound it out and make a good effort at attempting it before telling me what it was. Overtime I began reading much quicker and more confidently and the stories began to sound more like stories and not just a bunch of words strung together. As I progressed my Auntie would praise me with positives, boosting my confidence and self esteem as a language user. As I grew older my reading skills grew faster and faster, and I was soon able to read fluently without my Auntie looking over my shoulder. My younger sister then began yearning to read the stories. So I

took over the role that our Aunty did and helped her through the stories as our Aunty would lay or sit quietly listening and enjoying what was being read, no matter how long it took to get through a story. She would continue to encourage us and tell us how fantastic we were doing. From then on my younger sister and I would take turns in reading the stories, but every now and then would still ask our Aunty to read them back to us.

To me these incidents are important because my Aunty had a great impact towards my love of reading, books and language learning in general. These stories were not only enjoyable for my mind and imagination but also silently teaching me about some important life lessons. Things such as perseverance, how one good deed leads to another, the results of greed, the dangers of speaking to strangers and the importance of honesty. These are lessons that have remained in my memory since childhood. However dormant, they have always guided me to make the right decisions in my life. Reading books from a young age and having someone listen, really taught me how engaging stories can be. How you can get lost in a book reading because your mind creates its own little world for the story to live in and how real the worlds from the books become. Some people don't understand how enjoyable reading a book can be, they don't realize how book lovers create this world inside their minds. I feel so sorry for these people who cannot get the same enjoyment from reading as I do. I believe that this may be because they were not exposed to reading and listening to stories from a young age, and this has resulted in them not having the abilities now to see the true greatness that lies within the pages of a book. This is why these incidents from my childhood are so memorable. I am truly grateful for all those times I spent at my Aunty and Uncle's and thankful for them in helping to create the stepping

stones along my language journey. Not only supporting my everlasting love for reading but also for the encouragement of my growing vocabulary and my development towards being an expert user of language.