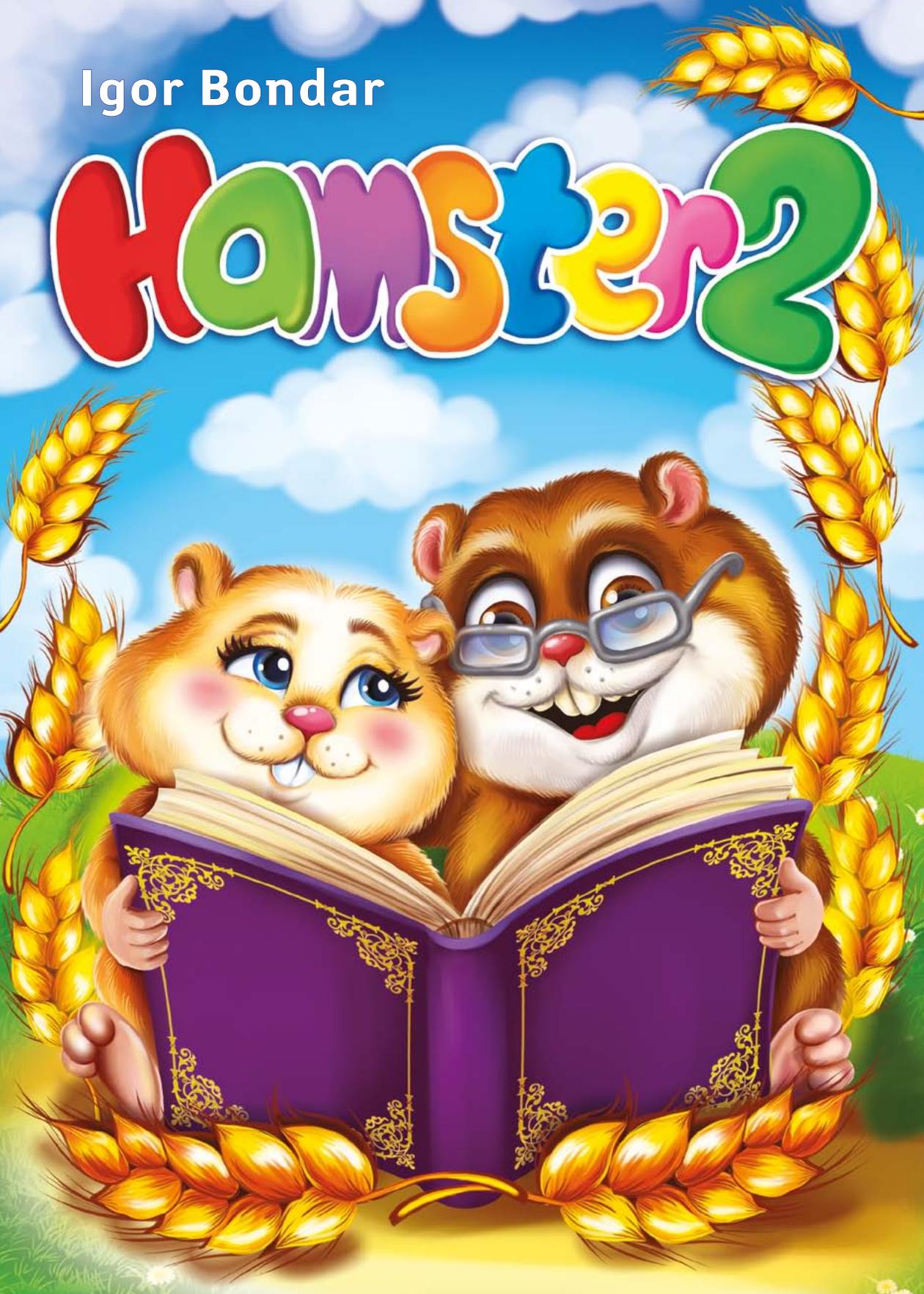


Igor Bondar

# Hamster 2



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# HANSTER 2

A fairy tale

Illustrated by Alyona Garbuz

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Sometimes even very smart hamsters cannot escape the romantic twists in their lives.

Illustrated by Alyona Garbuz.

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## The Envelope

**T**his late morning, Bob the hamster was sitting at a table near the hole and reading the Book of Hamster Life, as always. He decided to keep reading a few lines as per his morning routine. There was a pile of delicious grains in front of him, and the sun was shining brightly in the sky. The first statement he read today was:

*“EVERY GRAIN COMES INTO THIS  
WORLD TO MEET ITS HAMSTER.”*

“What a great observation!” Bob thought and put a few grains into his mouth.

Then, he leafed through the book and opened it at random. The next statement was:

*“ALL ATTEMPTS TO UNDERSTAND  
THE MEANING OF THE TAIL  
ARE DOOMED. IT’S IMPOSSIBLE  
TO KNOW THE UNKNOWNABLE.”*

The hamster leaned back in his chair in a delicious languor.

“What a wonderful morning!” he thought.

“Good morning, uncle Bob!” he suddenly heard a loud choir of children’s voices near his head.

It was so unexpected that he almost fell off the chair and then turned around. Five little gophers were standing beside him. His old friend, their father, was at a little distance.

“Well done,” he said at last, recovering from shock. “Politeness is a very good habit.”

“We’re learning from uncle Bob!” the little gophers shouted again in a loud choir. “One of his rules is:

*“POLITENESS ALWAYS LEADS  
TO GRAINS, AND GRAINS LEAD  
TO THE FLUFFINESS OF A TAIL!”*

After that, the young gophers stood in a straight line and unanimously opened their mouths.

“Not bad...” Bob said with respect and put a grain in each mouth.

“Thank you, uncle Bob!” the gophers shouted again and ran away to play.

Meanwhile, their father was watching them with a smile.

“Hi Gopher,” the hamster turned to him with a smile. “Your children are growing wise.”

Gopher raised his paw in greeting.

“How can they not grow wise next to my wonderful friend,” he said cheerfully.

“Take the grains!” Bob got a bit emotional.

The gopher took a couple of grains from the table and looked carefully at the hamster.

“It seems that my children lack only one thing,” he said slowly, “friendship with your little wise hamsters.”

“Oh, man, you’re starting that again...” Bob frowned. “Look, you know that I still don’t like anyone of opposite gender.”

“I know, I know,” the gopher nodded. “You’re only looking for a wise female hamster.”

“Exactly. And where can I find her?” the hamster shrugged. “I’ve tried to meet with female hamsters several times. But, they all fall asleep on the first page of the Book of Life. What am I supposed to discuss with them, after all?”

The gopher burst out laughing.

“Sometimes it happens in family life, I admit,” he said and suddenly pulled an envelope from behind with a mysterious smile and placed it on the table. “Today, however, I’ve got something different for you on this topic.”

“Really?” Bob said with a doubt.

“See for yourself,” the gopher shrugged, flipped a grain and caught it with his mouth wide open.

The hamster watched as the grain disappeared into his friend’s, mouth and then looked at the envelope. He took it, opened and pulled out a folded sheet of paper.

“What is it?” Bob asked curiously.

“Open it and you’ll see,” the gopher replied.

The hamster unfolded the paper. There was some text written in good handwriting. Bob began to read it aloud.



*“IF YOU LOOK AT THE GRAINS VERY  
CAREFULLY AND LONG ENOUGH,  
THEN NO ONE WILL STEAL THEM”*

was the first sentence of the letter.

“Oh, here’s a wise saying, my friend!” the hamster brightened. “What an interesting mix of depth and humor. I’ve never seen this style before.”

After that, he went on reading with clear interest.

*“IF YOU TWIST A POD ON THE TABLE,  
ITS BEGINNING AND END  
WILL CONSTANTLY CHANGE  
PLACES. ONLY THE MIDDLE  
WILL REMAIN UNCHANGED.”*

The depth of this thought made the hamster’s tail vibrate with excitement.

“Man, that’s great! Where did you find this letter?” Bob said, delighted. “Who is the author of these wonderful lines?”

“I was really hoping you’d like it,” the gopher was satisfied. “There’s a picture of the author in the envelope.”

Then he laid down on the grass and crossed his legs. The hamster picked up the envelope again with interest and shook it. A color photo fell out. The wisdom lover took it and... froze, surprised, and then slid to the grass. A beautiful she-hamster stared

back at him from the picture. Her clever and merry eyes seemed to examine the hamster with curiosity and a humorous twinkle. The keeper of the Book of Hamster Life felt the beginning of some irreversible processes inside of him.

“Who is it?” his voice was slightly hoarse.

“A she-hamster... and she definitely looks wise,” the gopher said with pleasure. “Her return address and name are on the envelope. That’s all I know about her.”

Bob quickly picked up the envelope and turned it over. At the bottom, in the sender’s box, he saw her contact: Wiseland, Shesha the Hamster.

“Probably, this was sent to me by my relative, who is a traveller,” the gopher said. “He was staying with us about a year ago. Back then, I told him that you’d like to meet a wise female hamster. Well, it looks like he found her somewhere.”

”Shesha...” Bob said slowly in a singsong voice.

## The Flight

he next morning, Bob was sitting by his hole again, reading the Book of Life. To be more precise, he tried to read it, but for the first time in his life, he was not very good at it. For some reason, he barely understood

the meaning of the words, and his tail was motionless all morning.

Of course, he realized that it was all because of that smart she-hamster. Five times already Bob put her picture away in the hole, and five times he went inside to take it back. Something was happening to him that had never happened before. Bob, as an honest and observant hamster, had to admit it.

He tried to find some answer in the Book of Life on this subject, but the closest thing that he found was:

*“LOVE IS A TEMPORARY CRAZINESS  
THAT MAKES ONE HAMSTER GIVE HIS  
GRAINS TO ANOTHER HAMSTER.”*

However, Bob hasn't yet given his grains to anyone. So, it seemed that his case was beyond the wisdom of the book.

By noon, he discovered another serious problem: he'd almost completely lost his appetite. Usually, by this time, the pile of grains on the table remained very small. But this morning, the hamster ate only a few grains.

Bob certainly understood that loss of appetite for a hamster is a very bad thing. However, the strange thing was that he didn't feel bad at all. On the contrary, every time he looked at the picture of Shesha, he felt as if he ate a handful of grains and was filled

with strength. Finally, tired of observing all his abnormalities, he put the Book of Life aside and waited for his friend.

The gopher visited him at noon, as usual. His appetite was evidently better and he couldn't say no to a good handful of grains. As he ate a few of them, he looked closely at the hamster.

"You look strange, my friend," the gopher said, "your cheeks are a bit hollow, and your eyes are lighting up like searchlights."

Bob sighed with understanding.

"You are right, mate, something unusual happened to me. I couldn't even read the Book of Life today..."

The gopher choked.

"Uh... Maybe I shouldn't have given you that picture?" he asked uncertainly.

"No, no!" Bob said very quickly. "On the contrary, thank you for this new feeling. But, I think I should deal with this once and for all."

"That's what a hamster says!" the gopher smiled. "So, what are we going to do?"

"Why do you ask?" Bob said, surprised. "Of course, I'll find Shesha and get to know her. Then, everything will become clear. Either she is truly my destiny, or I'll be disappointed in her."

"Great plan! However, sometimes they might not like us..." the gopher mumbled and gave an appraising look at the good-looking and well-fed hamster. "But I think that's not our case..."

“Well, then,” Bob said, “now we have to find out where Wiseland is.”

“...and then figure out how to get there,” his friend added.

\* \* \*

Hamster and gopher spent the next two days searching for Wiseland. Only steppe storks were able to help them finally find this land. It turned out that this place was pretty far: about three days of flight from their field. Besides, Wiseland was far away from the sea. Therefore, Bob couldn't reach this place by sea on a ship, as he'd done before.

They spent three days trying to solve this problem and then suddenly, they saw a giant pelican flying in the sky. After that, the gopher slapped his paw on his forehead and rushed to the canal where the pelicans lived. The hamster caught the idea and followed him at maximum speed.

The pelicans didn't really like the request of their furry friends to take Bob to Wiseland. Nobody really wanted to fly for three days to some unknown country. The hamster and gopher were about to get upset when they saw the largest pelican slowly approaching them.

“Why do you even have to fly there, little hamster?” he asked with interest.

Bob showed him the picture of Shesha.

“She lives there. That’s why I want to fly to meet her,” he said.

“Do you like her?” the pelican asked.

“I think so, but I’m not sure yet. I’ve never had this feeling before,” Bob shrugged. “I want to fly there and figure it all out.”

“Love is such a thing...” the pelican nodded and looked at his wife, standing nearby. “Honey, how would you like to give one lovesick hamster a little help?”

A slim she-pelican approached them, swaying along.

“To help a lovesick hamster, you say?” she asked cheerfully. “Who would argue with love, my dear?”

The big pelican laughed merrily, loudly clacking his beak.

“I agree with you, honey,” he said. “All right, hamster, we’ll take you to your loved one.”

“Thank you!” Bob exclaimed cheerfully. “If you need something from me...”

“Hey, hamster, what are you saying?” the pelican interrupted him. “If someone makes money on love, he can be left without love...”



“Then, thank you so much, dear pelicans!” Bob looked at them gratefully.

The gopher was standing next to him with a happy smile.



Three days later, two large birds and the hamster were flying merrily toward Wiseland. The pelican carried the hamster in his beak and sometimes passed him to his wife. They opened up their beaks a little, so that the hamster could enjoy the views. At rest stops, Bob told the good birds from memory some wise sayings from the Book of Hamster Life. They listened to the well-read hamster with interest and, sometimes, clicked their beaks.

“Well, you have a lot of wisdom inside you, my friend,” the big pelican said to Bob once, as they stopped to rest. “If your she-hamster is as intelligent as you say, I could have flown to such a type, too, in my time.”

His wife’s beak unambiguously swung over his head.

“But I had better luck, buddy,” the pelican went on quickly, “my wonderful wife lived nearby so I didn’t have to fly anywhere.”

His companion’s beak gently stroked the big pelican.

# Shesha

**F**inally, on the third day, local birds flying alongside the pelicans told them that they had reached Wiseland. At the next stop, Bob walked around the local field and found groundhogs. He didn't have to ask many questions about Shesha: they already knew the wise female hamster well.

The groundhogs explained to Bob how to get to her house, and after a while, the two pelicans and hamster landed in a beautiful valley between two mountains. There was also a big lake, and our travellers decided to finish their long flight on the shore.

They agreed to meet the hamster there in three days and said goodbye. The big birds then swam across the lake to catch some fish for lunch, and the hamster, without wasting time, set off to find the wise female hamster.

His route was not too long. Bob asked a couple of local rodents for directions and soon went out on a large picturesque meadow. There was a nice little house with a garden, which bloomed with a variety of flowers and bright greenery. Above the house, there was a poster with some text on it.

The hamster came closer and read it:

*“GRAINS LEAD TO THE FLUFFINESS OF A TAIL, FLUFFINESS OF A TAIL LEADS TO WISDOM, AND WISDOM LEADS YOU BACK TO THE GRAINS”.*

“Very well!” Bob thought. “And what an interesting style.”

At this moment, he suddenly saw the hamster coming out of the house. It was her, the hamster from the picture. Bob realized that in real life, Shesha looked even more beautiful. She came to the table and poured out a handful of grains on it. Then, she stepped aside and began to make some movements: Shesha shifted from one foot to the other, smoothly moving her front paws, which was quite unusual.

The he-hamster guessed that she was doing some exercises, though he had never heard of them before. As she finished, Shesha somersaulted a couple of times and then went to her chair near the table. She sat down and popped a few grains into her mouth. After that, the hamster finally looked up and immediately noticed Bob who was standing nearby. Shesha quickly swallowed the grains and stood up.

“Hello!” Bob talked first, coming closer. “Let me introduce myself: my name is Bob. I’ve recently read your letter with some interesting statements and decided to come and see the author. I really liked them.”

Shesha looked at her guest with interest.

“So, you’re Bob, the keeper of the Book of Hamster Life?” she asked.

“Yes, it’s me,” the hamster looked down, a little confused.

“Then, welcome to my house!” the she-hamster said with a smile and bowed to him, folding her front paws in an unusual manner in front of her belly.

Not knowing what to do, Bob repeated the gesture. He tried to look solid and serious, but his tail treacherously wagged like crazy. Then the she-hamster invited her guest to the table. Bob, who was really hungry after the long flight, was glad to taste the grains. Shesha watched him eat with good appetite, smiling, and it seemed that she liked it.

“How did you get here?” she asked, after Bob had filled his stomach.

“In the pelican’s beak,” the hamster smiled back. “Unfortunately, I couldn’t bring the Book of Life with me due to the small size of the beak.”

“I see,” Shesha sighed, a little sad. “To be honest, I wouldn’t mind reading it.”

“No problem,” the hamster replied. “I remember many statements and I’ll be glad to retell them to you. Well, and if you ever want to read the whole Book of Life, you can always fly and visit me — I invite you. By the way, my pelicans are coming back in three days.”

“Thank you very much! I’ll think about the trip,” Shesha said with a smile. “Before I met you, I had

heard of the Book and of you many times. The last time was from the gopher who asked me to write a couple of lines.”

“Thank you, that was very kind of you,” Bob said with a broad smile and then looked at the hostess with undisguised curiosity. “Shesha, could you please explain to me, why did you become interested in wisdom?”

She thought for a moment.

“That’s a good question. I think that sometimes there are some forces inside hamsters which they just cannot resist. Of course, you can try, but it certainly won’t come out well,” she shrugged with a smile. “The same thing with my craving for wisdom. I was just born this way. I’ve always been interested in the things that others didn’t like at all sometimes.”

Bob looked at her with understanding.

“Well said, dear Shesha. I have nothing to add.”

They both smiled cheerfully.

“If I don’t read the Book of Hamster Life in the morning, too, it feels as if I haven’t eaten a single grain,” the guest said.

“It’s true! This craving for wisdom has its own appetite, that’s for sure. But instead of grains, beautiful thoughts are needed here,” Shesha laughed.

“Great analogy,” the hamster looked at Shesha with respect.

The female hamster, meanwhile, looked at the guest with surprise.

“You know, my dear Bob,” she said thoughtfully, “that’s amazing. For the first time in my life, I can speak my mind freely on my favourite subject. And, the most unusual thing is that I see a real interest and understanding in you.”

“I think, my dear Shisha, that’s easily explained,” Bob shrugged and looked with sympathy at the hostess. “Perhaps, it’s just because we’re very much alike.”

At this moment, Shisha felt her tail vibrating for the first time ever.



The hamster ate some more grains, then the hostess suggested her guest go for a walk and see new places. Bob gladly agreed, and for the next two hours, he listened with interest to Shesha’s stories about the different ways of life of Wiseland. Some of them reminded him of home, and some of them didn’t. What he had never seen before were monkeys. They sat here and there along the road in the trees and looked very funny.

When they got back to the house, Shesha showed Bob his cozy room. However, the hamster didn’t have a rest in the room but decided to spend some more time with his new friend instead. They sat together on the grass outside the house until nightfall and talked about everything.



The next day, the hamsters had a conversation at breakfast. It was so easy for Bob to talk to Shesha as if he had known her for a thousand years. She was so simple and open and at the same time very deep and interesting. Shesha didn't read any of wise sayings of the world, but she could feel wisdom thanks to some inner instinct.

The hostess also taught Bob how to do her exercises. It turned out to be very difficult for him: at first, he swung on one leg and even fell a couple of times, but then, he finally managed to do the exercises right. Bob also showed the hostess his own exercises: cheeks blowing and tail raising. Shesha cheerfully laughed at them for long. Then, they went for a walk again and didn't even notice that another day had come to an end.

On the morning of the third day, it was time for Bob to say goodbye. This time at breakfast, he looked with sad eyes at his new acquaintance.

"I have to go home, Shesha," he said. "It's very nice here, and the last thing I want to do now is go back. But, I can't go home without the pelicans."

Shesha looked sad this morning, too. She looked closely at Bob and didn't talk much today. It seemed that she was thinking a lot about something. Finally, as if she had made up her mind to do something important, she suddenly said:

"You know, dear Bob, the day you arrived, you invited me to your house to read the Book of Hamster Wisdom. Would it be

too much of me to accept your invitation?” Shesha said with a broad smile. “I have never had such an interesting and pleasant conversation with anyone else in my life. For some reason, I really don’t want it to end today.”

Bob jumped in his chair for joy.

“Of course, dear Shesha, I’m happy to invite you to my house. My Book of Life is at your disposal, so am I and my whole house,” the hamster said quickly, and his face lit up with happiness. “The second pelican will be happy to put you in his beak. I already asked him about it just in case...”

Both hamsters laughed happily. After that, Shesha began to prepare for the trip — she began to comb her tail beautifully.

## One year later

**I**t was a late sunny morning, and Bob the hamster was sitting at the table, reading aloud the Book of Hamster Life. The first statement he came across today was:

*“THE LIFE OF A HAMSTER CAN BE  
MEASURED IN DIFFERENT WAYS.  
IT CAN BE THE NUMBER OF YEARS*

*LIVED, THE NUMBER OF GRAINS  
EATEN, BUT IT CAN ALSO BE  
THE DEPTH OF WISDOM LEARNED.”*

“Lovely!” the hamster commented on the thought, ate a couple of grains and randomly flipped the Book.

The next statement was:

*“THERE SHOULD BE AS MUCH WISDOM  
IN A HAMSTER AS THERE ARE  
FEATHERS IN A GOOD PILLOW: A LOT,  
TO MAKE IT COMFORTABLE, BUT NOT  
TOO MUCH TO NOT MAKE IT HARD.”*

The hamster smiled and put the Book of Life aside.

“What a wonderful morning!” Bob said, leaning back in his chair and placing his paws behind his head.

“Good morning, uncle Bob and auntie Shesha!” he suddenly heard a loud children’s choir near his ear followed by another greeting. “Good morning, mommy and daddy!”

“This children’s morning greeting became so long,” Bob thought to himself and looked at his wife with a smile.

“Darling, are you feeding our little hamsters or gophers today?”

Shesha, who was standing nearby on the head in the inverted lotus position, thoughtfully moved her upper paw.

“Um... I think I’ll feed the gophers today, honey,” she said.

“Great,” the hamster replied and went to count five grains for their little hamsters, saying on the way, “politeness, kids, is always very, very good.”

“We know, we know!” the unanimous children’s choir shouted in response. “Because politeness leads to grains, and grains lead to the fluffiness of a tail!”

Politeness always  
leads to grains,  
and grains lead  
to the fluffiness of a tail



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