

# LADY BUG ~ *ACTION HERO!*

*A children's story book*

*Written by Kim Tuttle*

*Illustrated by Catherine Goldman-Bloomfield*

Your cast of characters:

Lady Bug  
Jeremy the Frog  
The Wise Old Mr. Turtle  
Betsy the Butterfly  
The Wicked Wasp  
The Love Birds  
The Hunter  
The Salesman  
An Army of Ants  
A Caterpillar  
The Family  
Miss Moffett

LADY BUG ~ *ACTION HERO!* was originally presented as a story ballet by DANCE ALIVE!, State Touring Ballet Company of Florida, with choreography by Artistic Director Kim Tuttle. The book was created from the ballet's narrative script. The ballet was premiered in Gainesville, Florida at the Curtis M. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts on February 8, 2005. In attendance were elementary and middle school students from 11 Florida counties.

ONCE upon a time, in the forest of forever, there lived a beautiful, sweet, and very strong little lady bug. Everyone loved Lady Bug. She was just, well, loveable. She was friends with the very wise old Mr. Turtle, she was friends with a ditsy blond butterfly named Betsy, (who was always drinking a little too much nectar!) and she was extra special friends with the happy, hopping frog, Jeremy. They were a real team, she and Jeremy! Lady Bug was a cheerful little bug, and always thought the best of everyone. She simply had no enemies.

One time she and her friends watched curiously as an odd looking caterpillar looped its way through the forest in a kind of a soft shoe tap dance. It had huge spots on its body that looked just like eyes - kind of scary! But Betsy knew it was just a matter of time before this strange creature would change into another beautiful butterfly, and join her in the forest.

Suddenly an army of ants marched angrily into the clearing. Lady Bug quickly warned everyone to hide. They all scattered out of sight, but poor Mr. Turtle was so slow, he could not hide fast enough. He was right in the path of the ferocious ants! What could Lady Bug do? She just had to do something to save him! So she did. With a wide stance and fire in her eyes, she stood her ground and waited for them, afraid, but firm in her resolve. And they came. Summoning up all of her strength, she used her teeny, tiny little legs to attack them, one by one. She kicked and she punched and she pummeled the pitiful ants until they were beaten right to the ground. And then, as a final blow, she released her icky, sticky, smelly spray on them. UGH! Who would think a pretty Lady Bug could do that! But she was a strong little thing, and knew above all that she had to save her friends.

The ants limped off, grumbling, and everyone came out of hiding. "Thank you, Lady Bug," they all cried. "You were so brave. Thank you, thank you so much for saving our lives." And Lady Bug just looked down, blushing and said, "I love you all. What else could I do?"

They were all very tired after the stressful day of Lady Bug's battle, and soon fell asleep. Just then, in the cool of the twilight, two love birds gracefully flew in, calling to each other their sweet affection in voices beautiful with song. It was clear they were very much in love.

At that very time, in a quiet village a short distance away, a young couple was shopping for a pet for their daughter. They thought a pretty bird would be just perfect! The salesman, quick to please, smiled and thanked them, and told them he would have one for them the very next day. As soon as they left, the greedy salesman beckoned to a mean-looking man who was waiting, hunched over, in the corner. "Come here," he said. "Would you like to earn some money?" The man eagerly came closer. "I have an offer you can't refuse," said the salesman. And he whispered into the man's ear: ".....wsh....wsh.....and.....wsh."

The man (who we correctly guessed was a hunter), looked very excited. With a gleam in his eyes, he quickly left the shop. He traveled. He searched. He looked North and South, East and West, up and down. He walked. He ran. He snuck. (That means he was sneaking). Soon he was in the peaceful rainforest. (It wasn't raining then, but it does rain a lot in the rainforest. )

And then, through the misty twilight of the clearing, he saw her.

Slowly - slowly - slowly - then.....VERY QUICKLY, he took out his ropes and net and captured the beautiful love bird. Oh no! She was so surprised, so panicked, so frightened. She called out "H...e...l.....l.....l.....p, h...e...l....l....l...p." But her voice was so beautiful no one could tell she was upset. Poor little love bird. What was going to happen to her.....?

The hunter tugged and pulled and carried her off with him. He was very satisfied.

When the forest creatures awoke, they wondered where the pretty love bird was. Jeremy the frog was jumping crazily from lily pad to lily pad, Betsy the butterfly was fluttering in distress, and the wise old Mr. Turtle was just shaking his head. The signs were all there - it was clear she had been captured. The poor boy love bird was sad beyond sad. His beautiful wings fell to his sides, and he wept his heart out. Lady Bug knew something had to be done. But what?

Just when things couldn't get any worse, a wicked wasp attacked the little group. She zoomed toward the butterfly, stomped on the turtle, and headed full steam toward Jeremy, who was petrified with fear! Lady Bug could not stand seeing her friend attacked and rushed to put her tiny body in front of his.

The wasp, surprised by such heroic action by a teeny, tiny bug, was taken aback. She paused, looked around, and to everyone's amazement, burst into tears! "Why are you crying?" asked Lady Bug. "Because I have never seen anyone so brave - nor anyone who loved her friends so much that she would die for them," answered the wasp. She could not stop sobbing. Everyone gathered around her to comfort her. (Except the boy bird, who was still too sad to chirp.) Then, bolstered by her new found strength and with her friends support, Lady Bug pulled herself up by her little boots, flapped her little wings, and flew off to rescue the love bird. The not-so-wicked wasp stayed behind to proudly guard the forest.

Lady Bug flew North and South,  
East and West,  
and Up and Down.

Soon she found what she was looking for. She saw the love bird, she saw the parents, and she saw the precious child. Now being a very smart Lady Bug, she flew toward the child. But just then, the mother took a step. It was a VERY important step, because it crushed one of Lady Bug's wings. "Stop!" cried the little girl. "You're hurting the Lady Bug." "Oh no", cried the mother, "I didn't mean to. I'm so sorry." (She was a very kind lady.) Then slowly - ever so slowly - Lady Bug moved. She tried one wing - it was just fine. She tried the other wing - oh, it was not fine. Now what was she to do. How could she save the Love Bird? The little girl seemed to know something was going on in Lady Bug's head. "What is it, Lady Bug," she said, "what's wrong?"

Now Lady Bug couldn't talk people talk, but with all of her might, she fluttered her one good wing madly - struggling, struggling to get up. She managed with superbug strength to drag herself over to the lovebird, and with the greatest of efforts, put her damaged little wing around the bird. The little girl knew what she had to do. She had to convince her parents to return the bird to freedom - to her home. "Yes," they said. "She can go home. That's where she belongs." So the bird and the bug tipped their wings to say thank you and goodbye, and as Lady Bug hopped on the Love Bird's back, they carefully, but eagerly, made their way home.

When they flew into the forest, everyone was thrilled to see them. The two love birds joyously renewed their love, Mr. Turtle moved from side to side, the butterfly drank a LOT of nectar, and Jeremy the frog took Lady Bug to his lily pad, where he lovingly bandaged her wing. It seemed that everything was back to normal. But they would soon find out, it wasn't.

Deep in the darkness of night, they slept the dreamless sleep, confident in their love and safety.

SUDDENLY, crashing through the quietness of the forest, came the Hunter, with his ropes and his net. All the creatures awoke in fear. Who was going to save the love bird now? Mr. Turtle shook his head, the butterfly fluttered, Jeremy the frog jumped wildly, and Lady Bug, weak and injured, just could not help them.

But there was one more member of this happy family.

THE WASP!

She buzzed and buzzed - faster and faster - in smaller and smaller circles - and then, with all of her considerable power, she narrowed her eyes, took perfect aim, and drove her stinger smack into the hunters - well, not his head -- not his arms -- not his legs --- nor his front - but where did she get him?

You guessed it!

Well, the Hunter was in such pain, he ran off as quickly as he could. He had learned his lesson. Oh my, was there celebrating! The Love Birds continued to love, Betsy the butterfly flew (and drank nectar), Mr. Turtle sunned himself, Jeremy jumped joyously, and Lady Bug, and the creature formerly known as 'Wasp', became fast friends.

But there is one more thing about to happen before we leave the forest. Do you remember the caterpillar? Do you remember what happens to caterpillars? Well, from the very depths of the forest out peeked a fuzzy little face. It moved and it squirmed and it rolled all around. And Betsy, who was suddenly all a flutter, rushed quickly toward this strange looking creature. She watched..... She waited.....What is that? A.....wing? Another...wing?

It's a butterfly! A beautiful, beautiful butterfly! A friend for Betsy.

And now we are at the end of our story. But it is really a beginning. For after Lady Bug gets her rest, and the forest friends nod together in peaceful sleep, many new adventures will pop up, right around their little corner of the world.

And we have learned something important ~ that a hero may be small in size, but is always big of heart.

Dedicated to all the Lady Bugs of the World.

-THE END-