

Written by Jason Graham

Illustrations by Brian Beausoleil



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with illustrations by Brian Beausoleil



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> Summers Island Press Thorne Bay, Alaska

In loving memory of Woody Dewig. Christmas isn't the same without you. CONTENTS

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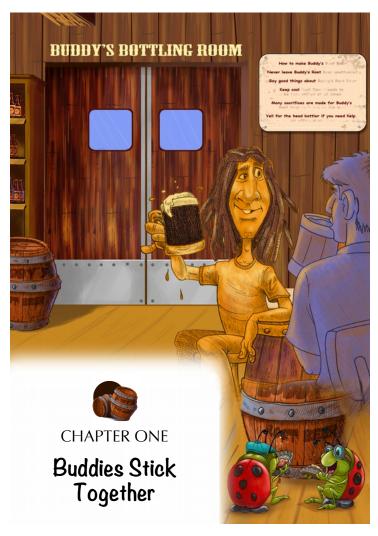
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Once upon a time, there were two ladybugs hanging out at *Buddy's Pop Shop*. The pop shop was a place that made it's own root beer. It sat at the intersection of two major highways in the area, which meant there were always people passing through on different adventures.

These ladybugs were different than your usual ladybugs. They had taken the "*Oath of the Buddy*." Something they learned from an old and faded sign that hung on the pop shop wall next to the bottling room.

The buddies didn't know how long it had been there, but they knew it was way before they were hatched. And they had looked at it so many times they knew what it said by heart. But they didn't know exactly what the words meant.

That's because some of the words were worn out and starting to fade away. The little bugs knew enough to figure out they were rules for buddies, though. And they wanted to be buddies.

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Good buddies.

Buddy One had a lot of big ideas about what it meant to be a buddy. But they weren't really sure what it meant, so they started by just calling each other buddy.

One day, the ladybugs were under their favorite table, waiting for root beer, when one of the customers sitting there started to talk loud. "Men are adventurers. They don't just sit around drinking expensive root beer."

Buddy One crawled up the table and peeked over the top to see what that booming voice looked like. It was a big human person with dreadlocks, wearing a T-shirt. He was talking to his friend at the table.

His friend waved a hand toward the old barn-slat walls and *Buddy's Root Beer* barrels that were the tables. "Well, bud, I feel like I'm in a lodge in Alaska. What could be better than drinking root beer in a wonderful place like this? "

"Just what we are about to do. Grab a buddy and go skydiving!" He stood up between his chair and the table. The ladybug had to fly back down to the floor to get out of his way as he reached for his mug of root beer. He drank it down so fast a little splash bounced off the corner of his mouth and sailed onto the floor.

Right next to the ladybugs.

The Ladybug Buddies got excited. The root beer at *Buddy's Pop Shop* was poured from giant kegs into cold frosty mugs. The waitress always sloshed a little off the top when she got to the table she was serving. Sometimes the customers sloshed some over, too. When that happened—and it always happened—the Ladybug Buddies were there to slurp their fill.



"Hey, Buddy, we should go skydiving with this dreadlocks dude and his buddy."

Buddy Two stopped slurping his root beer for a moment. "Why in

the world would we want to go skydiving?"

"Didn't you hear him? He said, grab a buddy and go skydiving. Because that is what buddies do."

"They are men, and we are ladybugs. Big difference. Really big."

"But he said they were buddies," Buddy One reminded him. "Just like us. Maybe anybody can be a buddy. Of course we are ladybugs, but we are different than regular ladybugs, right? We are buddies. And buddies do cool things. Like skydiving."

"Listen, Buddy. You know ladybugs can't fly high enough to skydive. Furthermore, it is as dangerous as..." He turned around to look his buddy in the eyes, and didn't see him anywhere. Then, there he was! Nested in dreadlocks as the big skydiver dude was walking out the door!

So many thoughts raced through Buddy Two's head. Starting with the rule, "*Never leave Buddies.*" So, he flew toward the door. He really didn't like the idea of skydiving, but he knew he was a buddy and had taken the Oath and everything. But the door slammed shut before he got there. Looking through the glass, he could still see his buddy...

Headed to a beat-up old truck with the dreadlocks dude.



CHAPTER TWO Buddies Help Each Other Out

Think, think, think! Buddy Two was racking his little ladybug brain for a solution. He was running out of time. He flew around Buddy's Pop Shop, looking for a way out. Getting in and out of this place wasn't too hard, they just had to wait until someone opened the door. But Buddy Two didn't have time to wait!

Just then, the pop shop dog got up from where he had been sleeping next to the fireplace, and slowly wandered to the door. Immediately, the ladybug got an idea. The Head Bottler

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always said, "If one door closes, another is sure to open." So, Buddy Two flew as fast as he could. Right at the face of the big dog. Around and around he flew.

The dog started to get wound up, and began to chase the ladybug. In a few seconds, the pop shop dog was at an awkward run toward his dog door. At the last minute, Buddy grabbed on to his collar and held on tight as they blasted through the dog door. By



then, the dog was going full speed, and he quickly caught up to the beatup truck that was just leaving the parking lot.

Buddy One saw the whole thing, as Buddy Two leaped off the dog's collar and tumbled into the back of the truck, just as it pulled onto the highway with two extra passengers.

"I'm glad you decided to join me on the adventure." He smiled.

Buddy Two thought they were headed for trouble, but he didn't want to let his buddy down. So he figured he would make the best of it. "I am glad my last drink was *Buddy's Root Beer*," he said.

A little while later Buddy One wasn't so sure he liked the adventure. There they sat, in the back of the truck, with a cold wind howling around them. "Hey, B-Buddy--" Buddy One's voice shook, he was so cold. "Do you have any m-milk?"

Buddy Two was huddled in a corner trying to get out of the wind. He glanced over at Buddy One with a puzzled look on his face. "I am a ladyb-bug. I d-don't have milk".

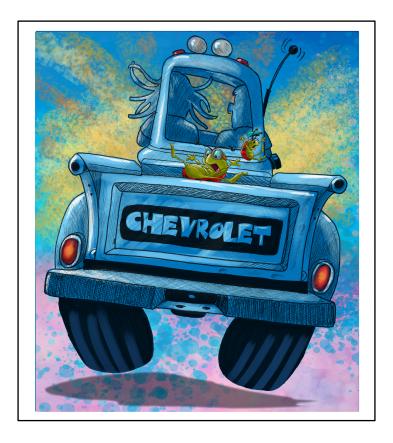
"That's too b-bad." He shivered even more, but then he smiled. "We could have had m-milk shakes!"

Buddy Two smiled, too. Then Buddy One laughed out loud, and pretty soon they were both laughing so hard they almost forgot how cold they were. As a matter of fact, they were laughing so hard they didn't notice as the truck turned off the main road, and onto a bumpy dirt one.

The bumps threw the buddies into the air and back down, bouncing them in the bed of the truck.

Flipping and bouncing, flipping and bouncing, until a sudden POOF! Like they had landed on a giant pillow.

The Ladybug Buddies Incredible Skydiving Adventure



Something silky enveloped Buddy One. Just as he started to enjoy the comfort of a softer ride, he heard a long, scary, "Ahhhhhhh!"

He looked up just in time to see Buddy Two, flying through the air right at him. There was no time to get out of the way. He flung open his little bug arms and caught his buddy. The impact made them both plow deeper into the big silky pillow with a loud, "Ooooffffff!"

"Uggggg," said Buddy Two. "Nice catch, Buddy."

Buddy One said, "I think I bent an antenna."

"What is this thing?"

They looked around at the big pillow they had landed in. It was very colorful. But it was way too big to be a flower.

Buddy One shrugged. "It's warm and comfortable. So, I say it is a gift from the Head Bottler."

"How can he help us this far away?"

"Maybe he can hear any buddy if they get stuck, or in a bad spot, or something isn't going right. Like when the *Buddy's Pop Shop* workers call out to him in the bottling room." "Buddy, where do you come up with this stuff?"

"It is the writing on the wall, Buddy."

Buddy Two was about to ask for more information about that writing on the wall, when the truck came to a sliding halt. The dreadlocks dude jumped out, scooped up the silky, pillowey, stuff the buddies were lying on, and slung it over his shoulder. Only then, did the buddies realize they were inside a backpack. The dreadlocks dude jogged to an airplane that had the engine running.

The buddies looked at each other.

Their adventure just got real.

They were in a backpack, heading for a plane, that was about to take off.





CHAPTER THREE Buddies Talk Things Over

Even if they wanted to, the buddies couldn't get out of the pack. What was so nice just a minute ago, was now trapping them.

"Why do you get us into these things!" Buddy Two was still close enough to yell right into his buddy's face. He was upset about this whole trip. He didn't like the cold, and he didn't like being so far away from *Buddy's Pop Shop*. Then he saw something change in Buddy One. The usual smile was replaced with a look Buddy Two had never seen before.

It wasn't fear. Every buddy knows

fear when they see it. It is impossible to hide fear. You can conquer fear, or accomplish things in spite of your fear. That is part of being a buddy. This was something different. His friend looked sad. The way you might get when you sucked all the root beer out of a cap on the floor, then realized you didn't leave a drop for your buddy.

"I just want to be a good buddy." His voice was almost a whisper.

Now, Buddy Two was really listening as his buddy started to share.

"You see, I lost my dad in the battle of '42," explained Buddy One. "Right before he left, he said to me, 'you will make a great buddy some day,' and flew out the door. As you know, the ants won that day. Dad never came back. And I didn't really know what a buddy was back then.

Then, one afternoon, I flew right

into a half-full mug of root beer. Before I knew it, I was headed to the bottling room. Right through the big doors."

"Wait, wait, wait! You're telling me you went through the big doors?" This story was getting to be too much to believe for Buddy Two.

"I did. There were buddies everywhere. And they were making enough root beer to last forever. If they needed help, they just yelled for the Head Bottler."

"You saw the Head Bottler?"

"No. He was higher up somewhere. I heard him answer, though, so I knew he was there. But I saw the whole *Oath of the Buddy*."

"I always thought you made that up, yourself."

"Not really. It was written on a bigger sign in the bottling room, without so many faded parts. At the top it said, Rules for Buddy's."

At that moment the dreadlocks dude tossed his backpack into the waiting plane, and the buddies were finally able to struggle free and fly to a corner of the plane. The second skydiver dude climbed in behind them and closed the door. Then the engines got louder, and they headed out for take off.

"How about just a cool plane ride instead of a skydiving adventure?" suggested Buddy Two.

But the plane was so loud, all Buddy One heard was, "Skydiving adventure." So, he raised his little antenna like a salute. It was what Ladybug Buddies did, instead of giving a thumbs up.

Buddy Two was relieved, and settled in for the flight, thinking he wasn't going to have to jump out of the plane.



But he was shocked when, a few minutes later, as the skydiver dudes were getting ready--Buddy One headed right for the goggles of the closest dude. He had found the only place a ladybug could survive if they jumped out of the plane!

Buddy Two crossed his antenna. It was the ladybug signal similar to the human sign for "time out." So there they were, with Buddy One saluting, and Buddy Two crossing his antenna. Pretty soon, they were furiously repeating their signs. It was a signlanguage argument, and neither one was going to give in.



CHAPTER FOUR Buddies Are Brave

Buddy Two started to call out to the Head Bottler. "I don't want to die-- I have so much life left to live!"

Then he realized, if he didn't stick with his buddy, the life he enjoyed would be forever changed. If he let his buddy down just because he was afraid . . . well, that wasn't being a good buddy. So, he looked at his buddy, stood ladybug tall, and gave the smartest ladybug salute he could. His buddy saluted him back.

They were going for it!

Buddy Two looked for the dreadlocks dude so he could climb into his

goggles for the ride. He saw him getting ready on the other side of the plane, so he flew closer. Sure enough, there were the goggles, lying on the bench. The Ladybug Buddy was determined, so he flew right into them, just as the dreadlocks dude picked them up.

The door of the plane opened, and wind rushed in all around them. Buddy One was excited, since his skydiver dude was standing right in the doorway, and he could look down from thousands of feet up. He felt like no ladybug had ever been this high up before. He looked around for Buddy Two, but didn't see him. A few moments later, the dreadlocks skydiver stepped next to him.

Then Buddy One got scared.

Buddy Two was in the goggles of his skydiver, but he had a lot more room. What if he didn't have enough room in these goggles? His skydiver dude had individual goggles on. Like swimming goggles. One for each eye. He was squeezed up into the corner, trying not to get into the eye of his skydiver.

It all happened so fast there was no time to change anything.

Buddy One was looking at his buddy, comfortably perched inside the roomy goggles, when his skydiver dude took a flying leap out of the plane. It was like having your eyes closed when dropping down in an elevator. Sometimes the buddies did that. They would get into the elevator that went down to the cellar (where all the *Buddy's Root Beer* was stored) and close their eyes. But this time, it lasted a lot longer.

Buddy One couldn't help it--the air in his lungs rushed out in a long scary scream that sounded like:

"ААААААНННННННН!!!!!!!"

Soon the air rushed back into Buddy's lungs. Then he looked around for the other skydiver...the dreadlocks dude was in perfect control. But he could see Buddy Two



flattened against the glass of the big goggles, riding on top of the dude's nose, hollering:

"AAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!"

Just like he had been doing a moment ago. That's the last he saw of his buddy, though, because all of a sudden, his skydiving dude started tumbling and rolling through the air. Nothing like the dreadlocks dude. Buddy One had been discovered! His skydiver dude was totally out of control, and he started clawing at his face!

Oh, this was bad.

But at that moment, more important things were happening. When the two skydivers got closer, their arms went out to stabilize, and the tumbling stopped. Moments later, both skydivers pulled a cord on their vest. Something that made the Ladybug Buddies slam into the goggles, again. But only for a moment. Then, there was no more rushing wind, and no more screaming. It was completely quiet. Serene even.

Buddy One looked at Buddy Two.

He was sitting in the corner of the big goggles, now, just out of sight of the dreadlocks dude. He threw one more smart salute to his Ladybug Buddy across the sky.

Then Buddy One was scrambling to get into a place where he wasn't blocking his skydiver dude's vision. It was a tiny place only a ladybug would fit into.

In that moment all was quiet and they were skydiving! Not only that, but they both learned something. Buddy Two had conquered his fear and stuck with his Buddy, and Buddy One found out some simple gestures, like the salute, can mean two very different things. The amazing thing was that making mistakes hadn't kept them from having an incredible adventure, anyway. They had done it! He threw a proud ladybug salute to Buddy Two, who waved both of his antenae frantically in the air. Then he thought to himself, "We have GOT to work on our communication!"

Suddenly he realized he could see forever from his little spot in the skydiver dude's goggles. But just as he was enjoying the view, he noticed the ground was starting to get closer and closer.

And they were falling faster and faster...

It looked like they were going to crash!



CHAPTER FIVE Buddies Never Give Up On Each Other

The two skydivers gracefully landed and their parachutes dropped beside them. Then the skydiver dude ripped his goggles off and started waving them wildly in the air. There was no time to lose! Buddy One flew out as fast as he could, to get away from him. His ladybug instincts were kicking in and he knew this was no time to get squashed!

As he flew high in the air he spotted the truck in the parking lot. So, he pointed his little antennae at it and flew with all his strength. When he got close to the truck he saw Buddy Two headed in the same direction.

They landed in the back of the truck about the same time. They gave each other a high five and flopped down to catch their breath. All of a sudden, they started laughing.

They laughed because they didn't understand each other in the plane, and because they were probably the first ladybugs to ever skydive, and because they felt like they had narrowly escaped certain death. Mostly they laughed because they were one step closer, in their minds, to being great buddies.

Pretty soon the skydiver dudes threw the bags with their parachutes in the back of the truck. This time, Buddy One and Buddy Two knew that was the warmest spot for the ride home. Once the truck started moving they just relaxed and thought about the adventure they had that day. They were too tired to talk. There would be plenty of time for that when they got back to the pop shop. After a nice cold bottlecap of *Buddy's Root Beer*.

The skydiver dudes did not go in, this time. They were headed home. But the Ladybug Buddies took a moment to give them a goodbye salute after they flew out of the back of the truck, when it stopped at the stopsign in front of *Buddy's Pop Shop*.

Because it actually had been four buddies that went on that incredible skydiving adventure, even though the dudes didn't know about it. When anybody can be a buddy, they can turn up anywhere. The Ladybug Buddies were thinking about all these things as they waited for someone to come out of the pop shop and open the door.

They didn't have to wait long.

The first thing they did when they got back inside, was find a table of customers who had just ordered, and



head over to look for splashes. At this time of day, there were always a lot of them.

"BBRRRPPPPP!!!!!! UHHHH, BBRRRPPPP!"

"Buddy! Mind your manners!" Buddy One joked with his buddy as they sipped their favorite drink. "I thought I would never have another *Buddy's Root Beer,*" Buddy Two replied.

Buddy One chuckled, and took another long sip of his root beer.

"I thought sure when your skydiver dude took his goggles off and started waving them in the air like a wild man, you were done for!" said Buddy Two.

"Nope. It was when I fell out of my spot and ended up eyeball-to-eyeball with him I thought I was done for. He started spinning, and I started screaming, then he started screaming, too. It was terrible!"

"What did you do?"

Buddy One eased back on his shell, slicked back his crumpled antenna, and waited a few extra seconds before he answered. "I did what any special trooper would do in that situation."

Buddy Two leaned closer to get the

story.

"I used all my legs and grabbed as much eyebrow hair as I could, then held on for dear life!"

"Oh, man, I thought you had some super-special, tactical ninja way. Or attached yourself to the inside of his goggles. Like *Spiderman*, or something."

Buddy One sighed. "I don't know any of that stuff. I just knew if I never gave up, and we stuck together, having a good buddy might be enough."

Buddy Two raised his bottle cap, and--almost on cue--the Head Bottler came by and splashed another round of root beer perfectly into their caps. The buddies gave a salute, then drank it up.

Buddy Two sighed with content. "I am so glad we are done with adventures for a while. We almost died! It's a good thing the Head Bottler was watching out for us up there. I wonder how he can hear that far?"

When there was no answer, he looked around. His buddy wasn't next



to him, anymore. Now, where in the world did he go? When he finally caught sight of him, he gasped, and spilled the rest of his root beer.

Buddy One was at the big window, looking outside. Nearby, there was a table where some motorcycle dudes were sitting. They had leather jackets on and big boots.

Buddy Two looked out the window for their vehicle. That's when he saw a truck with motorcycles in the back.

"OH, NOOOO!!!!" Buddy Two knew just what Buddy One was Jason Graham

thinking and flew over to see if he could talk him out of it. But his buddy already had a crazy look in his eye... and a smile on his face.

The End



Next up... The LADYBUG BUDDIES Incredible Motorcycle Adventure Don't miss it!



The Oath of the Buddy



Anybody can be a buddy.

About the Author



After a career in the Coast Guard, and many years working with youth programs, **Jason Graham** knows a lot about being a buddy. *The Ladybug Buddies Adventures* had their beginnings as bedtime stories which he told to his own children.

He is also a Wilderness Expert at the Wilderness School Institute, and a contributor to their popular *Backpack Survival Guides*. He enjoys hearing from readers, and you can get in touch with him by sending an email to:

Wilderness-Expert@SummersIslandPress.com



About the Illustrator

Work that is colorful and vibrant, with a certain storybook pleasure, **Brian Beausoleil** paints from the heart no matter what the subject is. WIth a master's level in

fine art and illustration, two years of study with a former Disney animator, he brings a great sense of joy and satisfaction to his work. He has been painting professionally for over thirty years, and you can see more of his art over at:

<u>http://beausoleilart.blogspot.com</u>

It isn't always easy to be a buddy.



But it's worth it.