

Safi and Mari's Little Egg Rescue Team

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for Conservation Optimism



It was a warm summer day. A young boy had taken his little sister out to play in the national park as they often did. Because of the heat, the siblings had ended up in one of the small streams by the big river when they noticed something moving on the riverbank a little ways away.

“Safi Bhai!” the little girl cried, grabbing her brother’s hand. “Look over there! It’s a crocodile!”

Her brother turned to see where his sister was pointing and gasped.

“You’re right! It’s called a gharial, like Mama and Baba are always talking about!”

“Bhai, I’m scared!” the girl said.

“Hey, it’s okay Mari. Come with me.” Holding his sister’s hand tight, Safi quickly led her towards a nearby tree and helped her up, quickly climbing after her.

“How do Mama and Baba work with them! Don’t they get scared?” Mari asked her brother.

“We’ll have to ask them how they can be so brave when we get home,” Safi said.



From their perch on the tree, the gharial didn't seem so scary. It had made itself comfortable by the side of the river and seemed to be enjoying the sun.

"What is it doing, Bhai?" Mari asked. "Why isn't it moving?"

"It's basking," Safi told his sister. "Crocodiles like to lie in the sun to make their bodies warmer. It's kind of like..." he paused, thinking to himself. "It's like sunbathing!" he exclaimed.

Mari looked at her brother with big sparkling eyes, taking in the information he was sharing with her. She opened her mouth to ask something else when they heard a loud noise.

A huge truck had pulled up nearby, with large nets in its trunk. Mari was so startled by the noise that she lost her footing and slipped, but her brother managed to grab her before she fell. He lowered her gently to the ground and promptly jumped down from his perch to join her. Safi fussed over his little sister to make sure she was alright and discovered they had both had some cuts and scratches. He decided to take Mari home to get themselves cleaned and bandaged, and promised they would check on the gharial the next morning after they had got some rest.



When the siblings returned to the riverbank the next morning, the gharial was gone, and the riverbank had been left a mess. The sand had been scattered, and pieces of metal wires and plastic nets were lying around the riverside.

"Bhai! What happened here?" Mari asked with concern. "Where did the gharial go?"

"I think it must have accidentally been caught in the fishing nets! Sometimes bigger animals can get stuck when humans use gillnets for fishing." Safi explained to his sister.

"What's a gillnet?" Mari asked.

"It's a big net made of plastics that hangs straight in the water like a wall or a curtain. You're not supposed to use them here because other animals can get displaced or stuck, like that gharial we saw! We have to go tell Mama and Baba!" Safi exclaimed, full of determination, already walking in the direction of their home.

"Bhai, wait! There's something else in the sand!" Mari exclaimed, racing over. Safi followed after his sister and noticed some eggs buried in the sand close to where the gharial had been basking.

"Mari, I think that's a nest! The gharial must be the mother of these babies!" Safi said, making his way back home again, this time holding his sister's hand. "Come on, we have to hurry!"

"But what about the eggs?" Mari cried.

"We can come and check on them later, I promise!"

With that, the two siblings rushed home as quickly as they could, just like their parents had told them for situations like this one.



As soon as the two got home, they rushed to their parents and told them everything that had happened with the gharial.

"You did so well to quickly come back and tell us," their father said to them.

"Yes, thanks to you we can alert our animal rescue team and have the gharial back in no time!" their mother said.

Soon after they had told them, their father set off, promising to be back with the gharial as quickly as he could.

"Wow, you and Baba are so brave to be part of the rescue team," Safi remarked.


"Oh, that reminds me! Mama, we wanted to ask you something," Mari said.

Their mother smiled at them brightly. "Thank you, Safi. Now, what did you both want to ask me, Marina?" she asked.

"Well, Bhai and I were wondering how you and Baba can be so brave! Don't you feel scared of some of the animals?" Mari asked.

Their mother thought for a moment before speaking. "Well, I suppose it can be a little scary, and even a little dangerous sometimes. But with the proper training and education, you can learn to understand them and take care of them. Sometimes they really need our help, and we really want to help them even if we are a little scared sometimes. That's what makes us brave, like you two were today!" she said, tapping both of them on their noses affectionately. "Now, let's go prepare for when your Baba brings that gharial back!"

With their mother's inspiring words, the pair grabbed some caps from their closet to copy their parents' rescue team ones, then set off to return to the riverbank with their mother.



As soon as they arrived at the site, the siblings decided to go and check on the eggs as Safi had promised his little sister while their mother went on further ahead, but she made sure to stay within reach in case the children needed her. When the siblings got to the nest they were still a little scared to get close, but from where they were standing they couldn't see the eggs too well at all.

"Are you scared too, Bhai?" Mari asked, popping her head up from behind her brother.

"A little," Safi admitted, not wanting his sister to feel bad for being the only one.

"It's okay." His little sister smiled at him. "You can hold my hand and we can look together so you won't be scared," she said, wrapping her small fingers around her brother's.

Safi smiled warmly at the sweet gesture. "Thanks Mari, you really are very, very brave."

With his little sister safe just behind him, Safi and Mari slowly approached the nest.

"Oh no, look at this trail! It looks like two of the eggs rolled away!"

"We have to find them!" Mari said, following the trails to find the missing eggs.

When they finally spotted them, they forgot all about their fear and each quickly picked one up and brought them back to the nest.



They placed the eggs down as gently as they could, making sure not to let them slip or roll away again. When they were done, they exchanged big smiles, but then quickly remembered that the riverbank was still a mess from the gillnetting.

"Hey, Mari. I know we're not old enough to be a crocodile rescue team yet but what if we were the little egg rescue team, just for today?" Safi asked his little sister.

Mari beamed at him. "I think that's a great idea, Bhai. I want to keep helping the gharials too." She brought their hats out from their backpack and reached up to put her brother's on his head, and pulled her own hat on too.

"Little Egg Rescue Team, go!" she cheered as she started to tidy around the riverbank, her brother quickly joining her with equal enthusiasm.

Soon the riverbank looked just as good as before and the tired pair lay down on the sand to stretch their legs.

"Mari, it's like we're basking!" Safi giggled to his sister. "I think I understand the gharial a little more now. This is really nice."

Mari laughed beside him, clamping her arms open and shut pretending to be a gharial herself. Safi joined in when suddenly, there came the sound of something cracking from right behind them.

The children rolled over to see what it was and gasped, turning to look at each other with huge grins.



"They're hatching!"



Then there was another sound a little further away. The sound of a familiar vehicle they had come to know as the rescue van. Soon enough, both their father and mother came into view and made their way over to them.

"Oh, wow! The riverbank looks wonderful. Thank you for all your hard work," their mother said.

"Yes, and thank you for looking out for the eggs while I got their mother back," said their father.

"She's back!" the children cried happily.

"That's right, and it looks like we're just in time," their parents said. "Why don't you go and perch up on your tree again for a nice and safe view."

The children exchanged big smiles before racing over to their favourite tree and watched the rescue team release the gharial as she made her way back to the riverbank. She seemed happy and comfortable, making them smile even wider.

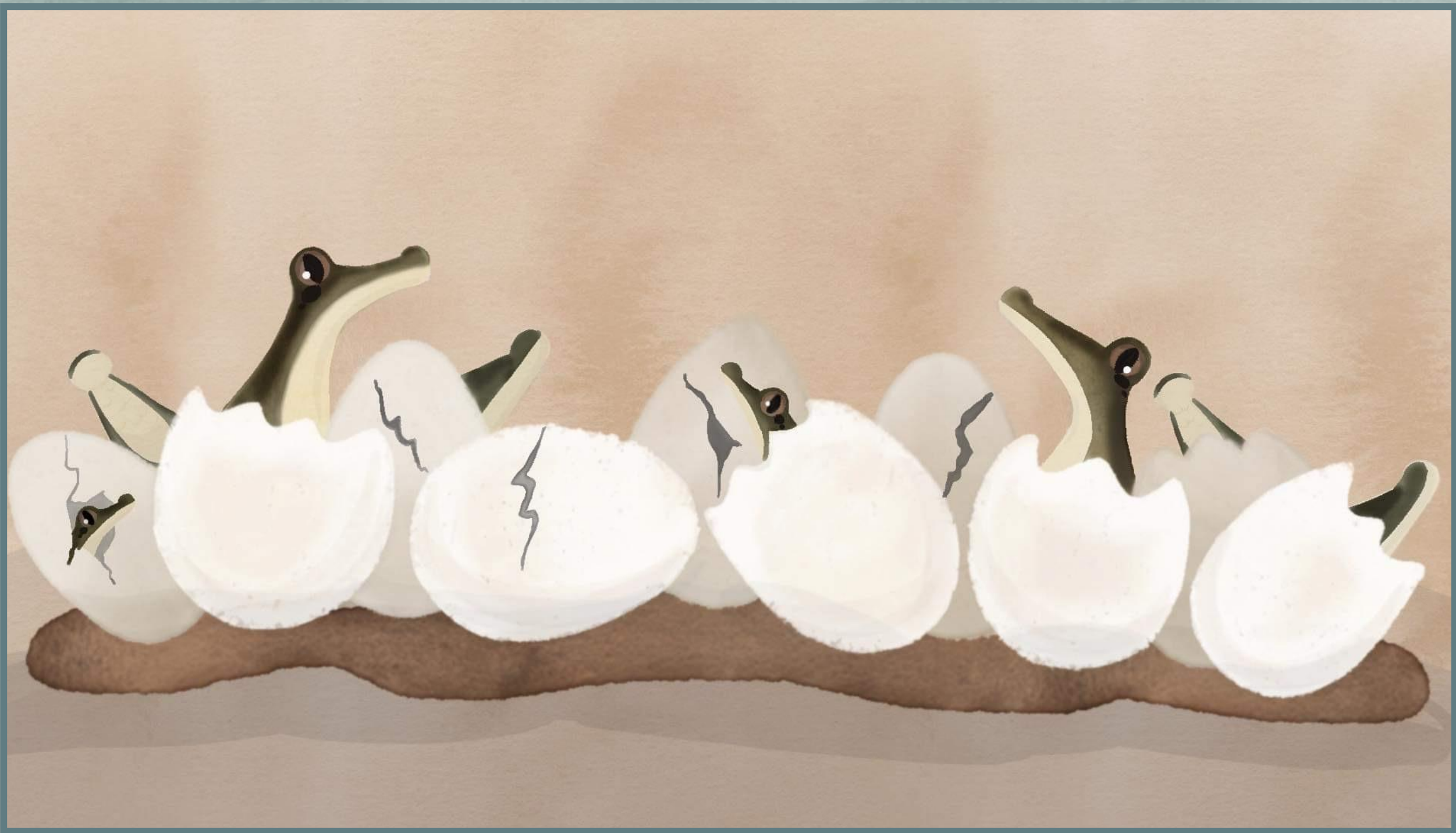
Then the eggs really began to hatch. Tiny little crocodile snouts popped out from the shells, taking their first breath of fresh air in the world.

"I think I understand how Mama and Baba can be so brave now," Safi said.

"Yeah." Mari agreed. "I want to be just like them when I grow up."

"Me too," her brother said.





The two stayed perched on the tree for a while, happily watching the tiny gharial crawl and wiggle out of their eggs. They were nipping, yapping and crawling all around their little nest. When the sun started to set, they decided it was time to go back home.

Their parents had already reached before them, and they welcomed their children home with big hugs.

"You two were really amazing today," they told them.

"We think the gharial were quite amazing too," Mari replied.

"Yeah! We want to work in the rescue team just like you to help them when we grow up," Safi added.

Their parents exchanged big smiles before grabbing their own rescue team hats and swapping them with the makeshift ones on their children's heads.

Mari looked up at her brother and started giggling.

"What's so funny, Mari?" Safi asked.

"Well, it's just a little big on you," she replied.

"So is yours," Safi giggled with her, lifting the hat off her eyes.

"Don't worry," their parents said, "you'll grow into them just fine."



End.

