Adventures with Money

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Far away from Earth, on the other side of our galaxy, there is a planet called Zeee. No one works on Planet Zeee. Zeee people don’t need to earn money because their planet has a very special tree, unlike any tree you or I have ever seen! It’s called . . .
Zara, Zoey and Zach live on the Planet Zeee. They take money from the Money Tree, and fly on their longboards to nearby planets to shop for toys, clothes and food. The money just grows back, so no one ever needs to save.

Zara buys fancy saddles for her unicorn.

Zach has a garage full of flying longboards.

And Zoey adds to her collection of moon rocks.

But one day, a terrible thing happens.
The Money Tree begins to die.
“Arrgghish,” Zara says (that’s Zeze for “Oh no!”).
“How will we buy stuff now? I want another saddle!”

“Purgunk!” exclaims ZoeY. (That’s Zeze for “yeah!”).
“I want more moon rocks, and another flying longboard!”
She already has fifteen, but who’s counting?

“Me three! I mean, me too!” says Zach.
He has seventeen.

“Not to mention food, clothes and toys,” Zara says.
“We must search the galaxy to find a new Money Tree!”

The children hop on their longboards and fly off to the stars.
Zoom! The Zee kids swoop down to Earth and land in a place full of trees with lots and lots of leaves.

"Look at all this money!" they shout, as they pull leaves off the trees.

Emma, Jack and James, are biking by when they spot the Zee kids. "Hey! What are you doing?" James hollers.

Zach says, "You sure have a lot of money on this planet! We're going to take some back home with us—if you don't mind."

"That's not money! Those are leaves!" Emma cries. "This is money!" She reaches into her pocket and pulls out some dollars and coins. Zoey touches a dollar bill. Zara takes a quarter and bites it. "This tastes funny," she says.

Emma grabs the quarter back and wipes it off. "It's not food! That's our money."

"If you keep pulling those leaves off, you'll hurt our trees!" says Jack.
Leaves? Hurt trees? Funny-tasting metal things?
This is all confusing to the Zeeees. "Well then, how do you buy stuff? Those bikes, for instance?" Zara asks.

"We earn our money by working," Emma says. "I help my mom at her bookstore."

"I walk dogs," Jack says.

"I am a babysitter," James says.

Zoey rubs her chin thoughtfully. "I get it! You do things for people who give you leaves . . . uh, I mean money. And then you spend your money on stuff. Do you have to go far away for your stuff? Or do you have local planets?"

"Wha—? No, our stores are on this planet. And we don’t just spend our money. We also put it in the bank to save," says James.

"My parents have a family budget we follow," Emma says.

"A whadjit?"
“A budget. Every time I earn money, I put some in one of three jars. One jar is for spending, then I put some in another jar to give to the animal shelter, and a bit in a third jar for savings. I’m saving my money for my first set of wheels! That’s called budgeting.”

“Wait—who is Bank? And why do you give them your money? And where can we get some jars?” Zach asks.

“Oh, like leaves! I get it.” Zara scoops a handful of leaves and grins. “That’s your Money Tree!”

“Wha—? No, not exactly, but it does grow.” James says. He bikes a figure eight around the children. “When I put my money in a savings account, the bank pays me! That’s called interest—it’s sweet!”

“The bank isn’t a person! It’s where people put their money to keep it safe,” Jack explains. “And money also grows there.”

“Let’s go!”
The children bike and skate out of the park into the tree-lined neighborhood.

Zara, Zoey, and Zach’s longboards float just a few inches above the sidewalk, causing some astonished looks from the pedestrians around them.

“I wish I had a flying longboard like yours!” James says, admiringly. “Where did you get it?”

Zara stops skating and looks sad.

“What’s wrong?” Jack brakes alongside Zara. “Our Money Tree has no more leaves, so we can’t buy any more boards. That’s why we came here. To find a new Money Tree.”

“We can’t buy anything at all,” Zoey adds. “We don’t even have enough food to get through the coming Zeefest.”
Emma, Jack and James gather around the Zeees. “What do you mean, your Money Tree?”

“It’s our one tree on Planet Zeee, and we use the leaves it grows to buy whatever we want from other planets. But we’ve taken the last leaf, and now we have no more money.”

James frowns. “Maybe you should take care of that tree. It will grow again if you feed and water it.”

“And NOT take every leaf!” Emma agrees.

“But how can we buy stuff until it grows? We don’t have jobs like you do. And we don’t have banks, either.”
Jack suddenly smiles. “I know!” he says. “We can help you find ways to earn your own money so that you don’t need your Money Tree!”

Emma smiles, too. “We can even show you how to grow food for your Zeeeball.”

“That’s Zeeefest!” Zoey says.

“. . . And even sell your food on other planets!”

Zara jumps up and down. “Maybe I could buy stuff to make my own unicorn saddles!”

“You have a unicorn?!”

And Zoey adds, “I could make pretty walking paths with my moon rocks!”

“Wow, moon rocks?!”
The kids ride into town to find seeds, tools
and books about money for the Zeees.

They even find some jars and piggy banks. “You can
use these until you have a real bank!” Emma says.

Zach, Zeev and Zara are delighted with the gifts.
“But we want to give you something in return,” they say.

The Zeees huddle together.
They whisper... they giggle... they whisper some more, and finally...

“We know what to give you as a thank you for all you have given us!”
Zach announces.

Zach picks up his board.
“I’ll be right back.”

He hops on and flies into
the sky, returning just a few
moments later holding three
new flying longboards.
“I don’t really need seventeen of
these,” he says, panting slightly.
Emma, James and Jack hop onto their new flying boards and wave to their friends. “Good luck, Zeees!”

Zara, Zoey and Zach fly back home, full of hope for their planet. And ready to work!

First they feed and water their tree.
Next, Zara starts making unicorn saddles.
Zach begins planting their garden to harvest food for the Zeeefest.

And Zoey uses her moon rocks to make a beautiful path around their Money Tree, which is growing new leaves (but not money) every day.

Because, of course, we all know that . . . . . . . money doesn’t grow on trees!