

Cricket

the realm of imagination



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April 2008 Volume 35 Number 8



PHOTO BY TAMARA MCEIROY

COVER AND BORDER

by Stephen Costanza
"Bon Voyage"
acrylic

Stephen Costanza studied music theory and composition at Syracuse University before attending the Philadelphia College of Art to pursue a career in the visual arts. He has worked as both a graphic designer and an illustrator in a career that has encompassed silk screening, graphic design, and book illustration. He has always maintained a strong interest in music; from 1980 to 1992 he played the piano professionally in a ragtime/classical music ensemble, performing alongside a violinist.

In addition to magazines like *Cricket* and *Spider*, his illustrations have appeared in newspapers, advertisements, and textbooks. His work has been featured in association with the Boston Ballet, Four Seasons Hotel, and Boston Lyric Opera. It has also been exhibited at the 2000 Children's Book Fair in Bologna, Italy, and the Original Art Show in New York in 2003.

His first picture book, *Noodle Man: The Pasta Superhero*, written by April Pulley Sayre, was published in March 2002. He has combined his love of Mozart, music, and painting into his next picture book, *Mozart Finds a Melody*, the first book he has both written and illustrated. He is currently at work on a book about Antonio Vivaldi. His art can be viewed online at www.painted-words.com.

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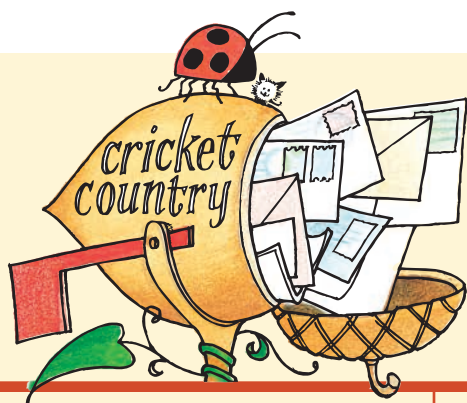


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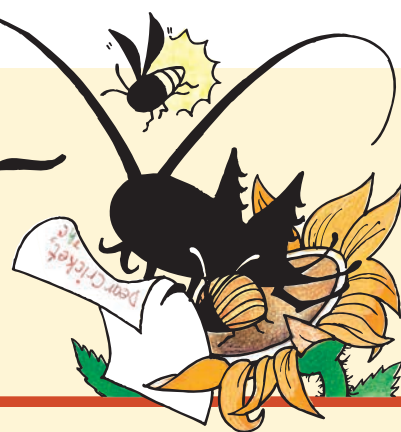
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the Letterbox



Dear Pussywillow,

You're my favorite kitten character in the gang! Where did Ladybug find you? How old are you? How did you get your name?

My favorite thing to do is play soccer. My favorite color is baby blue. My favorite books are the Fairy Realm and Emily Windsnap series, books about horses, and books by Geronimo Stilton. I love to read *Cricket* magazine, too! My teacher has a bunny named Raisin. She is a dwarf rex brown bunny and she was our class pet.

Maybe you could have an issue about fishing. My dad is a fishing guide. Do you like fish? I do!

Maggie M., age 8
Lake Anna, Virginia

Dear Maggie,

I found Pussywillow at the edge of the Grassy Field one April day. She slipped off a pussy willow bush and magically came to life. She's just a baby and she'll never grow any older, so I'm answering for her. She sends you a very special purrrrrrrrry-hi!

Love,
Ladybug

Hi, Everybuggy!

I'm just writing in to tell you how awesome your mag is. (I know you get at least five letters like this in each "Letterbox.") My sister loves this mag so much she pays for the subscription herself, even though she is a cheapskate. Since she pays for it, I have to sneak it to my room to read it.

Are there any Runescape geeks out there? I do not meet many people who like it anymore. Keep up the good work, *Cricket*.

Allen F.
via e-mail

Dear Everybuggy,

I love your magazine! My favorite characters are Ladybug and Pussywillow.

Are there any vegetarians out there? I am

OF COURSE
THEY LOVE
YOU. WHAT'S
NOT TO LOVE?



MEW!

a vegetarian. I'd also like to respond to a few people. In response to Micaela L. (August 2007), I just started reading *Nancy Drew* and I love it! I also dance ballet, but I'm not dancing on my toes yet. I don't think I ever will; dancing is just one of my hobbies. To Simran Mayadas (September 2007), I love acting and am taking a class on how to make a movie! It's an awesome class, and I have a lot of fun.

Josephine G.
via e-mail

Hi, Everybuggy,

I love your mag! It is so cool! I would, however, like more fantasy stories. Like about unicorns, fairies, dragons, and more! In response to Erin Stone (November 2007), I loooooove opera! It is one of my favorite things in the world. My favorite opera singer is Marlis Petersen, and my favorite opera is *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss. I also think that there should be more opera stories in *Cricket*. Are there any other opera fans out there?

Julia W., age 10
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Everybuggy,

I love your magazine! I really like that it has stories and poems instead of articles about things. I really liked the serial "Barn Gravity" (August–September 2007). I also like the bugs on the sides of the page commenting on the story or explaining words. I am also a pretty big puppy fan, so I would like a story about a puppy.

I want to respond to Simran Mayadas (September 2007). I didn't know bunnies could bark! Mine doesn't, but my bunny is really big! She has a bunny leash, but she hates it. Once she got away and was living under one neighbor's shed while living off another neighbor's garden. We finally caught her while she was eating.

I like to write stories. I would like to be an author

when I grow up. I am going to write about all sorts of things. An author also reads. I would like to suggest the *Warriors* series by Erin Hunter. Erin Hunter is actually three different people writing the books.

Gillian E., age 10
Louisiana

Dear Cricket,

Your magazine rocks! My eyes light with joy when I see your magazine in the mail.

Does anybody love turtles? I do. My friends say I am obsessed. I personally wouldn't go that far.

One of my favorite things in *Cricket* magazine is the continued stories. I liked "Long Meg" (April–July 2007). It was very enjoyable. Another one I look forward to reading is *Tales from the Homeplace: Adventures of a Texas Farm Girl* ("The Panther," July 2007, and "Sydney," September–October 2007). I really like all of the cover art. There is a lot of variety.

I wish *Cricket* would have more myths, tall tales, and legends. It would also be cool to have more turtle stories.

Emma Waldron, age 11
South Thomaston, Maine

YES! MORE
STORIES ABOUT
CREATURES
WITH
SHELLS.



Emma, we have a tall tale for you this month, "Melodious," beginning on page 28.

The Editors

Dear Cricket,

I was reading some old magazines and in one I saw a letter from Calla W. (February 2007). That letter may as well have been from me! I, too, am homeschooled and I really love reading, writing, acting, sewing, and wolves! I love Harry Potter and my favorite characters are Fred and George. I have been learning Latin for about four years. Weird, huh? I, like Calla, play the piano!

I have a dog named Tiger Lily and a cat named Oscar. I have six siblings. I have a cute bunny named Carmel Sam. He is trained to stay in my yard.

A WRITER
AND A READER...
I PREDICT
GREAT THINGS!



I love this mag! I am always eager to get it. I think you should put more medieval stories in you mag. Adios.

Elizabeth A. Depew,
age 12
Grove City,
Pennsylvania

NAMESTE,
UPASNA!
WE LIKE STORIES
ABOUT FRIENDS,
TOO.



Hey, Everybuggy,

This letter is mostly in response to some letters in the April 2007 "Letterbox." To Morgen D., it is totally sweet that you live in Germany. My family has friends there, and I have taken the language in school. Furthermore, I will be traveling to Germany this summer. I will be staying in the Bavarian town of Landsberg for three weeks. I also take Spanish and plan on taking Russian next year.

To Lily O., I Scottish dance and whenever I tell people that, they almost always ask if it is anything like Irish dancing!

To the mag: I appreciated "A Night of Questions" (April 2007). Though I am not Jewish, my main group of school friends all are. They had been talking about the Seder at school, and now I know more about it. Plus, I can empathize with the character Michael. I have fainted three times, and it is not fun at all.

Emily Foster
Salem, Oregon

P.S. *Deutsch ist sehr toll!*

Hi, Cricket,

I'm a big fish nut. Or nerd. Or geek. Or whatever you want to call it. I'm especially into deep-sea fish, in particular the marine hatchetfish. Maybe you could do an article on those amazing little guys, complete with front, top, side, and bottom views of 'em. Also, I'm into *Homestar Runner*.

One time I caught a cicada or something and instead of taking him home I let him go back where he belonged. That was when I was in Cub Scouts.

I had a *Cricket* tape from the seventies and I really loved those "Opposites" poems by Richard Wilbur. I also liked the one about the hike in New York by Sam Levenson. Pretty cool. I have the story in a book, and other people should probably read it. I also kinda like John Ciardi. "And on Some Days I Might Take Less" is pretty funny, too!

Alex H., age 12
via e-mail

Dear Alex,

We also loved "Opposites" and thought others would, too. You will find the poem on page 14. You can even create your own poem about opposites for this month's contest.

Love,
Cricket

Nameste, Everybuggy!

I bet you're wondering what *Nameste* means. I'm from India, and *Nameste* means hello! Now you have a new vocabulary word.

I want to make a few comments on *Cricket*. First of all, could you please include more stories about friendship? Most of your stories have only one main character. It's nothing personal, but I like stories with friends in them.

Secondly, I'd like to respond to Amanda R. (October 2007). I'm definitely coming to Delaware! I love to shop (mostly for books) and would definitely take tax-free shopping.

I agree with Maxime L. (October 2007) that we should call soccer "football" and football "handball." I'd also like to tell Gretchen O. (October 2007) that my friend Kelsey and I love the *Warriors* series by Erin Hunter. People who love animals (especially cats) and fantasy should really check those books out.

I was wondering why so many people like math so much. Personally, writing is my favorite subject. It's so cool! You can get your emotions out and you're in control when you write. Teachers and my parents say I'm really good at it, too.

I hope my friends are getting *Cricket* (I think they are!) and I'd just like to say hi to my best friends Michael L. and Jeffrey D. Hope you're having a good life!

Upasna S.
via e-mail

Hey, Cricket!

I love this mag even though I am almost fifteen. I've gotten it since I was ten or eleven. For next year I also ordered *Cicada*. Though I haven't gotten an issue yet, I'm sure it'll be great. I live in the tiny town of Johnson City on the point of Tennessee. I used to live in an even smaller town near it called Erwin, where there are too many cows for my taste. I like cities better than the country.

A lot of people tell you to add more stories about "this" or "that," but I'm not going to do that. I just wanted to say to keep doing what you're doing, because your magazine is great! It's a wonderful blend of stories, art, and poems. Although I am a busy freshman, I still take the time to admire the wonderful cover art. I am an artist and a writer, so your magazine really appeals to me. I also like photography, movie watching, animals, cooking, and reading. I plan to be a veterinarian when I grow up. So thank you for producing a very special magazine that I truly love.

Andrea M., age 14
Johnson City, Tennessee



A MINIATURE
HORSE LEARNING
TO DRIVE A CART?

NO, NO, NO...
BUT WHAT A
GREAT STORY
IDEA!

LINES FROM CRICKET'S LETTERBOX

Anybody out there been to the Mormon Miracle Pageant in Manti, Utah? I act in it every summer.

Richard C.
via e-mail

I was looking at the picture on the cover of the October 2007 magazine. I can't find out where the sky starts and the ground ends, but I'll keep working on it.

Natalia K.
Moab, Utah

I am a girl and have blond hair. I hate it when people try to excuse "off" days by saying I'm blond. Your hair color does not make you unintelligent!

Etienne Wasson, age 13
Fort Myers, Florida

There are not nearly enough ferret owners in the world. My little ferret is so cute. He loves sleeping in my blanket. He also has a weird habit of stashing water bottles under my bed or the sink.

Taylor L., age 13
Ohio

I think astronomy is totally awesome and I have seen the northern lights. They're so beautiful!

Mariel R.
Oak Lawn, Illinois

I take Spanish and Mandarin Chinese. I also know a form of gibberish.

Nia N.
via e-mail

I have a horse, and my first ever ribbon with Chief (my horse) was blue. He is a nervous Arabian-style miniature horse and is in training for cart driving.

Angel M., age 10
Brownsville, Oregon

Cricket, maybe for a change, you could put some horse, cow, or other animal stories in your mag!

Rachel Dorsky, age 12
Appleton, Maine

Send letters to **Cricket's Letterbox**, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354. Please include your complete name, age, and address.

Letters may be edited for length.

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THE STAR SHARD

PART 1

BY FREDERIC S. DURBIN



CYMBRIL SANG. Her voice filled the dining hall like a pure liquid, drifting out through the narrow windows under the rafters. In her thoughts she floated away with the notes, riding the warm breeze over forests and fields; but in reality, she could go nowhere. The huge wooden doors of the Rake were shut with her inside, a prisoner in the biggest of all cages. It was her duty to sing.

To say that the Thunder Rake was a wagon would be to call the sea a puddle, for

the Rake was a fortified city, full of workshops and stables, houses, towers, gardens—even a rippling canal. But it also had wheels rimmed with steel, each one seven times as tall as a man, and it had arms made of gigantic tree trunks that slid back and forth, three along each side. Metal claws on the ends crashed down and sank into the earth each time an arm came forward. Like a gargantuan living creature, the Thunder Rake crawled over hills and through valleys. The

ILLUSTRATED BY EMILY FIEGENSCHUH

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WHAT A
MACHINE!
I'D LOVE
TO SEE THE
PLANS...



folk of towns and cities could hear the Rake coming with its axles squeaking, with rumbles and booms, claw after claw. People flung wide their gates and flocked out to buy exotic cloth, spices, glass, tools, and hundreds of other goods from the Rake's merchants. All the

world was a market, said Rombol, Master of the Rake: everything could be had for a price.

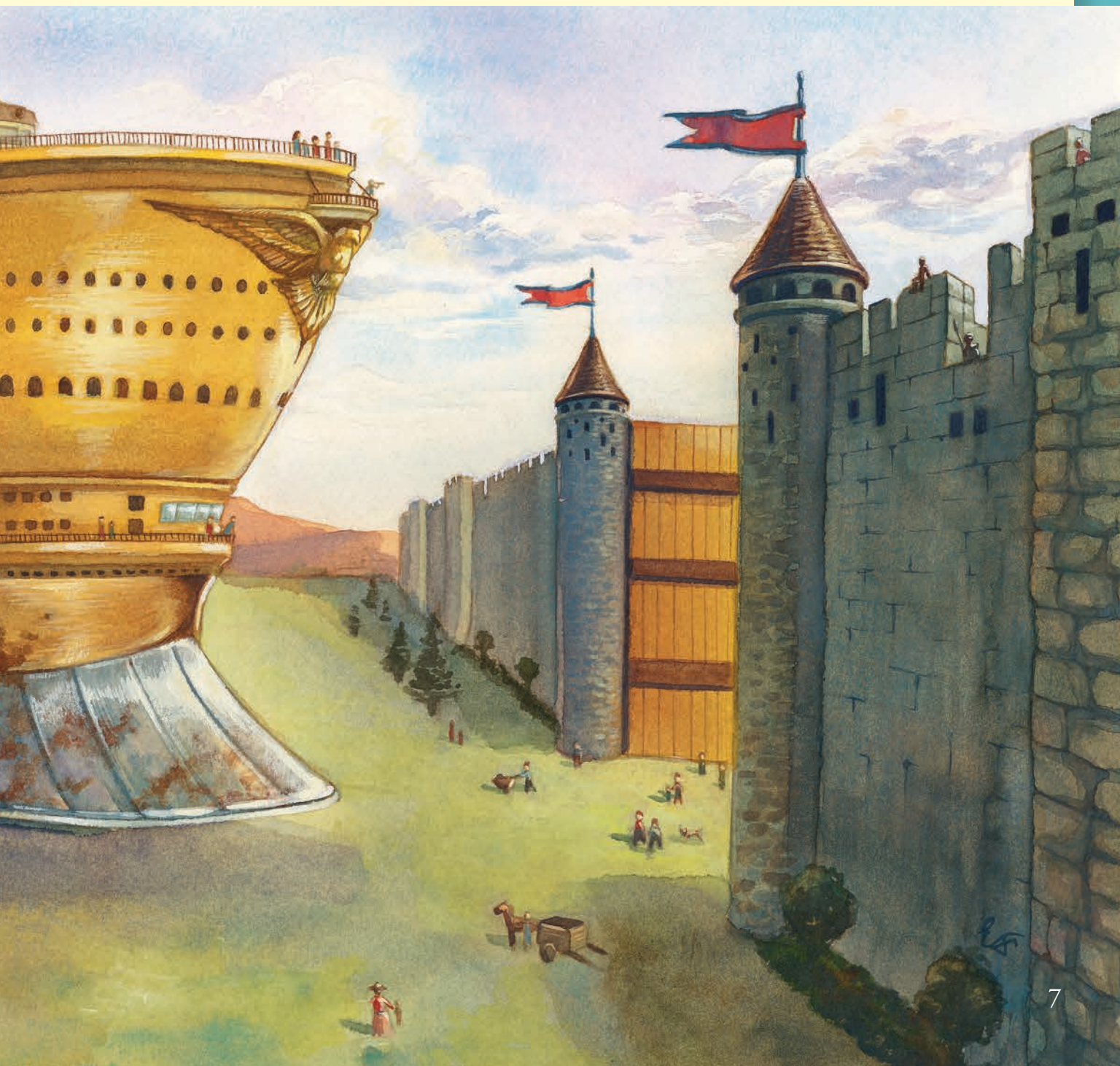
What was the price of freedom, Cymbril wondered—or happiness? She finished her song and bowed to those who clapped with greasy hands. Tomorrow another grand



circuit would begin, another journey of selling. The merchants had been busy stockpiling and crafting. Many were already snoring, their heads on the tables in the flickering, oily light. As Cymbril lifted her hem and carefully stepped down from the oaken chest

that served as her stage, the table clearers padded along the trestles, silent as ghosts. Cymbril moved to help them.

“That will do, Cymbril,” called Master Rombol. Slouched in his carved chair, he licked his fingers and wiped them on his





thick, black beard. He pointed at Cymbril with a chicken bone. "Go and rest your voice now. Tomorrow we roll into Highcircle, where the crowds await with purses jingling."

Several of the groggy merchants grinned.

"Be in your blue dress at first light."

Rombol flipped the bone to Bale, the hound at his feet, who caught and crunched it in his massive jaws.

Cymbril curtsied and hurried into the corridor, thinking, If you're worried about my voice, Master Rombol, why do you make me sing in the pipe smoke? At least during market journeys, she could spend her days in fresh air, and by evenings she had no voice left for the dining hall.

Shutting the door behind her, she leaned against it and breathed in the coolness. This hallway on the Rake's uppermost level was a street tonight, its ceiling drawn back. Cymbril peered up between high wooden walls at the stars—so many, even in the thin strip of sky—so blazingly bright, and so free. One of the Rake's cats rubbed against her

ankles, and she knelt to stroke its fur. "It's Highcircle tomorrow, Miwa," Cymbril told the cat. "You'll have plenty of new mice to chase."

Miwa purred, her eyes glowing with the blue-green fire of the Fey world. Cats could

always see the land of the Faerie folk, or Sidhe, side by side with the world of human-kind. Cymbril fingered the stone in her skirt's pocket. She had a little of the Sidhe's fire, too.

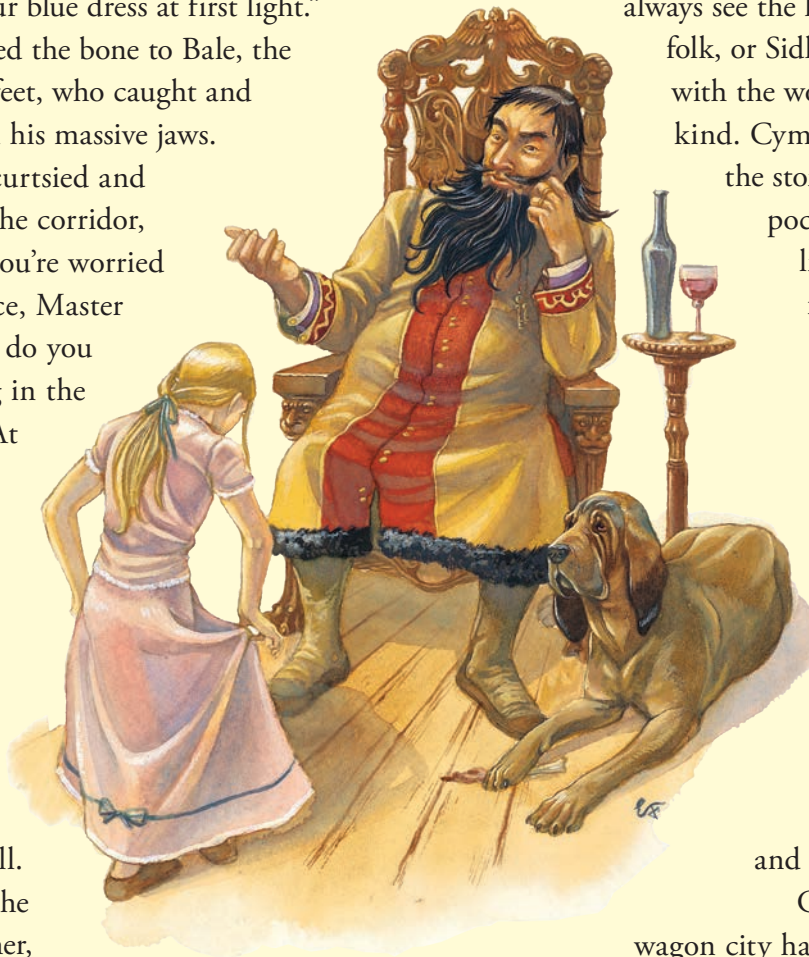
The gears gnashed, the axles creaked, and the Rake clawed the ground:

*squeak-boom,
squeak-boom,
squeak-boom.*

The Thunder Rake rolled at night; daylight was for buying and selling.

Corridors in the wagon city had names, like streets: Anvil, Longwander, Tinley,

Inbrace, Barrel Corner. . . Cymbril took the Ferny Way and ducked beneath a grape arbor into a spiral staircase going down. Straight to the lowest level she followed it, her leather slippers pattering. Some people said the colossal wagon had five stories, some said nine, and some said



thirteen, for several of the decks were hidden within the walls or couched in balcony half-levels. Despite her explorations, Cymbril had not found a way into three of the inner galleries. But her favorite space lay here, at the stairway's bottom. She brushed through a curtain of stringy brown vines into the Pushpull Chamber.

Dark and drippy, warm with breath and many bodies, it was the only place Cymbril felt at peace. The Urrmsh occupied the long, narrow room, and of all the people on the Thunder Rake, only the Urrmsh were content.

Even sitting on the rowing benches, they were taller than Cymbril, and as big around as boulders. Dark green and warty, the Urrmsh rocked back and forth, pushing and pulling on the "oars"—wooden levers that turned the gears that worked the tremendous claws of the Rake, gouging the ground, drawing the mighty vessel forward. Their mouths and round eyes were like those of frogs; they had no ears, only nostril slits for noses, and short, thick legs. Most amazing were their muscular arms, so long they could reach to the floor, with hands that could crush a rock to powder. Humans, who generally had trouble trilling the *r* in "Urrmsh," also called them the Armfolk or the Strongarms.

They smiled wide smiles as Cymbril passed between them, some pausing in their song to call her name or tap a fingertip on her head. She beamed and waved back, but she didn't try saying their names. Whenever she thought she'd learned them, the Armfolk changed places, rowing on different sides so that one

arm wouldn't grow stronger than the other. The Urrmsh were nearly always singing, sometimes one by one, sometimes all together. The words were in the Armfolk's own language, which sounded something like the gurgle of rain through gutters, something like the purring of giant cats. "We sing our songs," the Urrmsh had explained to Cymbril. "We tell our tales, and we push, and we pull. It is a good life."

One Strongarm she could always find was Urrt, because of his especially lumpy head, his lopsided smile, and his great size. He was several hundred years old—not at all old by Urrmsh standards. (None of the Armfolk kept a very careful count of their ages, though many of them remembered the world from when it was quite different.) Tonight Urrt was rowing on the right, at the very front. Cymbril threaded her way up the center aisle, stepping over the puddles that leaked from the canal above. The Strongarms liked to be wet. They glistened in the light from two rows of lanterns on strings.

There were just over three hundred of the Armfolk in the Pushpull Chamber, half on each side, two on each bench; the room itself lay in the center of the Rake's belly. Cymbril marveled that even this many rowers could move the Rake. It was a matter of levers, Urrt had told her: with a lever long enough, you could topple a mountain.

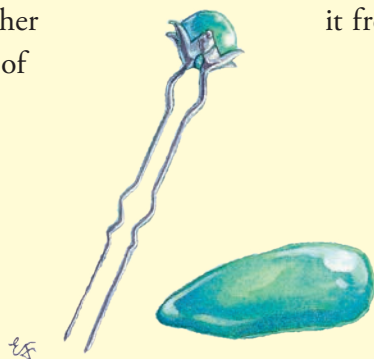
Cymbril settled in the dry front corner against a bulkhead, Urrt towering like a cliff above her. Pulling up her knees, she wedged



her toes against the edge of his foot, its toenails cracked and yellow with age. He said nothing, but his gentle eyes watched her each time he rocked forward, his fingers locked on the limb-thick oar. When the song rolled toward Urrt, he sang, his deep voice resonating in the boards. Cymbril hummed on the same pitch.

She untied the silver twine from her hair, pulling free the jeweled pin. Her hair tumbled over her shoulders. Sliding the twine into her pocket, she withdrew the stone and laid her two treasures on the “table” made by her skirt between her knees.

A stone from her father, a hairpin from her mother . . . but Cymbril had no faces to go with the words. Mother . . . Father. They had both died of the plague that swept the village where Cymbril had been born. After that, there had been an old woman who cared for Cymbril—or fed her, at least. Cymbril mostly remembered her red scarf and hairy chin. Then there was the Thunder Rake, and a woman of bony angles who’d taught Cymbril to sing. Selene—that was the woman’s name. On the day Master Rombol sold Selene in Banburnish Crossing, Cymbril had learned that even people had prices. She’d understood then that Rombol wasn’t her uncle or a charitable merchant who’d given her a home. He had bought her with shiny coins, just as people bought songbirds to keep in cages.



Cymbril held the hairpin between her fingers. The tiny jewel at its top absorbed and magnified whatever light was present—just now, the flickering pink of the Pushpull lanterns. The smooth, flat, palm-sized stone from her father, though, always glowed with the blue-green fire of marsh lights, of cats’ eyes . . . of the moon on a midnight sea. “Urrt,” Cymbril said suddenly, trilling the *r* with practiced ease, “tell me again.”

Urrt chuckled, the sound of rocks tumbling. “Never fear, little nightingale. You’ve heard it so often, you’ll never forget.” The thick oar-lever passed back and forth over her head.

“Please tell me again. I like hearing it from you.”

“Well, well,” said Urrt, his voice hushed so as not to disturb the Strongarms’ song—but the song echoed everywhere and could no more be disturbed than the earth’s bones or oceans’ tides. “It is in the songs of the Urrmsh: the stone is from your father and is the color of his

eyes. The pin is from your mother and once adorned her hair. She was the most beautiful woman in the Misty Vales, and the sweetest singer, too. You, Cymbril, have her face and her voice.” He glanced sideways at her with a full-moon eye. “Someday, little thrush, you must learn to sing in Urrmsh.”

Cymbril smiled. The Urrmsh traveled everywhere; there were many others besides those on the Rake. In woods and swamps, on grassy

hills, they gathered to exchange their songs. The music wove together news and wisdom in ways that made the important things hard to forget. Cymbril carefully let the treasures slip back and forth in the lap of her skirt—a bright circle, a pink spark. If she squinted, they looked like a firefly and the moon.

She was just beginning to feel drowsy when a long, braying tone resounded through the chamber, shattering the song. Wiltwain's horn.

"Hooooo!" called the Strongarms together and leaned back on their oars. Behind the walls, winches shuddered. Out in the night, the Rake's wheels ground to a halt. The steel claws plunged into the ground and rested.

Wiltwain the Overseer, Rombol's second-in-command, had blown the signal on his seashell trumpet. He appeared from the stairway, thrusting his sharp nose and chin through the moss curtain. "Just for a short bit, lads," he said, his glittering eyes sweeping the ranks of rowers. "We've got company coming aboard."

Company after sundown. What could this mean? Cymbril stowed the treasures in her pocket and sprang to her feet.

"See what it is, songbird," Urrt said when Wiltwain had gone. "But don't get stepped on."

Cymbril laid a hand on his enormous knuckle, smiled at him and his bench mate, and dashed one level up the spiral stairs. As she ran along the Hall of Wagons, where the rolling tents and shops stood ready to stream down into Highcircle tomorrow, she heard the snarling of the ramp's chains. It was unusual for Rombol to lower the ramp after dark. The lands between towns were haunted by robbers,

wolves, and worse things—things that the old cooks whispered of in the scullery on winter nights, especially when they wanted to keep the younger girls from giggling around the banked hearth fires.

Hurrying forward with a shivery lightness in her chest, Cymbril wondered what might come up the ramp out of the night.

Lantern light flared in the lofty hold ahead. There came a murmur of voices, the thump of the jointed ramp unfolding and striking the ground, and the neighing of horses. Rombol called a greeting to someone. Cymbril worked her way forward among the silent carts, their wheels braced with wedges. She was on the first balcony; three more levels soared above, but Rombol and his party—a few merchants and a squad of armored guards—stood on the chamber's floor one story below, where the ramp slanted down into the dark outside the Rake. Cymbril eased into the driver's seat of the front wagon, its yoke set against the balcony rail. Peeking over the footrest, she could see Rombol's group, but they weren't likely to see her . . . unless her hair glimmered. Its gold highlights did that in the glow of fires. She quickly gathered her hair, jammed it down her collar, and pulled her hood close around her face.

Cloaked riders rumbled up into the hold, night mist swirling around the horses' hoofs. Spurs glinted on muddy boots. Some riders had long bows across their backs. Sheathed swords were tucked beneath their knees, and their eyes shone watchfully in the shadows of their cowls. Cymbril counted seven strangers.

They stayed in the saddles but guided their horses to the sides, making way for the eighth newcomer, a woman on a pale chestnut steed. She flung back her hood and shook her flowing hair.

Cymbriel drew in her breath. The woman was not particularly tall, but she carried herself in a way that made her seem somehow larger than the rough men around her. A faint scar ran down her left cheek to the jaw. Her wide-set eyes fixed on Rombol. She did not smile.

"Brigit!" Rombol spread his arms as if greeting a close friend, but he kept his distance. "What news?"

"News of your great good fortune," she said.

Rombol chuckled, hands on his barrel-like waist. "And what good fortune is mine?"

"The fortune of the purchase you are about to make." Brigit signaled one of her riders, who prodded his black horse forward. Cymbriel had thought the rider was a fat man, but when he shrugged open his cloak, she saw that he'd been concealing a child on the saddle before him.

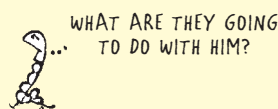
Cymbriel stared. It was a boy—but unlike any she'd ever seen. He had a long, beautiful face, a tiny mouth, and shoulder-length hair precisely the color of the moon. He wore a gray tunic that rippled like the swirling patterns of a stream. His luminous eyes shifted in color as the lanterns flickered, now liquid brown, now golden.

Rombol had begun to laugh at Brigit's words, but the sound snagged in his throat. For a full count of five, he gawked at the boy.



At last Brigit showed the hint of a smile. "Yes. It's one of them. A Fey child. A Sidhe. They're not at all easy to catch. But he'll be worth the price."

to be continued



OPPOSITES

by Richard Wilbur

An *omen* is a sign of some
Occurrence that is *yet to come*,
As when a star, by tumbling down,
Warns that a king will lose his crown.

A *clue*, by contrast, is a sign
By means of which we can divine
What has already taken place—
As when, to cite a common case,
A fish is missing from a platter
And the cat looks a little fatter.



What is the opposite of *pillow*?
The answer, child, is *armadillo*.
“Oh, don’t talk nonsense!” you protest.
However, if you tried to rest
Your head upon the creature, you
Would find that what I say is true.
It isn’t soft. From head to tail
It wears a scratchy coat of mail.
And furthermore, it won’t hold still
Upon a bed, as pillows will,
But squirms, and jumps at every chance
To run away and eat some ants.

So there! Admit that I was right,
Or else we’ll have a *pillow fight*.





ARMADILLO!

An *echo's* opposite is the *cry*
To which the echo makes reply.
Of course I do not mean to claim
That what they say is not the same.
If one of them calls out "Good day"
Or "Who are you" or "Hip, hooray"
Or "Robert has an ugly hat,"
The other says exactly that.
But still they're opposites. Know why?
A cry is *bold*; an echo's *shy*,
And though it loves to shout yoo-hoo
It won't until it hears from you.

PILLOW!



The opposite of *less* is *more*.
What's better? Which one are you for?
My question may seem simple, but
The catch is—more or less of *what*?
"Let's have more everything!" you cry.
Well, after we have had more pie,
More pickles, and more layer cake,
I think we'll want *less stomach ache*.

The best thing's to avoid excess.
Try to be temperate, more or less.



Spring pussyfooted into the neighborhood. Daffodils nodded on long stems, and new grass edged sun-warmed sidewalks. Winter held on tighter among the trees, though. Seth didn't mind. Everything that mattered to him was in the woods.

His boots slipped on lichen-covered rocks as Seth scrambled over a stone wall. He'd grown over the winter, and his longer arms and legs seemed sometimes to get in his way. As he entered the woods, musty air chilled him, and newly sprouted oak leaves made shadows flicker. He tugged at a rotten log. Did the beetles and centipedes underneath it sense spring? The log, still frozen to the ground, didn't budge.

He took up a stick and poked at a decayed stump. "Carpenter ants! But where's the queen?" Here by himself, Seth spoke out loud, as if to someone walking alongside. He would have liked a companion. But no one who knew him would have expected him to say more than three words in succession. Being alone was easier.

Still, he wondered what it would be like to share these woods with someone. He pictured wandering there with different classmates and shook his head over each of them, now and then raising his eyebrows, too, or cringing at some imagined awkwardness. Then he tried to see himself walking with his father, instead, and snorted a laugh loud enough to startle a magpie into scolding him and flapping away.

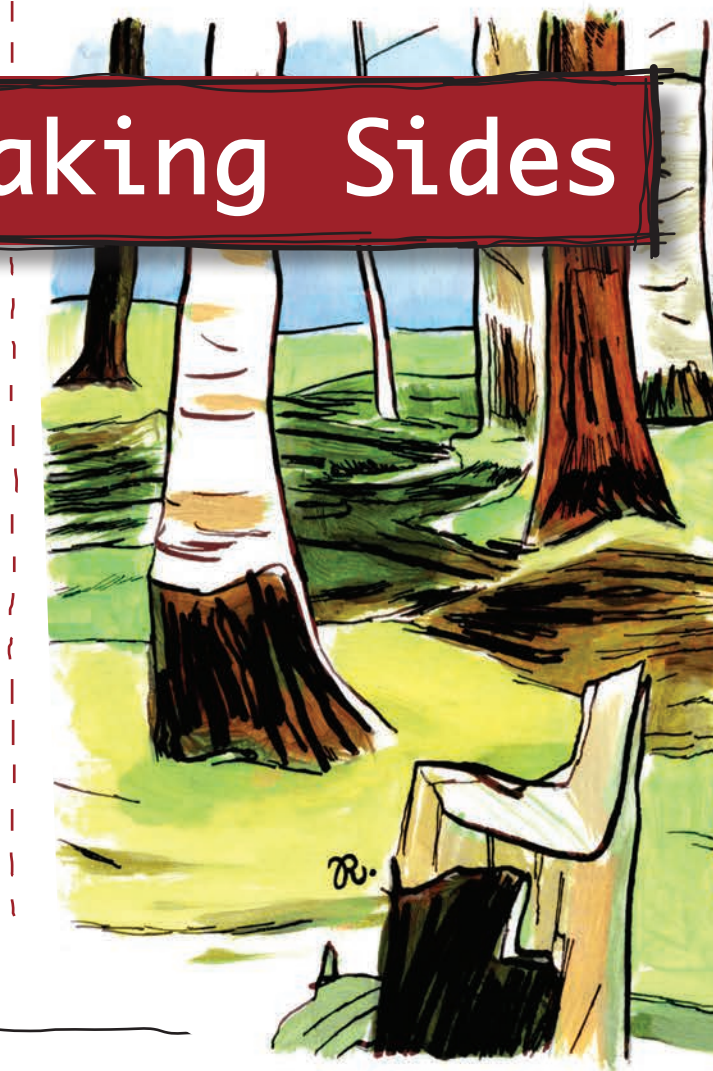
A hint of motion caught his eye, and he turned. Nothing. "Listen," he whispered.

Twigs brushed each other; dead grasses rustled in the still air. Squinting through the trees, Seth followed the tiny sounds. He shifted his weight gingerly as he stepped, keeping quiet. Look—a flash of gray? He rounded a broad tree trunk and saw the wolf.

Seth froze. The wolf paused in profile, raising its muzzle to sniff the air.

It turned and trotted deeper into the woods. The boy remembered to breathe again and followed stealthily, remaining downwind. He kept his distance, catching uncertain glimpses of the animal until dusk made tracking it impossible and he needed to be home.

Taking Sides





I'VE NEVER SEEN A WOLF.
(BLINK, BLINK) DO WE HAVE
WOLVES IN CRICKET COUNTRY?



NO, WE HAVE SOMETHING
... EVEN MORE
DANGEROUS.

HIS INITIALS ARE:
U.B.

That night Seth searched the Internet, memorizing wolf signs and habits. Had he actually seen a wolf? Maybe it had been only a large dog, or even a coyote. Or a wolf-dog hybrid; half wolf and half dog, half wild and half—well, never really tame.

A different boy, bright-eyed and exaggerating at the dinner table, might have told his family about the thrill of spotting a wolf. But for Seth, “family” was just Dad, and dinner wasn’t something they sat down to at the table. Woods and weather, books and wild things made Seth who he was. Dad preferred loud guitars, yelling at ball games on TV,

| and drinking beer with his buddies. They got |
| along, but no more than that.

| Next morning, Seth scoured the woods for |
| a bit of fur or some scat. Sharp air numbed his |
| cheeks. As he came to the field separating wilds |
| and backyards, he heard a dog yap—frantic |
| high-pitched barks that ended in choked gasps |
| as it reached the limit of its chain. “Quit it, |
| dog. You’ll scare . . . oh, you smell the wolf!” |
| Seth turned toward the sound.

| He caught the whole scene in a flash: the |
| wolf, crossing the field between woods and |
| yard, picking up speed. The little dog, whining |
| and pulling against its chain. The rail fence,

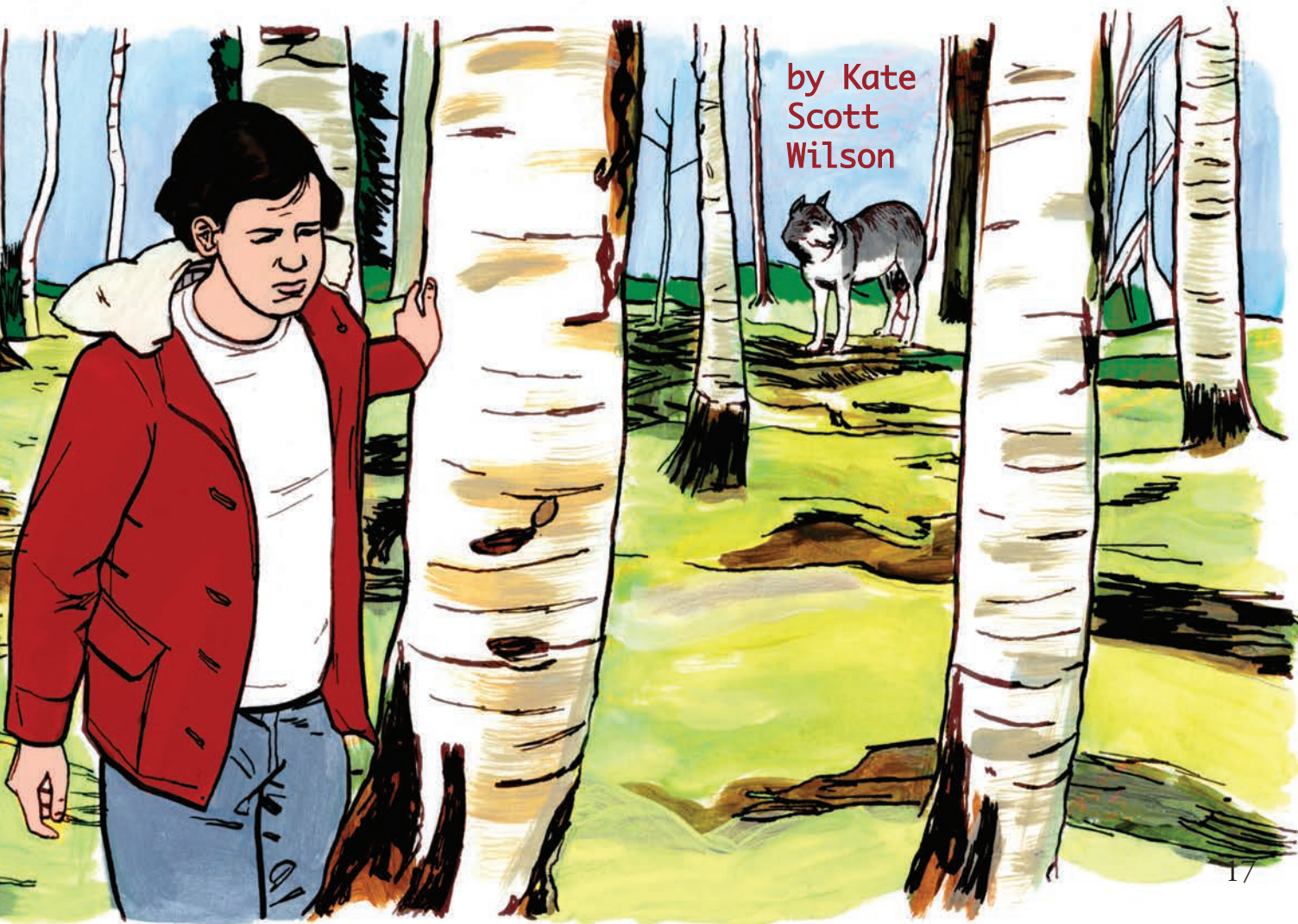


HERE,
SCAT
MEANS
DOO-DOO.



WHERE?
DID I
STEP IN
IT?

by Kate
Scott
Wilson



no protection. Time slowed. Seth didn't yell. His gut froze. Now the wolf wasn't some fantastic, unexpected adventure. It was a hungry predator, and Seth watched in horror.

A fat man inside the house yanked open the sliding door and roared, "Shut up!" He unchained the whimpering dog and took it inside. He never saw the wolf.

The wolf lowered itself into the yellowed grass and disappeared.

Seth raced home, editing the scene in his mind's eye. He imagined the wolf lunging at the helpless dog. He pictured a small child taking the place of the dog. He saw the wolf's gaping jaws and cruel fangs. He heard horrible sounds.

"Dad! Dad! Dad!"

Seth's dad straightened up from clearing away garden debris and leaned on his rake, frowning. "Whoa, Seth." Pressing a hand into the small of his back, he stretched and sighed. "What is it?"

Seth blurted, "Wolf—in the woods!" He winced as his dad raised a skeptical eyebrow, but then caught his breath and told the story from beginning to end.

Dad shook his head. "Son, there haven't been wolves here for, oh, seventy years or more. You saw a stray dog, a big one maybe, but no wolf."

"Come with me then. Come see for yourself." Seth hunched his shoulders under his father's gaze. "Please."

Silence. Seth already had turned his head away, and his body had begun to follow when the answer came.



"O.K., then. Hang on."

Dad grabbed his digital camera from the house, and they set off. Seth snuck glimpses of his father from the corner of his eye. Was he angry? No, his narrowed eyes looked annoyed, but his mouth was twisted in a kind of crooked grin. Just Dad's usual bewilderment about him, then. The boy's shoulders relaxed.

The woods felt different to Seth with his father there, more ordinary somehow: Middle America replacing Middle Earth. Still, he spoke softly. "A screech owl nests in that cottonwood tree; see the hole in the trunk?" He smiled, enjoying the companionship and surprised by his own comfort with it. "I was looking for wolf signs when I heard the barking. Wolf scat has lots of bones and animal hair, so you can tell it's not dog droppings."

"Find any?"

"Well, not yet. See in those rocks? A fox had a den there last year. I haven't seen her

**SKEPTICAL
MEANS
DISBELIEVING.**



OH
YEAH?
SAYS
WHO?
(HA-HA)

**BEWILDERMENT MEANS
CONFUSION AND UNCERTAINTY.
(BEEN THERE, DONE THAT...)**





this spring, but with a wolf around, she wouldn't stay, would she?"

Seth and his dad spoke more to each other in that hour in the woods than they had at home in the last month. It felt natural here to Seth. Here he knew what to say. But finally, reluctantly, he ended their conversation. "We'd better be quiet now if we want to find that wolf."

Father and son prowled from one end of the small woods toward the other, and there—at the point farthest from any homes—a gray shape trotted along a stony ridge.

Somehow the wolf didn't seem such a threat anymore. Maybe they could warn the neighbors, Seth thought. Maybe he could feed it, maybe he could . . . well, not tame it, exactly . . . befriend it? But these thoughts he kept to himself.

Whir. Dad took a quick photograph, zooming in close. "All right," he whispered, nodding at a grinning Seth as the wolf moved away.

Then Dad pulled out his phone. The air felt like winter again to Seth as he heard his dad request the number for Animal Control.

A burning began in the boy's chest and raced up to his scalp and down to his toes. "Dad, hey, no, hey!" He reached for Dad's arm. His father shook him off and waved, pushing his palm toward Seth as a signal to back off. Seth opened his mouth, shut it, shook his head, and hissed in frustration. Meanwhile, Dad argued with the dispatcher until she agreed to send officers.

Ending the call, Dad said, "O.K., now—what?"

But Seth no longer had any words. He trudged toward home, not looking to see if his dad followed.

The officers arrived at the house in minutes—a tall woman with one gray braid that reached her waist, and a younger man with a sandy moustache. Their eyes brightened as they studied the pictures on the camera's

ANIMAL
CONTROL!
HIS DAD
CALLED
THE DOG-
CATCHERS!



HE HAD
TO DO
SOMETHING...
WHAT DID
SETH EXPECT?

monitor. While the man got gear from their van, the woman asked Seth where he'd seen the wolf, and when, and doing what.

Seth answered in single syllables, looking down at his feet or staring into the distance. He glanced once at his father but then looked away from the criticism of Dad's pursed lips and frowning eyebrows. Shifting his eyes, seeking a distraction, he noticed cages and crates of different sizes in the van, and a folded net and tarp on the ground. And rifles. Two of them.

The boy's mouth fell open as he stared at the weapons. The woman followed his gaze and picked up the smaller rifle.

"This one shoots tranquilizer darts, Seth. What we hope to do is catch your wolf, check it out, and transport it to a better habitat, maybe to the wolf sanctuary outside of Fort McDunn. This animal is almost sure to be a wolf-dog mix or the result of someone's attempt to have a pet wolf. A wild wolf, even a lone one, would never come so close to people's homes."

Seth closed his mouth, sucking his lips over his teeth. He didn't want to hear about cages and fences. Or about the other rifle.

He turned and walked stiff-legged into the house, then straight through it into the backyard, moving faster; past the barbecue, around the shed, and into the gap between shed and fence where he leaned against the wooden slats. Eyes closed, hands clasped behind his neck, he lowered his head.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry." The whisper came harsh from his tight throat. "I don't know what else I should have done."

His stomach clenched as he faced his betrayal of the wolf. "I didn't know he'd call them, I didn't." But even as he spoke, he wondered if that was true.

If he had been younger, he would have cried. He would have pressed his hands tight over his ears to shut out the world. Instead, he pictured the wolf, trying to stay hidden in the suburban woods, preying on small pets, scavenging for dog food or road kill to survive. He pictured himself trying to feed the wolf, pretending it was harmless. No good, he thought. It deserves better, it deserves . . .

Seth took a deep breath, blew it out slowly, and straightened his back.

The wolf deserves to live, at least, he thought. And these people are here now. No time to come up with some other plan—I have to move. "Now," he said to himself and sighed, pushing off from the fence.

He caught up with his dad and the officers as they crossed the field. Seth knew the woods better than anyone, and he guided the three with care and skill into the maze of trees. But his stomach knotted. He bit his lip hard enough to hurt. The part of him that hoped they wouldn't find the wolf fought the part that wanted to have this done with.

As the mismatched band of hunters continued to move carefully through his woods, staying downwind of the unexplored sections, Seth breathed more easily. Maybe the wolf had moved on. Maybe it would become some other boy's problem.

Then he gave a silent gasp as the older officer's hand gripped his shoulder. She

I GUESS IT WOULD BE
HARD FOR A WOLF TO
LIVE SO CLOSE TO PEOPLE.




SOMETIMES PEOPLE HAVE
A HARD TIME BEING
CLOSE TO PEOPLE!

pointed. The wolf stood, its head raised, its body turned away from the hunters, on a rock outcropping not fifty feet away. The other officer slowly raised the tranquilizer rifle. Just as slowly, the wolf turned its head and looked back, over its shoulder.

The man aimed. Wolf's eyes met boy's eyes for an instant. And for an instant Seth tried to read something into that glance, something of forgiveness or understanding or maybe simply awareness. But he knew better.

| Then a clear shot with a tranquilizer
| dart—no need for a bullet—and they tracked
| the drowsy animal until it fell. It didn't take
| long. Seth helped roll the wolf onto the tarp,
| helped carry it to the van and the cage.

| Not free. But alive. That had to be
| enough.

| Seth turned and saw his father watching
| him. Grinning, Dad nodded and cuffed Seth
| awkwardly on the shoulder. That had to be
| enough, too. 

The Wolf

by Georgia Roberts Durston

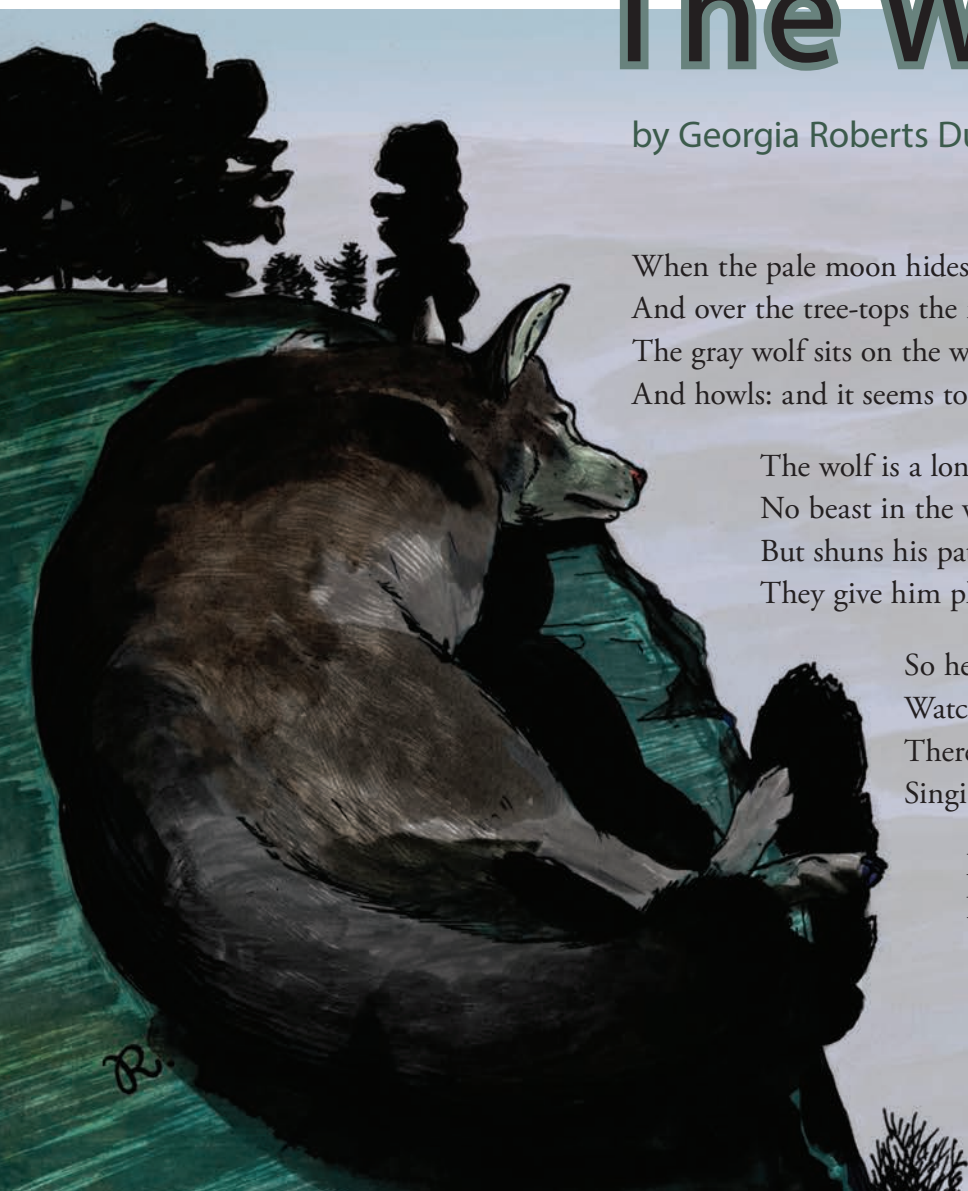
When the pale moon hides and the wild wind wails,
And over the tree-tops the nighthawk sails,
The gray wolf sits on the world's far rim,
And howls: and it seems to comfort him.

The wolf is a lonely soul, you see,
No beast in the wood, nor bird in the tree,
But shuns his path; in the windy gloom
They give him plenty, and plenty of room.

So he sits with his long, lean face to the sky
Watching the ragged clouds go by.
There in the night, alone, apart,
Singing the song of his lone, wild heart.

Far away, on the world's dark rim
He howls, and it seems to comfort him.

Art by Rama Hughes



THE YOUNG WOLF sat on a rock, sniffing the raw wind intently. He could pick out the sticky-sweet smell of a spruce and the pungent odor of Arctic fox. But the strongest smell was of approaching snow.

SOME
LITTLE
ONES ARE
NO CHORE
TO WATCH.



BUT DO YOU
WATCH HER,
OR DOES SHE
WATCH YOU?

Without warning, one of the pups from his pack knocked him from his rock. A second pup joined the playful fighting. The wolf allowed the pups to charge into him. They were much too small to really hurt him, and it was his turn to watch them while their parents rested.

Just then, a piercing howl interrupted their play.

Fifty yards away, the oldest male was pacing nervously. Back and forth he went, body stiff and ears

rammed forward. He looked toward the mountains and then raised his head and howled. His mate joined him, and their voices blended in an eerie, sad call.

The young wolf saw what was troubling them. The caribou herd was a gray smudge on the horizon. The caribou had also



smelled the snow and were moving to a new feeding ground.

The young wolf trotted over to the older wolves, the pups tripping after him. Another winter had come to the Arctic, and the wolf pack must follow the caribou.

For eight days, the wolves trailed the herd. The oldest male and female took turns leading. The young wolf was only two and not very experienced at finding trails. He watched the pups and made sure they did not wander off.

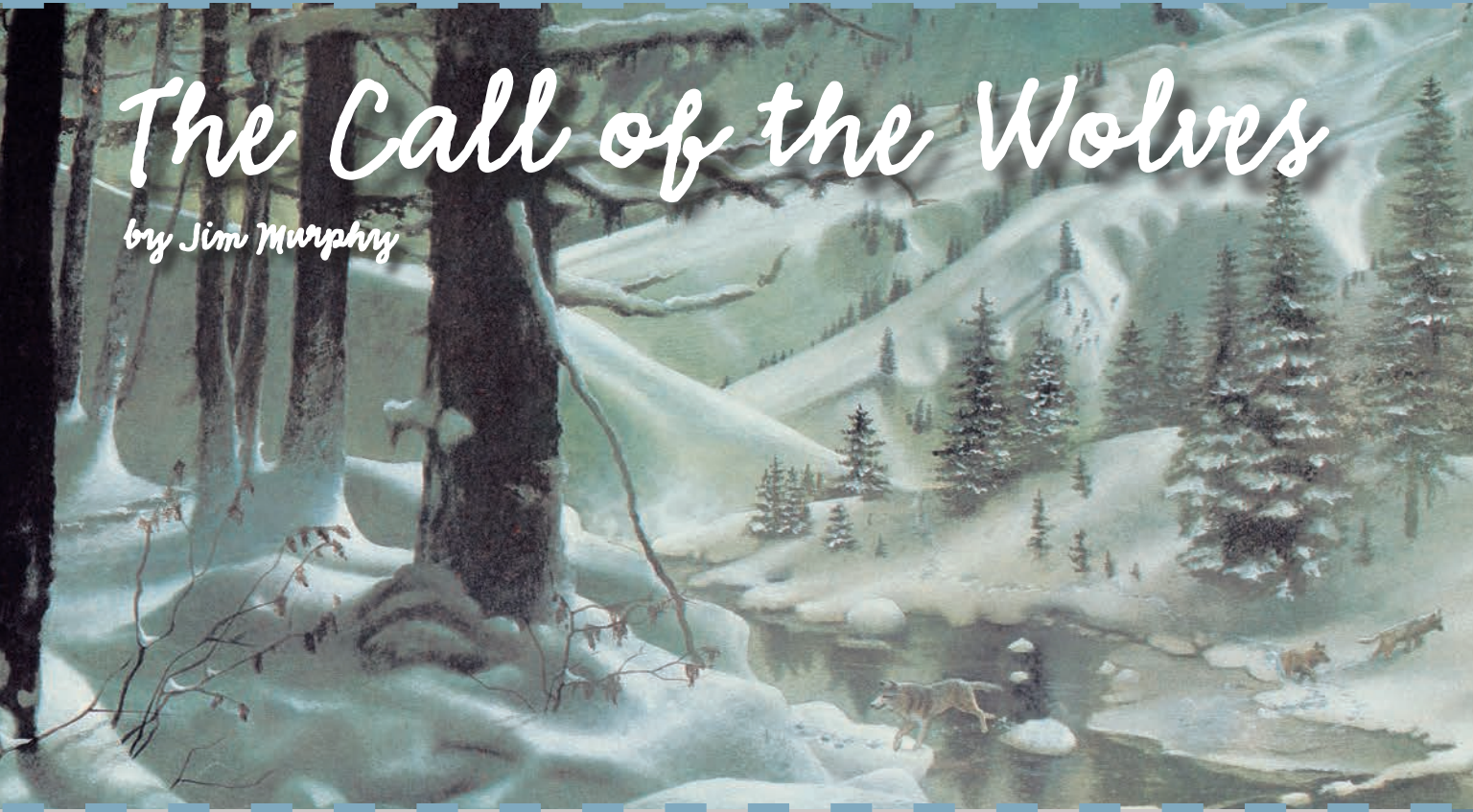
The terrain grew steeper and more dangerous, and snow began falling. Near the mountains, the pack came to a stream. One at a time, the wolves leaped across. On the other side, they entered a forest of tall trees.

Illustrated by Mark Alan Weatherby

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The Call of the Wolves

by Jim Murphy



At last, the pack came to a long, thin lake. Half a mile away, the caribou had gathered in an area filled with trees, plants, and berries. The caribou had found their winter food, and the wolves would stay nearby.

The pack found a rock overhang that provided shelter from the snow. They rested, but at dusk they were up again. The journey had left them with a gnawing hunger, and they were eager to hunt.

Down through the snowy woods they glided, heads low to the ground, eyes taking in every detail. The powerful odor of the caribou drew them on.

The herd had moved to a flat, open space at the tip of the lake. From there, they could see the wolves moving toward

them. Quickly the caribou pulled together in a protective circle, adults on the outside, the young and the sick in the center.



A HUNGRY WOLF WOULD BE GREAT
MOTIVATION TO RUN FAST!





right, his paws a blur as he ran. But instead of finding safety, the young wolf was running toward a sheer cliff and open sky. Behind him was the terrible plane. He had no other choice. Without hesitating, the wolf launched himself off the cliff.

He sailed into the air, then began dropping. Down, down he fell. A second later, he crashed into a mound of branches and snow. The impact crumpled his rear leg under him, but he couldn't stop. The plane was roaring toward him again.

He tried to run, but each step sent a painful stab up his leg. He shifted his weight so he could use only three legs, and his speed increased. Just before the plane reached him, he made it into the trees.

The wolf kept running through the forest, away from the sound of the plane. Finally,

The wolves spread out. Since a healthy caribou could outrun a wolf, the pack had to pick the right animal. The young wolf circled cautiously; it did not take him long to spot a sickly animal. The other wolves saw the same caribou and slowly moved in. Then they began trotting. The next second, the wolves burst into a forty-miles-per-hour sprint.

The entire caribou herd turned to flee. But at the same moment, a plane loaded with illegal hunters zoomed over the treetops.

A series of sharp, angry shots rang out from the plane. The frightened caribou charged back at the wolves. Within moments, the young wolf found himself in a confusion of snorting, frantic animals. He searched for his pack, but saw only churning legs. To his right, he spotted a sliver of light and headed for the opening.

He broke free of the stampeding caribou only to find the plane coming after him. More shots were fired. He dodged left, then

POACHERS
CHASING AND
SHOOTING
FROM
PLANES—NO
FAIR! I HOPE
THEY RUN
OUT OF GAS!
I HOPE THE
PROPELLER
FREEZES!



darkness and pain forced him to stop, and he curled up in a tight, warm ball to sleep.

At dawn, the wolf shook off the snow that had piled up on him. Then he peered out from under the trees and searched for the hunters. Except for snow, the sky was empty.

Next, he limped into the open and let out a long, lonely howl. There was no answering call. He had to find his pack.

All day the wolf struggled through the snow. It wasn't until late in the afternoon that something moved in the distance. He studied it and made out the ghostly shape of a wolf. A second wolf appeared. Was this his pack?

He was about to approach when two other adult wolves came into view. The young wolf had trespassed into another pack's territory. And if these wolves saw that he was injured, they would follow him, hoping for an easy kill. He scurried away.

The storm grew worse, and the wolf had to use his chest to plow through the snow. He

was so tired that his breathing became a low, throaty panting.

He turned to see if the wolves were tracking him. Far off, the forest was alive with skulking shadows and glowing eyes. He did not rest.

Two hours later, the wolf detected a familiar odor. Food. The wolves were somewhere behind him, but it had been many days since he'd eaten. He moved toward the smell.

The food scent led him over a hill. More odors came to him—wood smoke, metal, wet fur, and something that reminded him of the hunters. All were confusing, but he did not stop. Food was too close.

He came around an upended tree. Ahead, he saw a tiny cabin, a spot of light seeping from a window. Nothing moved, but the strange sight made him hesitate. He inched forward, his eyes probing the dark.

Suddenly, the snow next to him exploded, and a sled dog leaped at him, its teeth snapping. Other mounds erupted with angry dogs straining at their chains. The young wolf fled into the cold night.



Toward morning, the storm lessened, and the wolf grew nervous. The other wolves were getting closer. And in the light the hunters might see him. Then he heard rushing water. He'd found the stream. The water splashed and roared over ice-covered, slippery rocks, and below the falls the rocks juttied out of the water like jagged black teeth.

The barking of the other pack grew louder. Still, the pain in the young wolf's leg made him pause. A sudden growling behind him forced him to act. He fixed his eyes on the opposite side, tensed his muscles, and jumped.

His foreclaws touched rock and dug in, but his rear legs splashed into the icy water. The water tugged at him and tried to pull him under, and his legs fought to hold on. Finally, with one great heave, he pulled himself out.

Behind him, the other pack had reached the water's edge. The young wolf pushed himself up and started to run, only to find the path in front blocked by two wolves. He froze. Had the other wolves circled around to cut him off? All of a sudden, two pups charged into the open, barking wildly. He'd done it—he had found his way home to his pack!

Before the young wolf could take another step, his pack ran past him and challenged the other pack. When the other wolves saw them, they turned and fled.

The young wolf sprinted the short distance to his pack and sniffed to show he was friendly. But the pups did not wait for the young wolf to greet the adults. They sprang at him in a frenzy of affection, knocking him over and licking his face.

The oldest male and female raised their

heads and howled a greeting. The young wolf and the pups howled, too, their call drifting over the hills and snow for many miles.

Every animal who heard the call of the wolves knew that the pack was together again. 🐜



SAFE
TOGETHER.
YAY!





Kaya and Lone Dog

by Janet Beeler Shaw

This book is about a girl named Kaya. She finds a lone dog. She cannot take it to her village because the people say no. Kaya feeds the dog, and the dog has puppies and saves Kaya's brother from a bear! Do the village people let her keep the dog? What will the puppies do? You will have to read the book.

Katie, age 10
via e-mail



she learns she is really a princess, the daughter of a murdered queen, and the evil wizard Dom Daniel is trying to murder her also. Jenna meets Boy 412 and Dom Daniel's apprentice, who claims to be Septimus Heap! Then the histories of Boy 412 and "Septimus" begin to unravel. . . .

Mae, age 10
via e-mail

East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon

by Naomi Lewis

illustrated by P. J. Lynch

This is a beautiful tale of a lassie who must search out the four winds. The North Wind is the only one that can blow her to the castle where her lover resides. The drawings are lifelike and gorgeous. It is a mystical and strange story wrapped around incredible drawing. This book is a perfect read.

Lily W., age 10
Fultonville, New York

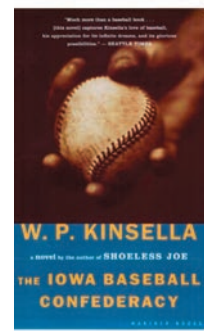


The Iowa Baseball Confederacy

by W. P. Kinsella

A young man named Gideon Clarke follows his father's footsteps and tries to prove the existence of the Iowa Baseball Confederacy, a league that no one remembers and that is not recorded anywhere. Read it and you'll like it.

Alex, age 15
via e-mail

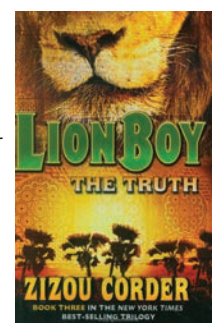


Lionboy Trilogy

by Zizou Corder

Lionboy is fabulous! It's about a boy who can speak lion's tongue. One day his parents (famous scientists) got kidnapped and taken far away. Lionboy went to rescue his parents and got caught up in a circus! It's exciting; the suspense is great!

John A., age 11
via e-mail



Magyk (Septimus Heap, Book 1)

by Angie Sage

Septimus Heap, seventh son of a seventh son, which would make him a very powerful wizard, supposedly dies at birth. His father finds a baby girl, Jenna. When Jenna turns ten,



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Melodious

BY LINDA LEE SAND

JUST ABOUT EVERYBODY'S

heard of Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, and all those other fellows who settled this country when it was just achin' to be tamed. But doggone it, why hasn't anyone written a speck about Melodious Angelinika Carlson? Well, I'd be flattered to tell her tale. And believe me, I'll set all the facts straighter than two knittin' needles in a ball of yarn. I'm warnin' you though . . . this story just might take your breath away.

It all started when Melodious was just a babe. That girl was so small, her mama had to use a sunflower-seed shell as a cradle. But it wasn't long, three hours in fact, before Melodious had to switch to a walnut shell. And by jiminy, if she wasn't bustin' out of a watermelon rind by day's end.

"Big-boned," said Mama.

"Like you," said Papa.

Melodious kept growin' faster than a weed in a patch of peppers. But it was her sweet voice that got people cluckin' like hens. The first time she gave a cry in church, the Reverend Elmer Olson stopped preachin' and shouted out: "By heavens! It's an angel!" Why, that's how she got her middle name.

"Melodious Angelinika is the music of my heart," said Mama.

"You betcha' she is," said Papa.

Yes, sir, that girl's voice was smoother than melted butter on biscuits. That's why, when Melodious got older, she was not only

the biggest contestant in the county singin' contest, she was the one who brought home the grand champion ribbon every year. It made the whole town pretty proud.

Well, things would have gone on harmoniously if it weren't for those winds that came howlin' across the prairie every spring. They sometimes blew folks clear into the next county and back again before supper.

One night, those winds came down and blew right inside the Carlson cabin. They started tossin' Mama and Papa around like potato peels at Grandma Lena's restaurant. Melodious knew she had to do somethin' pretty quick. So she went outside and grabbed hold of the chimney. Then she took the biggest, deepest, doggonedest breath there ever was. She sucked that wind up through the chimney and swallowed it, like it was no more than a burp.

"UFF DA," said Mama, "the worst of it is over, then."

"You can say that again," said Papa.

UFF DA! Don't you know the worst of it was far from over. Because after that Melodious could not make a sound. Not a whisper or a whistle. Not a high note or a low note. Boy, oh boy, the town missed her singin'. But she was still the cheerful girl she always was. And when the county singin' contest rolled around, Melodious was ready to encourage every off-key, tone-deaf warbler in the bunch.

UFF DA IS AN EXPRESSION OF SURPRISE OR RELIEF BROUGHT TO AMERICA BY NORWEGIAN IMMIGRANTS, BY JIMINY!



Illustrated by Julia Gran

© 2008 by Linda Lee Sand

But the first contestant had hardly peeped out a note before the storm clouds began congregatin' on the horizon. It wasn't two minutes before that mass of clouds started whirlin' toward the town. By heavens, if that wasn't a rotatin', gyratin', circulatin' twist of wind! Yes, sirree, it was a tornado. And not your run-of-the-mill, knock-a-few-barns-over variety, either. No, sirree, it was the Cyclone of the Century and headed straight for the stage.

Melodious knew she had to do somethin' pretty quick. So she grabbed hold of that tornado like a jump rope, but it was in no mood for playground games. It leveled every stone and stump in sight. If the Red River Valley wasn't already as flat as a flounder, that twister was going to make it so. But Melodious hung on and tossed that tornado up so high, it had to fight with the clouds to get back down.

Mercy, that tornado was mad. It landed forty miles east and drilled holes all over Minnesota—10,000 of 'em to be exact. By the time the rain filled them up, there was a lake for every man, woman, and child, plus a few left over for visitors. When that twister was finished, it was so tuckered out that it couldn't even blow the fuzz off a dandelion. Whew! But hold your horses, because that was only the beginning. On the way down, just to be ornery, some of that rain turned into snow and blew up the earliest, coldest, frost-bittenest blizzard there ever was. It created such a flurry that the old Red River got itself all twisted up and started headin' north.

That arctic air come swoopin' down like a Canadian Mountie. The snow was pourin' down faster than flour out of a sifter. If somethin' wasn't done quick, everybody would be as stiff as long johns on a clothesline in winter.

(Right about now you're probably thinkin' I'm making this up, because everybody knows you never take your long johns off in winter. But I'm telling you, this is as close to the unvarnished truth as a person can get.)

Melodious knew she had to do somethin' pretty quick. Just like that, she



tied all the folks together with twine so they wouldn't blow away. Then she blew out the biggest, deepest, doggonedest breath there ever was. All the wind she had deep down inside her from the chimney episode came out in a rush that blew that blizzard way up north. The cold air liked it so much up there, it decided to stay put.

"How about we have a little lunch to celebrate?" said Mama.

HOT DISH IS A KIND OF
MINNESOTAN CASSEROLE.
YUM!



"Don't go to
too much trouble,"
said Papa.

It wasn't too much
trouble scarin' up some hot
dish and buns and a little
sweet relish. They were whoop-
in' it up with coffee and bars
when someone noticed Melodious
was gone.

You talk about gone, too. They
looked high and low, but she was no place.
They looked inside and out, but there wasn't
a trace of her anywhere.

"My heart," said Mama.

"—broken," said Papa.

Oh, it was the palest moon that ever put
itself to bed that night. Yep, without Melodious,
the whole town was sadder than a prairie dog
without a hole.

Then they heard it.
There it was. The most
heavenly darn sound any-
one ever laid ears on.

"Melodious," said
Mama.

"Our angel," said Papa.

Sure enough, Melodious
Angelinika came running
across the prairie singin'
like, well, like someone who
blew a blizzard away and
unstuck her vocal cords
doin' it.

"I'm sorry I was gone so
long," said Melodious. "But
after I blew that blizzard up

north, I started worryin' about what'll happen
when all that snow melts."

Everyone nodded.

"So I went up there and carved a few of
those lakes a little bigger. That way, all that
melted snow will have a place to go."


Believe me, they were pretty good before,
but after Melodious carved 'em bigger, those
were five GREAT lakes.

Then someone said, "Hurray for Melodious!
Sing us a song to celebrate!"

So Melodious sang. She sounded so darn
good that the music brought tears to the eyes
of even the most hard-bit sourpuss.

Some say Melodious sounded like the wind
rufflin' over a wheat field in autumn. Others
tell it like her voice was a spring rainfall trem-
blin' over prairie grassland. Yet there are those
that say she sounded as mysterious as a loon

on a crystal-clear lake in
summer or as delicate as
the first snow in winter.

Truth is, some
say you can still hear
Melodious today. Now,
don't go to too much
trouble, but if you are
ever near the Valley here,
you should stop by. On
some quiet prairie night,
when the stars have just
burst out of eternity
itself, listen with your
own two ears. By heav-
ens, and this is the plain
truth, it just might take
your breath away. 



Spring and the Winter Goblin by Raven Howell

The winter goblin
Eats his greens,
Gobbles grass and leaves
And beans;

Eats until there's nothing left,
'Til Spring accuses him of theft.

Then off he trudges to his den
While Spring fills up her shelves again.

Flying Balloons

The Story of the Montgolfier Brothers

by Joseph Taylor



THE SMALL TOWN of Annonay, France, twittered with disbelief one spring day in 1754. People were gathering to watch thirteen-year-old Joseph Montgolfier attempt the seemingly impossible: surviving a jump from the roof of his family's four-story house.

"We've got to stop the boy!" cried one man. "He'll break his neck."



Nine-year-old Étienne Montgolfier, one of Joseph's fifteen siblings, turned and shook his head. "No, monsieur, he won't. He'll be saved by an old invention of Leonardo da Vinci's. Just watch."

On the steep slate roof, Joseph carefully finished laying out a large sheet of canvas with eight ropes attached to its edges. He tied the ends of the ropes together in a knot, then stood up and peered over the roof's ledge.

"Oh, what would your father say!" a woman grumbled at Étienne. "You're just lucky he's out of town."

Étienne stepped away from the crowd to get a clearer view of the chestnut tree across the carriageway. Its leaves were still, the air calm; the time had come. He waved his arms at his brother, giving him the go-ahead.

Joseph grasped the large knot of ropes, took a deep breath, and jumped.

The canvas billowed up. Joseph swung from side to side. But as he expected from the countless tests he had conducted, his descent was slow. He landed feetfirst on the lawn with only a slight thud. The jump was a success! Grinning, Étienne helped pull the parachute off his triumphant brother as the crowd cheered its approval.

The celebration was not to last, however. Monsieur Montgolfier soon returned from Paris, where he had been conducting business for the family's profitable paper company. He heard what had taken place and was furious. "You could have been killed," he scolded Joseph. "Promise me you will never again put yourself in such danger."

"I promise, Father," the boy answered.

"You need to get your head out of the clouds and apply yourself to your schoolwork. You and your brothers will have to take over the paper mill one day."

Joseph nodded uncertainly. He wanted to live up to his father's expectations, yet his heart and mind were elsewhere.

Illustrated by John Bobbish

© 2008 by Joseph Taylor



GREEK, LATIN, AND THEOLOGY were the subjects taught in his school, but it was science and mathematics that interested Joseph. As often as he could, he would steal time from his studies to escape outdoors, where he could let his mind wander and ponder nature.

One day, he found himself considering the possibility of flight. Though many had tried, no human had ever flown before. Most people thought it impossible. One noted scientist put it bluntly: “It has been proved that we human beings are incapable of rising from the ground and soaring in the air. Why waste time on attempts at changing nature’s basic laws?”

Joseph had other ideas. He saw that many things in nature—bubbles, steam, clouds—did rise. “Surely, a human could lift off the ground and fly, too,” he told Étienne.

Étienne nodded his agreement. “But how?”

Joseph grew so frustrated with his formal studies and his father’s rigid ways that he left school and ran away from home. He found a job picking mulberry leaves on a farm that raised silkworms. It wasn’t exactly the life of a prosperous merchant’s son, and his father soon had him returned to school. Joseph only





grew more determined to study science and mathematics.

Meanwhile, Étienne excelled in school, much to his father's delight. When he grew up, he became an architect, then, when his father retired, manager of the family business.

Joseph, though, stumbled from one failed career endeavor to the next. Although he devised new kinds of paper and manufacturing techniques, most of the family was dismissive of his attempts at papermaking and began referring to toilet paper as "Joseph's paper." Meanwhile, Joseph's dream of flight remained just a dream. Perhaps, he started to think, it always would.

THEN ONE DREARY November day in 1782, as forty-two-year-old Joseph warmed himself beside the fire in his apartment in Avignon, an idea came to him. He noticed how quickly the smoke

rose up the chimney. Could it be, he wondered, that something could float up with it?

He glued together a few pieces of paper to make a small bag, then carefully held it upside down above the flame. When he released it, the bag flew up the chimney with the smoke.

His heart racing, Joseph borrowed some green silk taffeta from his landlady and sewed a larger bag using the dress material. When he filled the bag with smoke, he could hardly believe his eyes. It lifted out of his hands and rose up to the ceiling.

After sending a hurried note to Étienne, Joseph made for Annonay to show his younger brother his discovery. "It's incredible!" Étienne agreed.

The brothers quickly set to work experimenting. For months they tested many different bags—small and large, paper and cloth, square and round, some inflated over a smoky fire on the ground, others carrying kettles of fire up with them. Finally, they designed a large, round bag constructed of layers of paper and cloth that did not carry a kettle. It was 110 feet in circumference, weighed approximately 500 pounds—and was held together by more than 1,800 buttons!

Rumors of the Montgolfier brothers' experiments eventually aroused curiosity, and they were invited to give a public demonstration of their "machine." On 4 June 1783, surrounded by a crowd of local officials and townspeople, Joseph and Étienne built a smoky fire in a grate using straw and wool and sent their balloon aloft. It rose more than 3,000 feet and drifted for ten minutes before landing in a vineyard. The brothers agreed

that the machine could have stayed up longer had the smoke not escaped from its buttoned sides. But the crowd was far from disappointed. Everyone rushed to congratulate them.

Soon the Academy of Sciences and the king and queen themselves, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, invited the Montgolfiers to Paris to demonstrate their invention. Joseph and Étienne were overjoyed. All they needed was some time to construct a better “aerostat,” as they now called the balloon.

But time was something they did not have. A few weeks after their triumph, they learned that their demonstration had prompted a prominent Parisian scientist, Jacques Charles, to begin work on a similar machine. Stunned, the brothers decided that the more worldly Étienne should go to Paris to keep up with events and oversee the construction of their new aerostat.

On 27 August 1783, thousands of people assembled in Paris to witness the flight of Charles’s *Le Globe*. When it was unveiled, Étienne and his new friend, Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier, an ambitious

young scientist, gasped at its small size. Then Étienne realized why it was so small. “He’s using inflammable air!”

Indeed, unlike the Montgolfiers’ aerostat, Charles’s was filled with a gas discovered seventeen years earlier that would soon become known as hydrogen. It was lighter than air—but also explosive. When Charles heard first reports of the Montgolfiers’ flight, he may have believed, with other scientists, that their balloon was lifted with this gas.

Forty-five minutes after *Le Globe* lifted off, the Charles aerostat burst. Its remnants streamed down into a field, where farmers attacked it with pitchforks, thinking it was a strange monster from the sky. Although Charles’s flight was not completely successful, Paris now buzzed with excitement. People talked about exploring the “air ocean” the way they had the sea.

A few weeks later, on 12 September, Étienne demonstrated his new, handsewn aerostat to members of the Academy of Sciences. Though the balloon rose up into the air, a sudden rain sent it crashing to the ground, destroying it. Étienne was horrified. The great demonstration before the king and queen was scheduled in less

than a week! Trying not to panic, he and his workers quickly began to construct an entirely new aerostat.

Not only did they finish in time, but Étienne took the opportunity to add a wicker basket to the new design. This aerostat would carry passengers—animal passengers,

An alien invader? That’s what French peasants thought when Charles’s hydrogen balloon fell from the sky.



to be precise! No living thing had ever flown in a machine. No one knew whether it was even possible for living creatures to endure the air at a high altitude. Étienne felt it was time to try.

On 19 September, near the royal palace at Versailles, the king and queen watched expectantly as the Montgolfier aerostat took off, with a sheep, a rooster, and a duck in its basket. A gust of wind knocked the balloon against its support mast, tearing it slightly. Once in the air, another gust tilted it and sent a plume of smoke streaming out its side. Étienne grimaced and closed one eye. But the aerostat continued at an angle, traveling two miles in eight minutes before landing in a small meadow. All three animals had survived!

Étienne shared the good news with Joseph, then got right to work on their next aerostat: one that might carry people. He was determined to reach this milestone ahead of Charles.

A critical day came a month later on 15 October. In a private test conducted by Étienne, Pilâtre de Rozier became the first person to go up in an aerostat tethered to the ground. He rose eighty-four feet.

The following month, de Rozier and the Marquis François Laurent d'Arlandes, an old friend of Joseph's, were ready to attempt the first free flight of human beings.

All of France seemed to hold its breath.

ON 21 NOVEMBER 1783, de Rozier and the Marquis climbed aboard a montgolfière, as everyone called their flying balloon. Étienne's steady gaze never strayed as the balloon slowly



lifted off the ground, carrying its courageous passengers upward.

On board, the two men waved to the enormous crowd below. Using pitchforks to add straw to an iron fire basket suspended in the neck of the balloon, they kept the montgolfière rising steadily. It wasn't long before the flames swelled too high and set pieces of cloth and rope on fire. D'Arlandes grabbed a wet sponge and put out the flames, saving the balloon—and their lives. Drifting with the wind over Paris, they traveled more than five miles in twenty-five minutes before landing safely on the slope of a hill outside the city. They had done it! All those involved with the historic first human flight were instant heroes.

Ten days later, Jacques Charles and Noël Robert made the second successful air voyage, using a “charlière.”

I WONDER IF
THE SHEEP,
DUCK, AND
ROOSTER
ENJOYED
THEIR FLIGHT.



DID IT
MAKE THEM
THE STARS
OF THE
BARNYARD?



On 19 January 1784, Joseph himself flew with five other men in a gigantic montgolfière 125 feet high. Afterward, a beaming Joseph told Étienne, “I flew! Can you believe it?”

Étienne nodded. “I most certainly can, my dear brother. I always believed you would reach your dreams.”

Joseph hugged him. “Thank you, Étienne. None of it would have happened without you.” His eyes twinkled. “Now, if only we could figure out a way to steer the balloon. . . .”

JOSEPH AND ÉTIENNE’S invention opened up the skies for human flight. In the years that followed, “balloon fever” swept the world, as new “aeronauts” pioneered first-ever flights in different countries.

In 1785, the brothers learned that it was hot air, not smoke as they had thought, which

was responsible for lift. Joseph went on to enjoy further success as an inventor, while Étienne continued to manage the family paper business and became active in politics. The two remained close.

A “steerable” balloon, or dirigible, was finally devised in 1852. The key to its success: it used a steam engine for propulsion.

Although the gas balloon is still in use today, it often contains nonexplosive helium, not hydrogen.

A hot air balloon is still referred to as a montgolfière. 🐞

AUTHOR’S NOTE While we know that Joseph experimented with parachutes as a boy, his leaping from his family’s house may be legend and is not known with certainty.

Up...Up...and Away!

MAKE YOUR OWN hot air balloon!

Here's how.

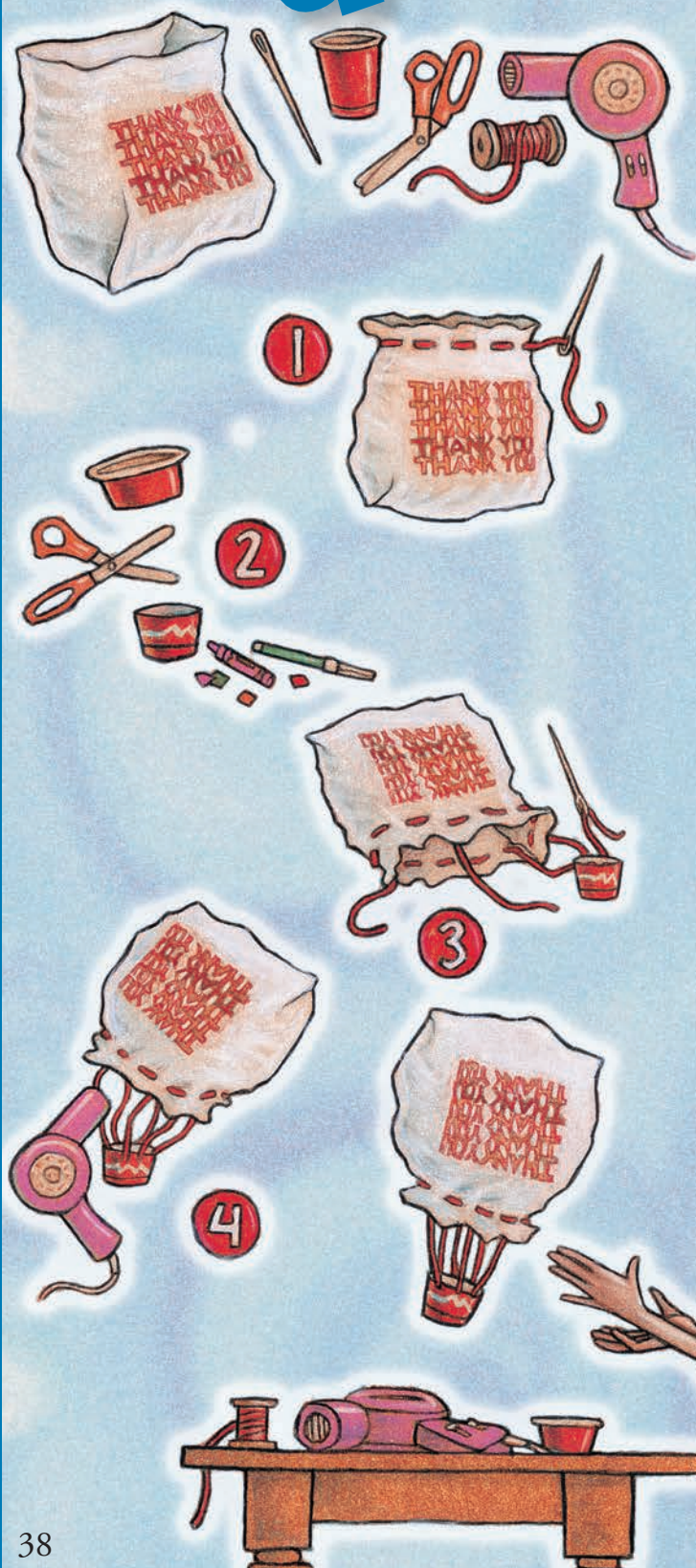
What You'll Need:

- large plastic bag (be sure it has no holes)
- needle
- plastic cup
- scissors
- strong thread
- hair dryer

What to Do:

1. Carefully sew a running stitch around the open end of bag. Pull ends of threads together to form bag into a balloon shape.
2. Cut bottom off plastic cup. Decorate cup with markers, crayons, bits of colored paper, or anything you like.
3. Sew cup to bottom of balloon, looping threads as shown.
4. Fill balloon with hot air from hair dryer. Watch your balloon rise.

How does this work? The hot air from the hair dryer is more buoyant than the room-temperature air. Hot air always rises, so your balloon, filled with the hot air, floats upward. As the air in it cools, the balloon will descend.



Illustrated by
Ryan Wiesbrock

One Horse, One Bird, Two Brothers

A SERBIAN TALE

“GOD BLESS YOU,
my sons.”

High in a tower
above Belgrade town,
Andjelia watched as the
old prince gave his last
blessing to his sons—
Bogdan and her own
husband, Dmitri.

Bogdan knelt,
head bowed, at his
father’s bedside, hands
clasped on the rich
coverlet in prayer.

Dmitri grasped at
the old man’s veined
hand.

“You must . . .
divide everything
between you . . . equally.” The old prince’s
quavering voice could barely be heard above
Dmitri’s muffled sobs.

“As you wish,” Bogdan whispered.

“Don’t . . .” Dmitri choked.



Adapted by Deborah Gee Zigenis

Andjelia hastened
to lay a hand on his
shoulder. He clutched
at it with a grip that
nearly cracked her
bones.

“Farewell . . .” The
old prince breathed the
word like a sigh, then
breathed no more.

“Nay!” Dmitri
leaped to his feet. Fists
swinging, he thrashed
at the bed curtains
and candlestands in
his grief.

All through the
next day and long into
the night, Andjelia

listened as Dmitri and Bogdan made a list
dividing their father’s riches. And all through
the day and long into the night, she winced
and wrung her hands as they quarreled in the
room overhead.

Oh, my husband, have a care. . . . She hugged herself tightly. You are as dangerous in your sorrow as a wounded beast. Grief for your father has enraged you so, you would turn on those you love best.

Finally, over most matters the brothers had agreed, but over two items, they argued yet. Each claimed their father's favorite black horse and his beloved gray falcon.

"They are mine."
Dmitri's voice boomed from above. "Many are my memories of hunting with them on the high hills with our father."

"Ah, my brother," Bogdan's voice was low in reply, "did I not help to train both horse and bird? Many are the memories they hold for me as well."

Finally, as the rising sun beamed through the lancet windows, Dmitri slammed out of the tower room and clattered down the stairs.

Andjelia hurried to his side. "So, my husband, you have settled all between you?"

"We have not!" Dmitri flung on his cloak, then stalked out the door.

"What do you mean?" Andjelia followed him to the courtyard where he slung his father's saddle onto the great, black horse and seized the gray falcon.

"Where are you going?" She caught at his hand.

"Listen." He shook himself free. "And listen well. I am off hunting and I take both falcon and horse. Bogdan is pig-headed," Dmitri said, yanking the cinch tight, "stiff-necked," he buckled it, "and greedy. There is no dealing with him. I am the eldest. How dare he claim that which should be mine!" Dmitri turned and scowled at his brother's chambers. "I cannot bear his presence. While I am away, I order you to kill him. I don't care how. Poison him if you must!"

"Dmitri!" Andjelia drew back. "You cannot mean it. You love your brother. You must not allow your grief and fury to so cloud your reason!"

"I do mean it!" Dmitri jabbed a finger at her. "I must have both horse and bird. If you will not poison my brother, I shall send you away—away from this castle, away from our



IF THEY'VE SHARED EVERYTHING
ELSE, WHY CAN'T THEY SHARE
THE BIRD AND THE HORSE?



MAYBE THEY'RE
TIRED OF SHARING.



DMITRI WOULD RATHER HAVE A BIRD
AND A HORSE THAN A BROTHER AND
A WIFE? HE NEEDS A TIME-OUT.

child, and away from me.” Then he swung up onto the horse and galloped out the gate.

As the hoofbeats faded into silence, Andjelia buried her face in her hands. “How can he ask this of me?” She wept. “If I should poison his dear, good brother, ’twould be a mighty sin. And yet . . .,” she continued, gazing toward the high window of her child’s room, “if I do not poison Bogdan, I must leave my dear baby and all love.”

Wiping her tears, Andjelia turned to the keep. As she passed the heavy doors that led to the treasure chamber, however, she paused.

Silently, she eased open a door. A brush of chill air raised the hairs on her arms as she sped down the stairs.

At the bottom, Andjelia felt her way to the table that held flint and tinder. Then, raising a lighted candle, she turned to the cavernous chamber and blinked at the dazzling display. Jewelry, goblets, platters, and armor overflowed from coffer and shelves.

Moving from chest to chest, pile to pile, Andjelia searched for the one possession she could call her own.

“At last!” She dropped to her knees before a carved box. Her hands trembled as she lifted out a great prayer chalice made of the finest beaten gold.

“This I brought with me from my parents’ house,” she whispered. “Thus it is mine to take now.”

Andjelia shined the chalice with the hem of her gown, then turned to the stairs.

Along the vast corridors and through the kitchens she sped, then down to the cellars,

where she sought out the cask that held her finest wine. Carefully, she drew the stopper and filled the chalice. Then she raised it, closed her eyes, and sniffed.

“Mmm. Now I must find Bogdan.”

Andjelia searched the castle, every corner, every corridor, every hidden, twisted stairway, but Bogdan was not to be found. Finally, she stepped into the chapel garden. “Bogdan . . .,” she whispered.

There he paced, his cloak snapping as he whirled to retrace his steps.

Gravel crunched beneath Andjelia’s feet. Bogdan looked up, his frown changing to a smile.

As she approached, however, his smile faded. “Sister, what troubles you?”

Sweet Jesu! Andjelia cast a glance skyward. I pray I do right. She dropped to her knees. “Oh, my brother!” she cried as she leaned to kiss the hem of his robe.

“Andjelia . . . rise.” Bogdan held out a hand, his expression puzzled.

“Nay.” Andjelia raised the chalice, fixing her gaze upon his tired face. “Tis in honor of you . . . in honor of you, my husband’s brother, that I kneel and offer this golden prayer chalice.”

Bogdan’s brows pulled taut.

Andjelia held the chalice higher. “I grieve at the manner in which you and Dmitri have quarreled. I beg of you, accept this gift, as though it were from him.”

“Thank you, my sister.” Bogdan’s voice was heavy, but his smile was gentle as he took the chalice. “Thank you for your tender care.”



THE KEEP IS THE
INNERMOST TOWER OF
A CASTLE, A PLACE
TO KEEP THINGS SAFE.



A CHALICE IS A DRINKING
CUP OR GOBLET,
LIKE THE ONES USED IN
COMMUNION.

Andjelia clasped her trembling hands together and watched as he raised the chalice to his lips.

HIGH ON the misty hills, Dmitri scowled up at the sky. All morning he had hunted the woods and fields where he and Bogdan had played when they were boys.

Settling the falcon on his glove, he turned the stallion along the shore of a lake. He recalled how their father used to hold him and Bogdan before him in the saddle, and the feel of their sire's laughter rumbling in his chest. Tears rose to his eyes.

"But what's this?" Dmitri sat up straight and squinted as he peered out over the water.

On the lake swam a duck with wings so golden-bright they lit up the valley.

He sighed. "What a trophy that duck would make." And he loosed the falcon to catch it.

Up, up, up into the sky the falcon circled. Then she dove. As she reached to sink her talons into the golden fowl, however, the duck whirled and caught her in his bill. The duck shook the falcon mercilessly over the water.

"Father, forgive me!" Dmitri breathed the words in horror. Then he leaped from his horse and plunged into the icy water. Swiftly he swam to the injured falcon, took her into one hand, and held her high as he struggled to shore.

There Dmitri laid the broken bird on the grass. Its right wing was twisted at an impossible angle. Dmitri shook his head, his heart heavy with sorrow. "How is it with you, my poor, gray falcon?"

"Without my right wing," the falcon gasped, "I feel as a brother would feel without his brother."

Dmitri jerked back. The bird had spoken! Then its words sank in.

Bogdan, he thought. I bade Andjelia poison Bogdan! Heavenly Father, forgive me. What was I thinking?

With trembling hands, Dmitri took up the falcon and leaped astride the horse.

"Please, God," the words pulsed through him as he thundered toward Belgrade, "let me reach home in time to save my brother."

Over the hills Dmitri and the black horse raced. Through the woods and across the plains they flew, up to the very gates of Belgrade town. With a ferocious kick, Dmitri spurred the horse to cross the bridge.

The horse whinnied and collapsed.

For a moment, Dmitri lay stunned upon the ground. Then he rolled to his hands and knees.

"Arise!" He pounded at the saddle, but the horse lay there, its sides heaving.

"Arise, I command you . . . I beg of you . . ." Dmitri's voice broke.

He lifted the horse's head onto his lap, stroked its lathered brow, and wept. Then he unfastened his father's saddle and slung it over his own back and took the falcon upon his glove.

Through the streets of Belgrade he ran, heart pounding, silently praying. Holy Father, let me reach home in time! When he reached the castle, the courtyard was silent, empty. Dmitri could barely breathe, so great was his

fear. He dropped the saddle, then sprinted to Andjelia's chamber, taking the stairs two at a time.

As he burst through the doorway, Andjelia looked up from where she sat playing the tamboura.

"Andjelia!" Dmitri threw himself onto his knees and buried his face in her gown. "I have been such a fool!"

Andjelia plucked the last chord of her song, then turned to him. "Why say you that?"

Tears trickled down Dmitri's face. "In my longing to cling to my father and to our old life together, I forgot the great love he bore both Bogdan and me—and my own love for my brother. Tell me . . . Tell me, please . . . Say you have not poisoned my brother!"


Andjelia set the tamboura aside and cupped his face in her hands. "Indeed," she said, smiling, "I have not poisoned your

brother. Instead I have made peace between you. He has granted to me the falcon," she

said, gesturing toward the bird, "and the horse in exchange for my golden prayer chalice. I, in turn, give both to you. He said, 'Such insignificant matters should not keep a man from his brother.'"

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" Dmitri cried. Then, thinking of the maimed falcon and the great black horse that would never again gallop like the wind, his face flushed hot with shame.

Andjelia stroked his cheek. "I can see you have already made your own peace with your brother. Go now. Tell him. He is in the garden."

Then she smiled as Dmitri leaped to his feet and ran out to embrace his brother in the last light of the setting sun. 



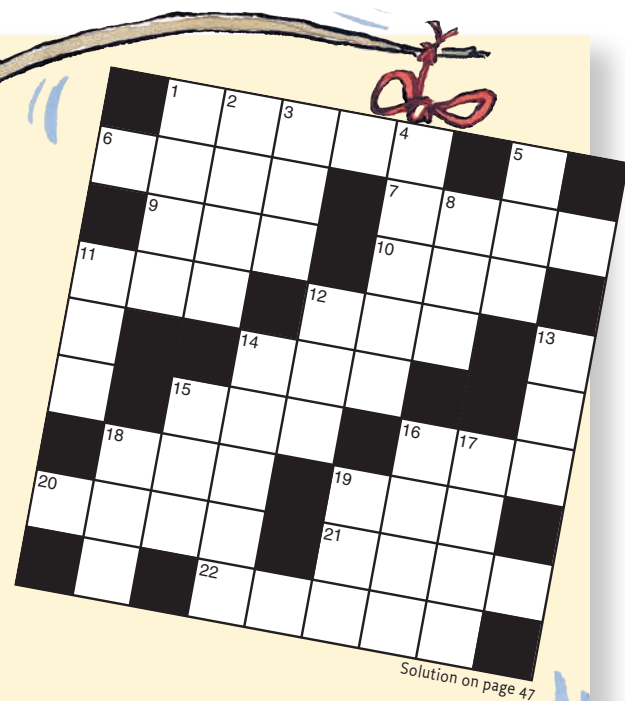
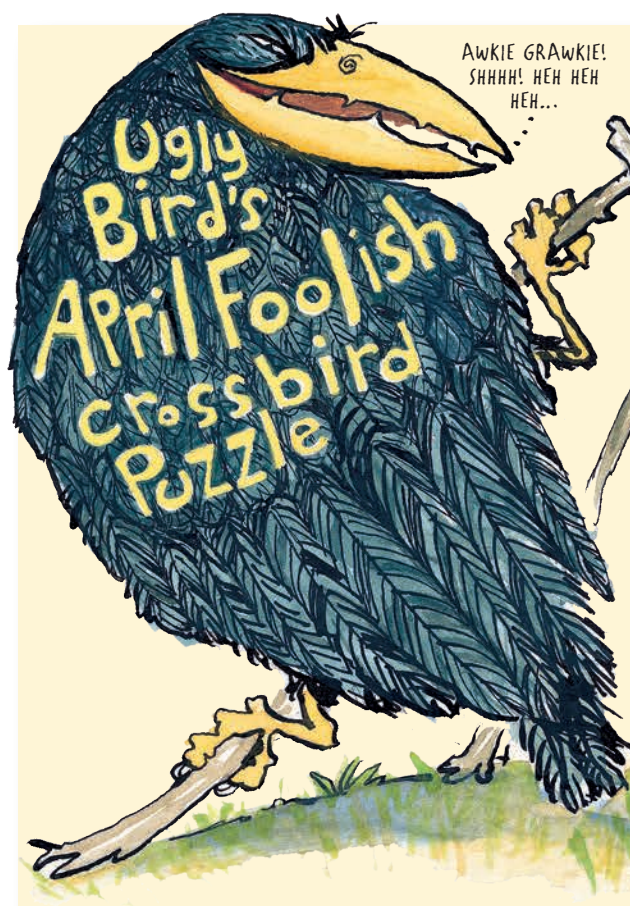
SHE DIDN'T
POISON HIM!
WHEW.

WHY DID THE
CHALICE
CALM
BOGDAN'S
ANGER?



ALL THAT
ARGUING FOR
NOTHING...

NOTE "One Horse, One Bird, Two Brothers" is a story that has been adapted from the Serbian epic song "How the Jaksic Brothers Shared," collected by Vuk Karadzic in the early nineteenth century. This song, dating from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, was originally sung to entertain and to help preserve the wisdom and heritage of the Serbian people and is a testament to the value of peacemaking.



Across

1. "April showers _____ May flowers"
6. April _____ (victim of a joke on 15 Across)
7. Typical April weather
9. Once and for _____
10. Opposite of beginning
11. Past tense of eat
12. Encountered
14. Kitchen utensil for frying
15. April Fools' _____ (April 1)
16. Pig's home
18. Writing instrument
19. Fourth month (abbreviation)
20. Past tense of lend
21. _____ Revere made his famous ride on April 18
22. The diamond is April's birth _____

Down

1. Sail _____
2. Part played by an actor
3. State just south of Wisconsin (abbreviation)
4. Usual color of April grass
5. Concealed
8. Social insect
11. Perform in a stage play
12. Month following April
13. If at first you don't succeed, _____ again
14. Trousers
15. Lion's home
16. Act as a bridge
17. Not false
18. If you are born in April, the sweet _____ is your flower
19. Army address (abbreviation)

UGLY THINKS
DROPPING THAT
BIG PUZZLE ON
SOMEBUGGY IS A
FUNNY TRICK?

THAT'S
NOT A
TRICK,
THAT'S A
TRAP!

HOW DUMB DOES HE
THINK WE ARE?

BUT HE'S
GOING TO
SMASH THE
COOKIES! WE
SHOULD...

STAY FAR AWAY!
HELP ME HOLD HER,
SOMEBUGGY!

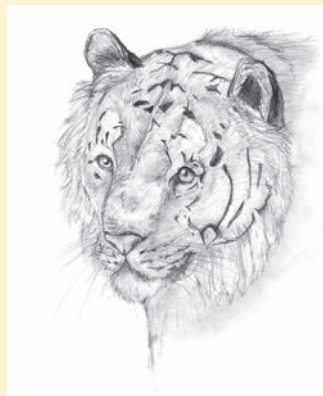
By
**Prankster Harris
& Punster Conahan**



WINNERS
JANUARY 2008 ART CONTEST
 Animal Spirit



First prize 10 and under
 Karly Chin, age 10, Redding, CA
Wolf Spirit's Forest



First prize 11 and up
 Abby Grobbel, age 12, Grosse Pointe, MI



First prize 11 and up
 Bianca Trombetta, age 14, Boston, MA
The Tiger Within



Second prize 10 and under
 Leela Keshav, age 9, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada



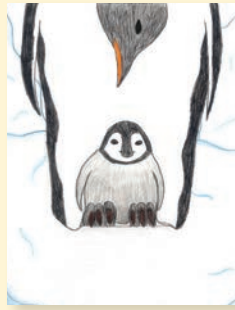
Second prize 10 and under
 Olivia Lewis, age 10, Larkspur, CA



Second prize 11 and up
 Karen Duan, age 12, Ann Arbor, MI
The Eagle's Feather



Second prize 11 and up
Eaton Guo, age 13, Elk Grove Village, IL
Weasel Nation



Second prize 11 and up
Lindsey K. Okada, age 12, Dallas, TX



Third prize 10 and under
Remy Mann, age 8, Boulder, CO



Second prize 11 and up
Brenna Manning, age 11, Wakefield, MA
The Tiger



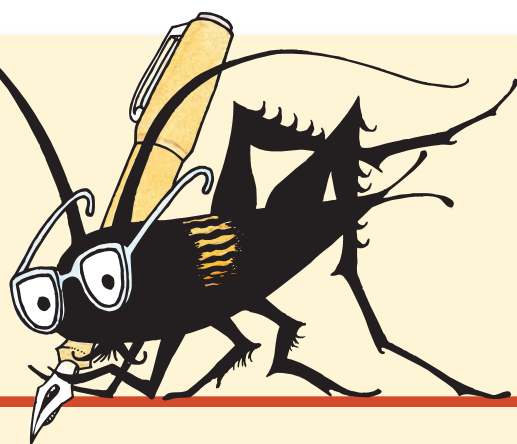
Third prize 10 and under
Emily Yeh, age 10, Plano, TX

Cricket & Ladybug: Steam-Powered Ballooning!





Old Cricket says



AT 10:00 A.M. on 9 January 1793, Jean Pierre Blanchard went “over the wall” at the Walnut Street Prison in Philadelphia. Way over. But he wasn’t an escaping prisoner. He was a French balloonist, and my friend Carl Delano Fowler tells me he was the first person to take flight in America.

Blanchard had arrived in the U.S. at the end of 1792 with his yellow silk balloon in hand, hoping that an aerial exhibition would pay his traveling expenses. He offered tickets at prices from two to five dollars, but though the flight attracted a crowd of 40,000 (including future presidents Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe), he didn’t make much money on the venture. Most people didn’t bother to buy tickets, preferring instead to watch from lawns, rooftops, or open windows. Still, Blanchard carried on with his flight. He had, after all, gone to the trouble (and personal risk) of mixing 4,200 pounds of sulfuric acid with iron scraps to make the hydrogen he’d need to get his balloon off the ground.

With wine and biscuits for nourishment and a small black dog for company, Blanchard lifted off from the prison courtyard as the crowd cheered a bon voyage. He rode the wind for fifty-six minutes, eventually reaching a height of 5,800 feet. Several riders tried to keep up with him on horseback, but he easily outdistanced them. When he finally landed, he’d traveled fifteen miles and crossed the Delaware River into New Jersey. Both he and his dog emerged unharmed.

Over the course of his life, Blanchard would make fifty-nine flights, including the first airborne crossing of the English Channel. Clearly he was happiest when he kept his head in the clouds.

Old Cricket

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