

ANDY, YOU EARNED IT

“Mom, Dad, look at this!” Andy pointed excitedly at the bright poster on the community bulletin board.

“The Great River Race,” Andy’s mom read. “Raft down Central River from the north bridge to the south bridge. The race begins at 11:00 a.m., Sunday, July 23rd. The winner of each age group will receive a trophy and a gift certificate to Outdoor Supplies.”

“That’s this weekend,” Andy realized, turning to his parents. “Can I?” He continued reading, “ages twelve to fourteen can enter the beginner’s race. Raft materials will be provided. Construct your raft beginning at 8:30 a.m.”

“I’m a good swimmer, and I’ve rafted the river lots of times by myself, and I am twelve,” Andy added.

Andy’s parents glanced at each other. “I’m sure you’d do great,” his dad said, “but the race is in three days. How will you be able to earn the twenty-five dollar entry fee in time?”

Andy thought for a moment. “Be home later,” he called. He sprinted down the cracked sidewalk toward the big white house at the edge of town where his sixth grade teacher lived.

Andy flew up the rickety stairs onto the weathered porch and knocked on the door. “Hi, Mr. Johnson. I need to find some work so I can earn twenty-five dollars to enter the rafting race. Can you help me?” Andy blurted out.

Mr. Johnson scratched his bristly-white chin. “I think we can work something out.”

Mr. Johnson led Andy to his old, two-story barn. The heavy wooden door shrieked as it open. The smell of moldy hay burned Andy's nostrils. Andy's eyes widened. *The whole thing?* he thought.

"Here's a pitchfork, and you can use that to haul," Mr. Johnson said, pointing to an orange, rusted wheelbarrow propped against one wall.

"Just dump it out back by the old car." Mr. Johnson waved toward a small side door opposite them.

When he finally finished Andy's arms and legs were throbbing. "Thank you, Andy," Mr. Johnson said simply as he handed Andy two crisp bills. Andy stared for a moment at his hard-earned money. His aches and pains disappeared as a smile crept over his face then he thanked Mr. Johnson and sprinted for home.

He could almost see his house when suddenly he stumbled over a deep crack in the sidewalk and skidded across the crumbling cement. Blood trickled down his scraped elbow and his denim pants were torn, but none of that mattered. He rose up on his hands and scanned the area for his money. There it was dancing in the wind only a few feet away.

Andy sprang to his feet just as a gust of wind whisked it away. His crinkled money came to rest a few inches away from a drain. He pounced again. Andy managed to capture one bill while he watched helplessly as the other fell down just beyond his fingertips. He plopped down on the hard sidewalk more heartbroken than hurt with only five dollars in hand.

How will I ever get twenty more dollars in time to enter the race? Andy wondered. He carefully brushed debris from scrapes while glancing at the surrounding houses. He

attempted to patch his ripped pants leg with the dangling threads. "I know," he thought aloud, "I can see if Mr. Smith needs help washing animals."

Andy limped his way down a side street not far away to a small blue house belonging to Mr. Smith who owned a small pet grooming shop. He stopped to wipe his feet before entering. A moment later he was greeted by a brown-haired man with a friendly smile. "Can I help you, Andy?"

Andy explained about the rafting race and that he needed to earn twenty dollars for his entry fee. "Mr. Smith, do you have any work for me?"

He thought for a moment. "I just got two poodles in and they need washed and dried by four o'clock. I could really use the help today, too. I'm sure that would be worth twenty dollars."

"Mr. Smith, you're the best!" Andy puffed suds from his face as he massaged soap into their curly white fur. He was amazed at how calm the dogs were in that small tub. He gently rinsed away the foam and then dried each. When he was finished Andy placed them gently in their pet taxi. Andy thanked Mr. Smith and stuffed his money deep into his pocket this time.

It was late afternoon when Andy trudged through his front door and plopped down into his favorite chair, exhausted and hungry. "What's wrong?" Andy's mom asked concerned.

Andy explained everything. "Now I hurt all over and I'm so tired. I made the entry fee all by myself, though,"

Andy's dad smiled. "I'm proud of you son. You really earned it."

The Desert Adventure

Linda Drom
35644 Fir Ave.
Yucaipa, CA 92399

(909) 790-2475

The Desert Adventure

One January morning Samuel John Schmitthenner, known as Sam Schmitthenner at school, woke up with a special power. He could think of a place and instantly be there. That is how he came to be standing all by himself in a Nevada desert.

As Sam looked around, he saw sand in every direction, North, East, South, and West. Sam thought maybe the special power came from eating the special round pancake, an ableskiver that his grandma had made for him. It was the only new thing he had eaten.

Sam looked more carefully at the little scraggly bushes scattered across the desert. Under the bushes were small holes. Maybe snakes lived in the holes. He heard a lizard darting for safety as he walked nearer to the bushes. Sam jumped as a jackrabbit popped up from a nearby bush. The jackrabbit was two feet tall. Sam was about twice as tall as the hare. The jackrabbit ran across the desert quickly.

Sam took out his stopwatch and ran after the rabbit. The rabbit ran two miles in three minutes. While chasing the rabbit, Sam saw a lake. As Sam got closer to the lake, it disappeared. It wasn't really a lake. It was a mirage. The sky was reflected onto the desert, looking like water.

Sam was thirsty. He took out his blue Toy Story water bottle. The jackrabbit was gone. All Sam saw was a tumbleweed rolling along in the breeze. Sam thought the jackrabbit has got to be here somewhere!

Choose what Sam is going to do:

Choice 1: Fly a kite.

Choice 2: Look for the jackrabbit.

Choice 1 Fly A Kite

Sam took out a new kite from his backpack. He carefully let the string out. The wind carried his kite higher and higher. The kite jerked Sam into the air. He hung on carefully, soaring high above the desert. The wind began to blow harder. Sand blew in Sam's hair and eyes. Sam decided it was time to go home.

He was sitting on the couch in the living room. His mother told him it was time for dinner. She hadn't noticed that he had been gone. That was a close one, he thought.

The End

Choice 2: Look for the jackrabbit.

Sam followed the jackrabbit's tracks. He took out his binoculars. He noticed a horned toad. He quietly walked up to the horned toad. He picked up the lizard. The horned toad squirted blood out of its eyes. Sam accidentally dropped the lizard. Sam decided it was time to go home.

He was sitting on the couch in the living room. His mother told him it was time for dinner. She hadn't noticed that he had been gone. That was a close one, he thought.

The End

Marcia K. Wasson
167 Rocky Creek Trail
Woodstock, GA 30188
(678) 401-3776
m3wasson@yahoo.com

November 20, 2013
Word Count 836

Aunt Mona's Flute
By
Marcia K. Wasson

"Oh, no! Not again!" Allison said. "I'm going to be in so much trouble."

Allison heard the front door close, and she knew she didn't have much time. She ran out of her older brother's room and down the hall to the last door. Allison quickly opened the door, flipped the light switch on the wall, quietly closed the door behind her and ran up the steps.

She did it again. She broke something that belonged to her older brother Sam. "It's not my fault," she said. "He shouldn't leave breakable stuff out. Especially when he knows I'll look at it."

Sam had a microscope in his room on his desk. Allison wasn't supposed to use it when he wasn't around. But a few minutes earlier she had prepared three slides: a leaf from the new

Boston fern in the living room, a purple carpet fiber from her bedroom and a sliver from a bar of facial soap. She had broken the microscope while adjusting it for the second slide.

"Why am I always breaking something?" she asked herself. She pushed her brown hair behind her ears and looked around the dusty attic wondering what to do. At the far end of the attic was her Aunt Mona's old beaten up wooden chest.

Allison walked over to the chest and carefully opened it. Sitting on top of a cream blanket was a shiny flute. Allison picked it up. "This flute is much nicer than the one I play in the school band. I wonder why mom bought me one instead of letting me use Aunt Mona's."

Allison wiped the mouthpiece off and lifted it to her lips and started playing. Wow, I sound great, she thought. Quickly, she pulled the flute away from her lips. "Oops," she said.

"Someone is going to hear me." Allison looked around at the attic walls, ceiling and floor.

"Nah, they won't hear me if I play quietly." She continued to play as quietly as she could.

When she checked her watch she was surprised to see that it was almost dinner time. That's strange, she thought. She hasn't heard any noises downstairs. Sam should be furious by now and looking for her.

Allison set the flute back down in the chest and carefully closed the lid.

She left the attic and walked into the kitchen. Her mom, dad, and Sam were preparing dinner.

"It's about time you showed up," her mom said to her.

Uh-oh, thought Allison. They know. "Why?" she asked her mom; her lip quivering.

"Because tonight is taco night and we need your help, squirt," Sam told her. "Grab the head of lettuce and start chopping."

"Oh, okay," Allison replied cautiously. Hasn't he seen his microscope? Isn't he upset? She grabbed the lettuce and started chopping.

The rest of the evening was uneventful. The microscope was never mentioned.

At eight o'clock Allison went upstairs to get ready for bed. After climbing in bed and pulling up the covers, her mom walked in and gave Allison a hug.

"Goodnight, Allison."

"Goodnight, Mom."

Her mom walked towards the door and Allison called out, "Hey, Mom? Can I talk to you about something?"

Her mom stopped in the doorway and turned around. "Sure, what's up?"

"I did something really bad today, but no one has said anything about it."

"We know about it, Allison. It was actually nice."

Allison was puzzled. Nice? How can that be?

"We heard you playing Aunt Mona's flute this afternoon before dinner. Your playing has improved a lot this school year."

She thinks I'm talking about the flute, Allison thought. Doesn't she know about the microscope?

Sam appeared in the doorway. "Hey, squirt. Thanks for getting the slides ready for me to look at. I've looked at all of them. Pretty cool! Check them out in the morning, okay?"

"Okay. Is your microscope okay?" Allison asked.

"Of course. Why wouldn't it be? Good night," Sam said as he left.

"Good night, Sam."

"About that flute," her mom said.

"I'm sorry I got into the chest, Mom."

"That's okay. I had forgotten all about your aunt's flute. When your Aunt Mona was about your age she told me it was magical."

"Magical? How?" Allison asked as she sat up and leaned forward.

"When Aunt Mona was about your age she had worn my special heart necklace without permission and she broke the chain. She hid out in her closet and played that flute while she tried to figure out what to do. When she finished playing she noticed the chain wasn't broken."

"So your necklace wasn't broken after all?" Allison asked.

"Nope. It was just fine. But your aunt had insisted it had been broken. She really had believed the flute was magical. Isn't that silly?"

"It doesn't sound so silly to me. Mom, do you think Aunt Mona will let me have her flute?"

"We will ask her the next time we talk to her. Go to sleep now. Good night, Allison."

"Good night, Mom."

Margie J. Harding
26378 Stallings Rd.
Greensboro, MD 21639
410-200-1828
littleonemjh@aol.com
222-44-3443

719 words

DEEP IN THE CITY

By

Margie J. Harding

Kaitlyn Holmes and her parents lived in a cozy condominium in the middle of a big city. One morning as the family got ready for breakfast, Mr. Holmes, a business man, discovered his paper hadn't been delivered. Every good business man needs a newspaper to stay on top of the business world.

"I need to go out for a little while to get a newspaper," said Mr. Holmes in his middle-sized, business man voice.

"Let's all go," shouted the dark, curly haired, Kaitlyn, spinning and doing the latest kick she learned in Karate class.

"Yes, let's," agreed Mrs. Holmes in her soft, teacher voice. "Breakfast can wait. Everyone's cereal is ready except pouring the milk."

Blue eyed, bronze skinned Kaitlyn, closed the door behind her as they left.

Sandy, a naughty little boy, watched as the family walked down the long hall to the elevator. When they were out of sight, Sandy walked to the door, and turned the knob and door opened. Kaitlyn, the last one out, forgot to lock it. Sandy went in.

Seeing breakfast on the table Sandy began helping himself. He found milk in the refrigerator and poured it on the smallest bowl of cereal. After tasting it, Sandy decided it was much too crunchy, and didn't finish.

Sandy poured milk in the middle-sized bowl. He took one bite of it, but decided it was too mushy, so he didn't eat anymore of it.

Next, Sandy poured milk in the biggest bowl. Tasting it, he decided it was neither too crunchy nor too mushy, but just right and he ate every bite.

Becoming tired, Sandy wandered into the living room. He sat in the narrow, tall, wooden chair. Sandy didn't stay in the chair because it was too hard.

Sandy climbed into the middle-sized chair. There were too many pillows making it too soft. Sandy didn't stay in that chair long either.

Next, Sandy sat in the biggest chair. It felt just right so he sat a while.

Harding, page 3
Deep In The City

Sandy, being a careless, little boy, fell when he was getting out of the chair. Being angry at the chair because he had fallen, Sandy pushed the chair over.

Sandy ventured into one of the bedrooms. He crawled onto the smallest bed. This water bed, filled with too much water made it much too firm.

Next, Sandy crawled onto the middle-sized water bed. It didn't have enough water making it was much too sloshy.

Sandy went into the next bedroom and crawled onto the biggest water bed. It had the right amount of water and felt just right. Sandy, being so comfortable, fell fast asleep.

Mr. Holmes had his newspaper under his arm as the family entered their condo. As soon as they came in, they knew someone had been in their cozy home.

"Someone has been eating my crunchy cereal from my small bowl," said Mr. Holmes in his middle-sized, business man voice.

"Someone has been eating my soft cereal from my middle-sized bowl," said Mrs. Holmes in her soft, teacher voice.

Kaitlyn spinning, her feet slicing the air, shouted, "Someone has been eating my cereal from my big bowl and ate every bite."

Harding, page 4
Deep In The City

The family began looking around the rest of the house. They went to the living room.

"Someone has been resting in my narrow, tall, wooden chair," said Mr. Holmes in his middle-sized, business man voice.

"Someone has been resting in my soft, pillow chair," said Mrs. Holmes in her soft, teacher voice.

Wheeling around, her legs striking the air, Kaitlyn shouted, "Someone has been resting in my chair and turned it over."

Next the family went to look in their bedrooms.

"Someone has been crawling on my very firm water bed," said Mr. Holmes in his middle-sized, business man voice.

"Someone has been crawling on my soft, sloshy water bed," said Mrs. Holmes in her soft, teacher voice.

"Someone has been crawling on my water bed," shouted Kaitlyn kicking and whirling, "and he's still here."

Startled from Kaitlyn's shouting, Sandy woke up. Seeing her arms and legs flying frightened him so much, Sandy ran from the condo as fast as his feet would carry him.

Kaitlyn and her family never saw Sandy again and Kaitlyn always remembered to lock the door when she was the last one out from that time on.

Lynn van Lier
W182 S6553 Muskego Drive
Muskego, WI 53150
(262) 309-5151
lynnvanlier@wi.rr.com

Hand Me Down

By Lynn van Lier

"This blue shirt is too small," said Dylan.

Mom laughed. "I can see your tummy sticking out. Pick out another one, and we'll give this one to your cousin, Stephen."

"But it's my shirt."

"You're too big for it now. It will fit Stephen because he's smaller than you."

Dylan was sad. He picked out a green shirt.

"I don't want to give this shirt away. It's my favorite color."
He pulled the shirt over her head.

"We won't give this one away. It still fits," Mom said.

"Will I have to give away my new jacket?" he asked.

"No," Mom hugged him, "only clothes that you can't wear anymore."

#

When Aunt Ellen brought Stephen over to play, Mom showed her the shirt.

"Do you think Stephen would want this?" Mom asked.

"It was mine, but it's too small for me," Dylan explained.

Stephen smiled. "Wear now!" he said.

Aunt Ellen put the shirt on Stephen.

Dylan laughed, "It's a little big, but you'll grow into it."

Stephanie Ascough
6677 Whirlaway Circle
Orlando, FL 32818
407-721-3689
stephanieascough@gmail.com

714 words

FAMILY TALES
By
Stephanie Ascough

In the attic room of their grandparents' house, three sisters were curled up in their sleeping bags. Avery rolled over and grinned at the older two. "You're not asleep yet, are you?" She asked.

"How can we be asleep if you're talking?" Norah said.

"It's past your bedtime, Avery," said Sabrina, stifling a yawn.

Avery sat up. "We should tell ghost stories," she said. "You know, like the ones Grampa told us today."

“Good idea!” said Norah. “He told me one today when I went with him to the bank about a coyote that can hoot like an owl.”

“Well, don't take too long,” Sabrina grumbled. “I'm tired.”

Avery scowled. “All we did today was play dress up and tea party. How can you be tired? Besides, you've stayed here before and I haven't. If I can't have real adventures here, I'm going to make up my own.”

Sadie pulled her sleeping bag over her head. Norah switched on a flashlight.

“I'll go first,” Avery began. “Once there lived a girl who was the worst snob ever. Her name was Delilah and she lived in this very house. One day she was so snobbish that she died. She was cursed to haunt this very place, keeping all the fun away from anyone who wanted to find it.”

Norah and Avery looked at Sabrina and started giggling.

“Wow, she really must be asleep,” Norah whispered. “Ok, my turn. Once, Grampa saw a coyote behind the house, you know, by the strawberry hill. Of course, coyotes are common here, but he could tell right away this was no ordinary coyote. Its eyes glowed red. And as Grampa watched-“

“It began hooting like an owl!” Avery said.

“Let me tell it, Av!” Norah protested. “The coyote began hooting like an owl. But not only that-as it made its way down the hill, it turned into a giant hoot owl and came flying at Grampa.”

Avery leaned forward. She hadn't expected this.

“Grampa ran down the hill as fast as he could. Just in time, he realized that this was the Morphion, the shape-shifter as old as the hills. Seeing the Morphion is always bad luck.”

“What happens?” Avery asked, her spine tingling.

“Well,” Norah said, lowering her voice, “At best, an accident is about to happen. At worst-“ suddenly she stopped. A strange, hollow sound had reached their ears.

“What is it?” Avery whispered, squeezing Norah's hand.

“I don't know,” Norah said. Her eyes were wide with fear. The girls looked around the dark room, frozen to the floor. The sound echoed louder this time, eerily crying like a trapped animal.

“Can the Morphon make other sounds?” asked Avery.

“I'm not sure,” Norah gulped. “C'mon, we have to look out the window.”

The sisters crept across the floor. Avery saw a twitch under the blanket that covered an old, over-stuffed chair. She yanked off the blanket and shouted,

“Sabrina Hanks! You're sneakier than any Morphon!” Sabrina was crouching next to the chair, laughing so hard that she didn't protest when Avery snatched an iPod out of her hands.

“And we thought you were asleep!” said Norah. She pointed to the iPod. “How'd you get that sound on there?”

“I recorded Grampa making that sound when I visited last summer by myself,” Sabrina said, catching her breath. “He told me the story of the Morphon. He said it might come in handy some day. You should have seen your faces!” She started laughing again.

“I bet he used to scare his own siblings with stories like that when he was little,” said Avery.

“Of course,” said Sabrina. “It runs in the family.”

This time, all three girls laughed.

“So what did happen to Grampa when he saw the Morphon?” asked Avery when the three of them were back in their sleeping bags.

“He didn't tell me,” said Norah.

“Me neither,” said Sabrina. “He said it was for another day.”

“I’ll ask him tomorrow,” said Avery. “This place is full of adventure! That overgrown path behind the pond has to have a story behind it too. And if it doesn’t, then I’ll make one up-“

“Avery!” her sisters groaned. “Go to sleep!”

Avery smiled and snuggled down into her bed. She knew tomorrow was going to be lots of fun.

Janelle Fila

2255 Sonora Road

Zanesville, Ohio 43701

musteringmystery@yahoo.com

740-586-8725

The Wades...Play Dress Up

Meet the Wades. Mr. Wade loves to get dressed up. Today he is wearing a red bow tie. Mrs. Wade is planting flowers. She wears a hat to keep the sun out of her face.

They have three children. Princess loves to wear her mother's clothes and jewelry. She likes to put bows in her hair. Jake and Blake are twins. They dress alike. Sometimes this confuses people...even Mr. and Mrs. Wade!

What kind of fun will the Wades have today? Today the Wades are going to play dress up!

Mrs. Wade pulls a trunk out of the closet. It is filled with old clothes. Princess finds ballet slippers and dances across the room. Mr. Wade tries on a big hat with feathers sticking out of it. He waves a pretend sword. Arr, he's a pirate!

Jake wants to be a pirate, too. Mrs. Wade ties a polka dot bandana around his head. He and Mr. Wade have a sword fight in the living room.

Blake tries on a big cowboy hat. He sees pointy cowboy boots. What is he dressed up as?

Princess is tired from twirling around. Being a ballerina is hard work. Mrs. Wade puts a baby bonnet on her head. Stop sucking your thumb Princess!

Mr. Wade puts on her baby bonnet. It is much too small for him. Stop sucking your thumb Mr. Wade!

Cowboy Blake is being attacked by pirates. How will he escape?

Janelle Fila

2255 Sonora Road

Zanesville, Ohio 43701

musteringmystery@yahoo.com

740-586-8725

Mrs. Wade puts on an apron. She is pretending to be a cook. It is almost lunch time. Princess grabs a pen and paper. She is a waitress. She writes down Mr. Wades' lunch order. Jake and Blake put down their weapons. Fighting made them hungry.

After lunch, they will change their costumes. Princess wants to be a mermaid. Jake wants to be a cop and arrest people. Blake wants to use his hose to put out fires. Mrs. Wade smiles. She knows they are in for a fun afternoon of dress up.

,

National Teddy Bear Day

By: Kristin Kayser

“Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!” Lucy called. She burst through the front door after racing home from school. She had so much to tell him and she didn’t want her brother Gabe telling him first. Gabe was her twin. He was only four and a half minutes older, but he sure never let her forget it.

“I’m going to tell Dad first!” Gabe said, hot on Lucy’s heels.

After rushing all over the house, Lucy found Dad in his study. He was sitting at his big wooden desk. Dad had just enough time to set his newspaper down before Lucy jumped into his lap. Dad chuckled, “Good afternoon to you too, Lucy. Did you have a good day at school?”

Lucy nodded her head eagerly, “Yep!”

Lucy’s blond ponytail bounced, nearly smacking Gabe in the face. She smiled victoriously as her brother glared at her.

“Dad, did you know that there’s a National Teddy Bear Day?” Lucy said.

She looked at Gabe before continuing. She wanted to make sure he knew this was now her story to tell. Gabe looked back at her for a moment. Then he nearly shouted, “And it’s tomorrow!”

“Gabe!” Lucy cried. “I wanted to tell Dad! You pinky swore whoever got here first could tell him.” Lucy hung her head unable to hide her disappointment.

“Now Gabe, a pinky swear is a pinky swear young man,” said Dad, waving a pinky at his son.

“Please, apologize to your sister and let her finish her story.”

Gabe’s mouth hung open. He looked down at the tops of his shoes and mumbled, “Sorry, Lu.”

Lucy smiled forgivingly. “So like I was saying, there’s a National Teddy Bear day and its tomorrow! Everyone gets to bring a teddy bear to school and play with it all day!”

Dad smiled, “That sounds like a great day! Do you know which one of your bears you’re going to take to school?”

Lucy hadn’t thought about that. She had so many. “I think I’ll take Teddy,” she said. “And Gabe could bring someone else, like Princess. He doesn’t have his own Teddy bear.” Lucy frowned a little. She still couldn’t believe Gabe didn’t have his own bear.

“No way,” Gabe shook his head. “I’m not taking one of your girlie stuffed animals to school. I’m going to take one of my action figures.”

“You can’t do that,” Lucy said. “It’s National *Teddy Bear* Day.”

“I don’t...” Gabe started to object.

Dad broke in, “That’s very thoughtful of you to offer to share, Lucy. I wonder, has your teacher told you the history behind National Teddy Bear Day?”

Both Gabe and Lucy looked at each other and shook their heads. Dad smiled, “Well it just so happens, I do. Theodore Roosevelt was the 26th President of the United States and his nickname was ‘Teddy.’”

“Like my Teddy bear!” said Lucy.

“That’s right, honey. Well one day, Teddy went out hunting with some of his friends. Towards the end of the trip the group cornered a bear cub. But Teddy refused to harm the innocent bear. When people heard the story a cartoon artist drew a picture of Teddy and the bear. This gave a toy maker the idea to make stuffed bears. With Teddy’s permission he named them ‘Teddy bears.’”

“Wow,” said Lucy eyes wide. She looked at Gabe with a smile, “Are you sure you don’t want to borrow one of my Teddy bears?”

Gabe tapped a finger on his chin, “Well, maybe. But I still don’t want a girlie one!”

Dad chuckled, “Why don’t we go see what we can find you in Lucy’s room?”

“Yeah!” said Lucy hopping to the ground. Grabbing Gabe by the arm she called over her shoulder, “This is going to be the best National Teddy Bear Day ever!”

ORME'S WINTER ADVENTURE

ORME WAS PERCHED WHERE SHE LIKED TO BE ON A DECEMBER NIGHT, RIGHT ON HER GRANDFATHER'S LAP AS CLOSE TO THE WOOD STOVE AS WAS SAFE. THEY HAD JUST FINISHED A MOST DELICIOUS SUPPER THAT MIMI HAD COOKED. VENISON FROM UNCLE GEORGE'S WOODS, SOME FRESH BRUSSELS SPROUTS FROM THE GARDEN, SOME PICKLED BEANS AND PICKLED BEETS AND A PIECE OF APPLE PIE HAD ROUNDED OUT THE FEAST.

MAYBE IT WAS THE WARMTH OF THE WOODSTOVE, OR THE TUMMY FULL OF GOOD FOOD, OR BOTH, BUT SOON ORME WAS SLEEPING QUITE SOUNDLY AND IN THE LAND OF DREAMS.

THE DREAM STARTED WELL ENOUGH. ORME WAS ALL BUNDLED UP IN HER WARM WINTER PLAY CLOTHES AND THE SUN WAS SHINING. SHE WAS IN A FIELD AND THERE WAS SNOW ALL OVER THE GROUND, BUT IT WASN'T SO DEEP THAT IT WAS HARD TO WALK THROUGH. IT WAS THE LIGHT FLUFFY KIND OF SNOW THAT FLOATED BRIEFLY WITH EACH FOOTSTEP AND SPARKLED IN THE SUNLIGHT. "THIS SNOW WILL HAVE TO AGE A BIT BEFORE IT'S GOOD FOR SLEDDING OR MAKING SNOWMEN", SHE MUSED.

Wordcount
732

JUST THEN ORME HEARD THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF SLEIGH BELLS. SHE TURNED TO LOOK IN THE DIRECTION THE SOUND HAD COME FROM AND CHANCED TO SEE A SLEIGH JUST AS IT ENTERED THE WOODS NEXT TO THE FIELD. IT WAS A BIG SLEIGH, BUT SHE COULDN'T SEE WHAT TYPE OF ANIMAL WAS PULLING THE SLEIGH AND SHE JUST MISSED SEEING THE DRIVER. SHE WALKED OVER TO THE TWO NARROW TRACKS THAT WOUND THEIR WAY INTO THE WOODS, AND DISAPPEARED AT THE FIRST SHARP BEND. THE TRACKS OF THE ANIMALS PULLING THE SLEIGH WERE INDISTINCT DUE TO THE FLUFFY SNOW, BUT A FEW OF THEM LOOKED LIKE THE DEER TRACKS HER GRANDFATHER HAD SHOWN HER ONCE IN THE GARDEN. COULD THEY BE REINDEER TRACKS SHE WONDERED?

ORME STARTED OFF INTO THE WOODS. THE TRACKS WERE EASY TO FOLLOW AT FIRST, BUT THEN A BREEZE STARTED TO BLOW AND THE LIGHT SNOW STARTED TO DRIFT OVER THE TRACKS. BY THE TIME SHE HAD HIKED PAST THE FIRST BEND, AND THEN THE SECOND BEND AND THE THIRD BEND, SHE WAS PRETTY DEEP INTO THE WOODS AND THE TRACKS WERE NOW VERY FAINT. IN A SMALL CLEARING, SHE CAME TO A PLACE WHERE THE TRAIL FORKED OFF, ONE TO THE RIGHT AND ONE TO THE LEFT AND SHE COULDN'T REALLY TELL WHICH WAY THE SLEIGH HAD GONE. WORSE, SHE LOOKED BEHIND HER AND EVEN HER TRAIL OF BOOT TRACKS HAD DRIFTED OVER AND COULDN'T BE SEEN. THE SUN WAS STILL OUT, BUT SHE COULD TELL IT WAS GETTING

LOW ON THE HORIZON. THE SHADOWS FROM THE TREES WERE GETTING LONG AND MORE TANGLED.

WHILE ORME WASN'T ONE TO FRIGHTEN EASILY, EVEN IN HER DREAM SHE KNEW SHE DID NOT WANT TO BE ALL ALONE IN THE WOODS IN WINTERTIME WHEN NIGHT FELL. SHE PULLED HER STOCKING HAT DOWN A BIT FURTHER AND WRAPPED HER SCARF TIGHTER AGAINST THE BREEZE.

JUST THEN SHE HEARD THE SLEIGHBELLS AGAIN. THEY WERE OFF TO HER LEFT AND SHE COULD TELL THE SLEIGH WAS HEADED AWAY FROM HER BECAUSE THE BELLS GOT HARDER AND HARDER TO HEAR. SHE DECIDED TO TAKE THE LEFT HAND FORK IN THE PATH AND HURRIED ON LISTENING HARD FOR THE TINKLING SLEIGHBELLS.

THE SUN WAS SETTING FAST NOW AND THE WOODS FELT LIKE THEY WERE GETTING THICKER, CLOSER AND DARKER. ORME COULDN'T HEAR THE BELLS ANYMORE, BUT SHE GAMELY TRUDGED ALONG THE PATH, A BIT TIRED FROM ALL OF HER HIKING. AS SHE ROUNDED WHAT, BY HER COUNT, WAS THE 13TH BEND IN THE PATH, THERE STOOD A SLEIGH. THERE WAS AN OLD MAN SEATED IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT AND HE SEEMED TO BE CHUCKLING TO HIMSELF. SHE COULDN'T SEE HIS FACE IN THE GATHERING DARKNESS, BUT WHEN HE REACHED DOWN TO HELP HER UP INTO THE SLEIGH, SHE DIDN'T FEEL AFRAID AT ALL. SHE SNUGGLED

DOWN ON THE SEAT NEXT TO HIM AND THE SLEIGH STARTED TO MOVE.

SOON THE SLEIGH WAS OUT OF THE WOODS AND SHE COULD SEE THE LIGHTS OF A HOUSE ACROSS THE SNOWY FIELD. SHE RECOGNIZED THE HOUSE AS GRANDFATHER AND MIMI'S HOUSE. THE SLEIGH STOPPED RIGHT BY THE FRONT DOOR AND THE OLD MAN DRIVING THE SLEIGH WAS STILL CHUCKLING TO HIMSELF. HE TURNED TO ORME AND SAID, "COME ON LITTLE ORME, WAKE UP, IT'S BEDTIME."

Gingerbread Madness

By: Deion Godwin

My kitchen was the same as usual. It was painted white, with wooden cabinets, and a white tiled floor. I mixed the ingredients, and then put the cookie in the oven. I turned it up to 900 degrees Fahrenheit. Then, I pulled out the jumper cables from the garage and hooked them to the oven. I attached the other end to the car. I wanted to see if a cookie could come alive with enough electricity. I turned the oven on and waited for a few minutes. Then, it happened.

The charred cookie burst out of the oven. It started to run around the kitchen, knocking things over. It knocked over the blender, the printer, and was very, very close to knocking down the refrigerator. It was surprisingly strong, and it had ripped up several tiles by the time it left the kitchen.

Eventually, the gingerbread cookie got to the living room. The raging cookie knocked over the television, putting a huge crack in it. While all of this was happening, I picked up a candle full of liquid wax. I waited for the cookie to come close, then splashed the cookie with the wax, drenching myself in the process. Only the cookie's left arm and leg were frozen in wax. It was nearly at the door, when my parents came in.

The cookie hobbled out the door, and I tried to chase it. Unfortunately, I realized my entire right leg was frozen in wax. I looked for something to pull it off with. "A pencil will have to do" I thought, and picked one up as I raced out of the door. Once safely outside, I started hacking at the wax on my leg with the pencil. After a few minutes, it came off. Just then, something hit me in the head. Hard. And everything went dark.

When I woke up, I saw hundreds of them. Maybe even thousands, of gingerbread men. They were all dressed the same. They had red frosting for a shirt, blue frosting for the pants, and M&Ms for the eyes. All of them looked the same. But I was looking for one. The charred cookie. It only took me a few minutes to locate him. The minute I found that cookie, it took a few seconds to get your eyes to focus on him. He was rainbow colored, and almost completely covered in frosting. "What are you?" I asked, hoping for an answer , knowing it would never come. Some dust got into my eye, and when I rubbed it, the cookie disappeared, never to be seen again. I walked back to my house, knowing I was going to be grounded for life. But I was sure of one thing. I would never, ever bake gingerbread cookies again.



The Stalker

Written By Deion Godwin

Two boys were walking down a street during the summer of 1995 in Jamestown. The older of the two, named Connor, was 12, and his little brother named Zeke, was ten. Though they were not the same age, they looked remarkably similar, so you never knew which one you were talking to. They both had the figure of an average kid, with scrawny arms, but with strong running legs and light moustaches. The day was Friday the 13th. The boys had been dared to go into the underground caverns to investigate the mysterious "Ghost". It supposedly wandered the caverns at midnight looking for a way out. Many thought this story was an old tale to teach kids not to poke their noses where they don't belong. This included the boys. They had traveled to the cavern entrance to prove the town wrong. They had come fully equipped with explorers gear and headlamps. Before they went to the caverns, they checked their equipment. "All systems go." Connor said.

Soon later, they were in the middle of a labyrinth of caves and walls. Zeke, being the one who is almost always scared, pointed out a low moaning sound. Connor dismissed it as just the wind. "But there is no wind down here." Zeke said. "Yes there is. It is going through the caverns." Connor said. Suddenly there was a screeching sound, and a figure materialized in front of them. "Get out!" the dark figure rasped. In an instant, the figure was gone. "That was creepy, I have to admit." said Connor.

"I knew I shouldn't have eaten that chili dog." Zeke said, tired from the walking and sick from the dust and "wind" that continually blew through the caverns. Connor was weary too, but decided not to show it. "They better remember us for this." Connor said. Zeke screamed, and his echo traveled through the caverns. The older boy looked around, but his brother was nowhere to be seen. There was writing on the wall, written in blood, "Watch out, I'm coming for YOU!" it said. "Oh no, no, no." Connor stammered. "This is not good" The figure he had seen earlier reappeared. This time, it took the form of a fiery beast. ""I warned you." it screeched.

Bewildered by the figure, and dazed by his brother's unfortunate death, Connor slumped down on a rock. The rock started to warm up and then burned Connor's back. Connor screamed, and the wind whispered, "He's coming." Seconds later, the boy disappeared. The Beast took another form, this time humanoid. It said one thing and one thing only, "I am the Stalker, and these are MY caves!!!"

The End....

Or is it?

Kim Ellis
14 Van Kleeck Ave.
New Paltz, NY 12561
Ladythorn1@aol.com
845 255 5010
494 words
Side Bar: 130 words

Fat Grapes

"You're coming over today," I say to Jordan as soon as he comes into the classroom. "My mom's picking us up. It's her day off from cooking at the diner."

I sit next to Jordan during Morning Meeting. I tell him about my hamster, Peanut, and my trampoline. We whisper about what we're going to do after school until Miss Barbino says, "Willem and Jordan, be good listeners."

Jordan is the smartest kid in my whole first grade class. He makes home runs in math baseball, and he can go all the way across the monkey bars. Jordan looks like a fast brown horse, but I look like a big, fat, pale turnip. Jordan has cool hair, too. Sometimes it's tight in little braids on his head, and sometimes it's all fluffy like broccoli.

Mom says I think about food too much.

I say, "How can I help it? I spend more time at the diner than I do at home."

When Mom lets Jordan and me into the apartment, she says, "Boys, there's cheese cubes and grapes in the fridge. I'm going downstairs to get the laundry."

The grapes are fat and juicy. The cheese is sharp cheddar, my favorite.

Jordan says, "Watch this!" He throws a grape into the air and catches it in his mouth.

I try the trick and the grape hits my nose. We laugh. Jordan tosses another grape high and it lands in his mouth. He makes a funny noise but he's not laughing.

His eyes bulge big, and he grabs at his throat. Then he tries to speak, but no sound comes out. He's making an awful face and flapping his arms around. His skin has gone dark purple.

The grape is stuck in Jordan's throat! He can't breathe!

"Mom!" I yell. She's in the basement! She can't hear me!

Then I remember the poster at the diner. I've read it a million times: First Aid for Choking.

I get behind Jordan and wrap my arms under his ribs. I make a fist and hold it with my other hand, just like the picture on the poster. Whump! I yank up hard on Jordan's stomach. I do it again, harder. The grape and a bunch of yucky cheese barf splash out of his mouth onto the floor. Jordan slides down on his knees, gasping and crying.

Mom comes into the kitchen with a basket of clothes.

"What's going on here?" she says.

"Jordan was choking on a grape."

Mom calls 911. A few minutes later, the ambulance comes zooming into the parking lot. Two medical technicians check Jordan.

“He’ll be okay,” they tell us. “But he should go home and rest.”

“You got a smart kid there,” the ambulance driver says to Mom.

But I feel like crying. Our play date is over.

The next day at Morning Meeting, Jordan tells the class, “Willem’s coming over tomorrow. He saved my life. We’re friends forever.”

Optional Side Bar:

First Aid for Choking:

The Heimlich Maneuver

If a person’s airway, or windpipe, becomes blocked, an emergency technique called the Heimlich Maneuver can be used to remove the blockage. First described by physician Henry Judah Heimlich, the technique involves giving several thrusts to the choking person’s abdomen.

In adults and children, choking is most often caused by a piece of food caught in the throat. Children may sometimes choke on a toy. The best prevention for choking is to make sure food is in bite-size pieces, to eat without rushing, and to eat sitting down. Walking, lying down, or playing while eating food is dangerous. And, of course, keep small objects out of the mouths of small children.

For more information about choking prevention and choking hazards, go to www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/choking_prevention_for_children.htm

Michael Eugene Hall
1519 N Hughes
Little Rock AR 72207
501-940-8189

January 28, 2014
Page 1
WC 1007

FULL DAY

I love to bounce the ball. Up against the wall or down our long, long hall. It really makes my mom mad and it even aggravates my dad to the point they say, "that's bad, bad, bad!" When I'm bored I do this in the day or anytime I want to play. My parents say, "stop! Make those sounds go away."

My dad's the one who loves to sleep. He plies himself on the couch in a heap, lying there all day just counting sheep. The kitchen is where you look, to find Mom reading a book or perhaps getting ready to cook, "yeah!" So, I decide to go outside and I begin to play on the slide, where I take a pleasure full glide. I see some

friends coming near. I yell, "Come on over here. I have a game for us, have no fear."

"A game, a game for us you ask? Is it one where you have to wear a mask?"

"No, it is one where dribbling is the task. Let's go play at the park it's just a little way. We need to hurry because we don't have all day. This is a game that doesn't need a card. You could play it in your yard. It's a lot of fun and it's not very hard." I jiggle my head for a fake. The defense begins to shake and I hit every shot I take. When I am lunging for a steal, there is only one thing I want to feel, a round leather ball that is real.

After a very, very long day of very, very hard play we all say, "Good-bye." And we are on our way. Dads standing at the door tapping his feet, Mom says, "Go get ready to eat and tell your brother Pete." After dinner I take a bath and Dad quizzes me on some math. He wants to see me on the right path. They do all this for my brother too, all while my head hits the pillow that is blue. Mom kisses me and says, "I love you."

Energy is the most amazing thing in the world. A child may have enough of it for ten adults. If adults had the same amount of energy as children do then adults would rule the universe. Just imagine our leaders of the world hardly ever sleeping. Well, they would be able to solve our worlds problems so fast that they wouldn't even be noticeable. Our world would be a much better place if adults had the energy of a child.

Even though energy cannot be seen it can be felt. When you turn on a light you

can see better, but you can't see the energy that makes the light, or is light energy? In the really old days the only light was created by the sun. Then fire was discovered and the age of the candle had arrived. Sometime later Benjamin Franklin flew a kite in a storm. The kite had a key attached to it and it was struck by lightening giving Mr. Franklin a shocking experience. People use the energy from their brains to make this energy, harness it and ship it to every home in the world. Now this energy can be controlled by the flick of a switch. Some parents wish their kids had a switch so they could turn it off.

What is energy? Why do some have more than others? Can it be measured?
Albert Einstein, a famous scientist, came up with the most famous equation, $E = mc^2$. This equation measures energy and was created by a very intelligent person. I am not so intelligent so I will not attempt to explain it.

An avalanche is considered energy, the bigger the more energy and the smaller the less. Seismologists are people who study the seismic waves, avalanches and earthquakes, which come from the earth, so energy can be measured. You can tell you are putting more and more air in a balloon as you blow it up, because it gets bigger. Let the balloon go and watch energy at its best as the balloon flows around wildly. Energy equals mass times the rate of speed squared, actually the speed of light but I don't think the balloon can move that fast.

Just about everything has energy. Stereo's, TV's, bicycles, phones, cars and even people all have energy. A team has energy; if you have ever seen a basketball team play then you know

that the big players move slower than the smaller ones, the points they score are the energy that they put in together.

Take three balloons all the same size and blow one up just a little and the next one a little more than the first and the third one a little more than the second one. Let them all go at the same time and each will run out of energy from smallest to biggest.

People are all sizes. Does that mean they all have the same amount of energy or are they all different? Do big people have, use or need more energy than a smaller person? One thing is for sure they all get energy from the same way, by eating and drinking. Sometimes people feel more energetic than other times. This may be a way to measure energy in a person by judging how much they achieve. Wouldn't it be nice if everyone would always be full of energy?

There are only two things you can do with energy, save it or spend it. The children of the world come by it naturally. Be mindful of others that do not have the level of energy that you have. So the next time you are feeling energetic, go and spend it with others that feel the same way and appreciate and enjoy the feeling.

“The Trunk” by J’Sangelo

One summer morning while waiting outside for my best friend Mattie; I notice Mr. Allan, a neighbor who lived down the street struggle to get a very large trunk out of his house. He finally got it down the steps and started dragging it to the side of his yard. He stopped, looked around and then off he went into his house. I was going to yell over to him when my friend Mattie came running out of her house.

She was waving her towel and yelling,” Hello, Are you ready for the pool“?

Yes, I said and I ran over to meet her, “ hey did you see the trunk“? “What trunk“, Mattie said.

The one in Allen’s yard?

As we walked passed the yard I pointed to the trunk and said “What do you think is in it?”

Why does something have to be in it? Mattie said.

Because Mr. Allen had a hard time getting it down the steps.

Mattie rolled her eyes and said, “Are you going to jump off the high dive today?

I started thinking about the high dive instead of the trunk.

I’m not sure I said.

Mattie laughed and said:, “Why, are you Chicken”?

I made a face and said “No”.

The pool that day was great and I even got enough nerve to jump off the high dive.

Climbing out of the pool Mattie yelled and held up ten fingers

“Great Jump.

We both laughed.

I'm hungry. Mattie said. So we both ran home.

When we came to Allen's yard I stopped.

"What do you think is in the trunk Mattie?

Why does something have to be in the trunk said Mattie?

It looked heavy, I said.

Ok, Super Slueth.what are thinking? Mattie said...

I'm thinking Mr. Allen is hiding something or someone.

"Someone."? Mattie said .You are funny as she ran into her house.

Bye!

That night my mum asked to me to take the trash out. As I was walked outside I heard a bang.

I turned and saw Mr. Allen again by the trunk. It looked like he was putting something in again.

I ran upstairs and got on my walky talky...Mattie Mattie come in.

What's up Super Sleuth. She said.?

I saw Mr. Allen again out by the trunk , I think he put something in it again.

So, maybe he's keeping books in there.

I don't think so. Tomorrow we should go over and look in side.

"What "?! Mattie said ,"I don't think so".

Come on ,...please!!!! I said.

The next morning I walked over to Mattie's house, got on the ground and started crawling on the ground along the fence until I got to Sangelo's yard there I waited for Mr. Allen to leave.

I was slowly getting up when Mattie jumps up from her yard on the other side of the fence and yelled, "Gotcha".

I said , you scared me. Shush! do you want Mr. Allen to hear you.

Mattie laughed and said ,"He left about two hours ago."

Ok, I said let go...we both crawled on the ground along the fence and got up only to see that there was a lock on the trunk.

Now what Super Sleuth, Mattie asked.

We both were getting ready to leave Sangelo's yard when down the alley came Mr. Allen's car.

We both fell to the ground waiting to make our escape when all of a sudden Mattie sister yells "Hey, Mattie" mum wants you to go to the store". why are you and Super Sleuth on the ground?

We both froze for a moment then we heard Mattie sister say..."Hi Mr. and Mrs. Allen".

As we looked up; there standing was Mrs. Allen looking over the fence at us.

Hi girls, would you like to meet Lilly?

We both got up and looked at the new baby.

Mr. Allen walked by smiled at us and said Honey, I put those books from the baby's bedroom in that old trunk. I hope you don't mind.

I'll move them to the garage later.

Books, Mattie said looking at me?

We left the yard laughing and Mattie laughing "Someone in the Trunk....."

Michelle Rendek
823 Pearl Drive
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420
(805) 474-8447
MLRendek@gmail.com

01/28/2014
131 Words

HOARSE HORSE
by: Michelle Rendek

“Oink,” said Prunella Pig.

“Moo,” said Camilla Cow.

But Winnie Horse said nothing.

“Oink,” said Prunella Pig again.

“Moo,” said Camilla Cow again.

But Winnie Horse said nothing. Winnie Horse had a problem. Winnie Horse was hoarse!

“Oh, this is terrible,” cried Prunella Pig.

“What shall we do?” asked Camilla Cow.

Winnie Horse looked around the stable.

“Do you think some corn would help?” asked Prunella Pig.

“Perhaps some nice fresh hay would do the trick,” said Camilla Cow.

But Winnie Horse saw something else. Winnie Horse saw the trough. Winnie Horse needed a drink.

She clomped across the stable, dipped her head in the trough and took a great big gulp of water.

“Oink,” said Prunella Pig.

“Moo,” said Camilla Cow.

“Neigh,” said Winnie Horse.

Winnie Horse could whinny again.

Marygrace Aquino
1 Winterberry Drive
Coventry, RI 02816
grace14 @cox.net
401 828 2761

Word Count 228

January 29, 2014

IMAGINE WHAT I CAN BE

By

Marygrace Aquino

The room is so quiet with stuff all around.
Cat gets real curious and without a sound he jumps on a
book and begins to chew.

Counting to 10, I calm from a stew.
Then I notice the title covered in cat-goo.

Wow cat!

Imagine What I Can Be!

I am a pirate, traveling the seas, with you at the stern,
smiling in the breeze.

We land on a castle, its kingdom surrounding.
A dragon takes us to an island astounding.
He leads us to treasure kept safe in his lair.
We peek at his jewels so grand and so rare.

M. Aquino, Imagine

Back on the ship, we continue our trip.

Off to seek more adventure!

I am Red Riding Hood with you as my guide, looking for
flowers and places to hide.

We climb up Jack's beanstalk and peek at his gold.
Then get quick relief from the giant's strong hold.

On we go for a trip far away, to a place we love.
It's the Milky Way!

Zooming into space, with our ship on a rocket, we gaze at
the stars. Get ready to dock it!

We snack on some meteorites so crunchy and blue,
discovering it tastes like a barbecue.

After that fun, aboard ship once more, we sail to our room
and clean up the floor.

Now...

Let's read more great stories and munch on some cookies.

A Day of Fun

"It's time to go to school!" Emily's mother called from the kitchen. She laid her knitting down on the nearby tabletop. Emily's kitten, Spring, followed her to the kitchen.

Emily picked up her lunch then bent down and patted her kitten on the head. She said, "You have a good day, Spring! I'll see you when I get home from school."

Spring leaped onto the large fluffy chair, looked out the window, and watched Emily and her mom leave. She let out a big sigh. What was she going to do all alone?

She hopped off the chair and sat on the floor looking around. Her bright yellow eyes narrowed as they focused. What was that dangling over the edge of the table? Emily had left a gift! Caught by a gentle breeze, some yarn swayed to and fro, to and fro.

Spring pulled her hind legs under herself. Her tail moved slowly from side to side. All of a sudden, she bounced up and grabbed the end of the yarn with her mouth and took off running. She ran over the large fluffy chair and onto the floor. The yarn got caught on the chair's leg, pulling it out of her mouth.

Spring crept around the large fluffy chair, smiling to herself when she saw there was more to the gift than just a single string. Emily had left a full ball of yarn to play with!

She crept up behind it and pawed at it, making it roll and unwind. She kept pawing and chasing it as it kept unwinding and rolling.

It started rolling down the stairs. Bump, bump, bumpity - bump. It rolled all the way down to the bottom and then out of sight. She let out a happy meow and followed the ball of yarn. When she got to the bottom of the stairs she saw only the end of the string. She strolled back upstairs and looked around.

At last there was no more ball of yarn. Instead, the yarn stretched out everywhere: under the large fluffy chair, between the baskets, around the lamp, over the couch, and even down the stairs. Spring thought it was beautiful. She climbed up into the fluffy chair and fell asleep.

“Oh my!” Emily said when she came home. She must have thought Spring’s creative yarn art was beautiful too! Proudly, Spring sat up and looked at her.

Emily came over, smiled at Spring, patted her head lovingly, and said, “Looks like you and I have a lot of work to do!” Together, they cleaned up all the yarn.

Later that night, as Emily was snuggled in bed she thought, *I’ll never leave that yarn out for you again, you silly kitten.*

Spring curled up at her side and thought, *That was so kind of Emily to leave me*

something to do today. I cannot wait to see what gift she leaves for me tomorrow!

Spring purred as they both fell asleep.

CURSE OF SEKHMET

The Curse of the Pierced Cat

By
Cynthia Skorlinski

Word Count: 1,825

CURSE OF SEKHMET

The Curse of the Pierced Cat

Prologue:

The story takes place in Egypt, near the city of Cairo. The time is the OLD KINGDOM, 2634 BC, Dynasty III. Our ruling king is King Sekhemkhet. The main character is my best friend, Anneht, 17 years old. You will read about Anneht and her family. She has one brother, Nasir, 16 years old, her mother and father. I will show you the sites and tell you about daily life in Egypt 2634 BC.

They told Anneht not to open it but she didn't listen. There it was, the shiny box about eight inches high, eight inches deep, and eighteen inches long. The top cover was decorated in gold leaflets and red ruby stones shining and glittering on the flat pressed tin design. The bottom section of the box was decorated with the red and golden rocks but had green emeralds in each of the lower corners. Everyone in the village and Anneht's family knew the secret and danger of the box. There was a curse on it—a deadly curse. Annie's mother and father told me and Anneht never, ever open the box; never go searching for the box.

Just then, I looked up for a second, Anneht remembered her father telling her what happened to her brother Nasir years ago. Father said, "Anneht, I do not want you to travel and venture into the pyramids. I need to know you are safe and close, not taken by any curse or deadly disease. I forbid you and your friend to enter the pyramid of Sekhemkhet I or any other royal site." "If you and your friends enter, you may never come back just like Nasir. He's dead now and we only have you. You are our only young girl and we love you. Promise on your father's life, you shall never enter the sites." Anneht said to him, "Yes, father, I promise."

Father told Anneht about the time Nasir entered the pyramid with his two friends from the village. They entered the passageway and climbed down into the dark skinny pathway with just small candle lit lights. They could barely see where they were going. Their curiosity drove them down, down into the room, the second and third, and then into the fourth room. Nasir went in by himself to this last room and saw the glistening box lying on the middle of this huge stone table with large pedestal legs carved with cats, birds, and snakes. He groped toward the small box, almost at a running, excited pace, eager to open it. Nasir touched the top of the box; it was smooth, only rough where the stones extended. He forced the lid open. His friends entered the room. They yelled, "Nasir, NO, NO, close it." It was too late. The box was filled with chemicals. The red sand spewed out once the box was opened. The red cloud and sand quickly spread all over the room. Red dust settled onto the ground, around Nasir and over the whole floor. The last boy, the last in the group, closest to the room entrance, saw Nasir fall to the ground. The boys froze for a moment, not able to move any muscles and then they realized their friend was dead. They were scared and backed up to the room entrance. They started to run up the passageway. The air in the rooms dissipated. The boys ran up through the tunnel not looking back. They

thought they were going to get cursed. They thought the curse would spread to them. Then screamed, "Hurry, Hurry, let's get out of here."

Nasir's friends ran back to the village to tell their parents what happened at the pyramid. A friend, Severht, stated "You should have seen Nasir. He was standing in front the large stone table, and then he opened the small tin box. When he did so, the cloud came out and the God from the Underworld took him. Nasir died instantly. The red sandy cloud covered the box, Nasir, the floor. Everything. We could not save him. We could not enter the room or we would die too. We ran." The villagers listened to the young boys. They were not entirely sure what the curse was or what message the hieroglyphs read.

Nasir's family went on, trudging through most difficult and sad times without him. Anneht's father missed him the most. The two of them always spent time together searching the pyramids, visiting nearby cities such as Luxor, Karnak, Thebes, and Giza. They traveled by boat down the Nile River to Upper Egypt during the hot season. During the harvest, they stayed in the village working their section of grain crops. Her father helped Nasir study and learn his hieroglyph symbols and Egyptian writing. Nasir did everything with father. Father was always there for him. Anneht wanted to have this same sense of sharing with her father but never could. She wondered what she could do to gain his love. She was desperate.

Anneht promised her father that she would never enter any of the pyramids like her brother but today, it didn't matter. She was not going to listen to her father no matter what. Anneht set out early morning to the Pyramid of King Sekhemkhet. She took with her as many

candles and her lucky necklace in the shape of the beetle, a scarab. Her heart raced for a minute; nervously she left on her way. It would take a few hours to reach the pyramid, and then she would spend a few more hours exploring the site. She thought she would be back to the village before evening, and no one would miss her.

Anneht went into the pyramid on the side entrance and headed down the passageway. She wondered if this was the way her brother, Nasir, had gone. She entered the first long room, and then moved into a second. Her candle went out and she lit another. The third room was very small and cramped with statutes and statuettes. Anneht had seen many of these at the religious buildings for services. She proceeded into the fourth room. In a moment, she recalled what her Father had tried to warn her about. Anneht saw the beautiful tin box lying on the stone table in the center of the room. The room's table was just as the villagers described. It was large and ornately decorated with the designs of cats, birds, and snakes covering the entire form. Anneht moved towards the box and touched the cover. She took a deep breath. She lifted the lid all the way open until she could see what was inside. It was the red sand that moved out into the air. It surrounded Anneht's entire body. The red cloud did not kill her as it did Nasir. It moved around and around her, swirling and twisting, weaving between her arms and legs. Anneht was aware of what was happening and then the cloud forced forward and pierced Anneht's heart. The red dust entered the hole, rushing into her heart. The chemical dust transformed and entered Anneht's form. The goddess of Sekhmet, the god of cats, had entered her body. Goddess Sekhmet and Anneht were now joined as one. Anneht screamed "Help me, help me," but she couldn't really move her mouth to make the noise. No one heard her. She was alone in the pyramid. She fainted, down to the floor.

Through Egyptian History, it was known, the gods had abilities to kill an entire world, one village, or any man or woman whenever he or she wished. The gods could also perform great things by themselves or by visiting the human form. The goddess Sekhmet was both. She was capable of killing prey, life and controlling Egyptian life by forcing starvation onto the people or making food plentiful. Sekhmet, god of cat controlled the dangerous reptiles. The idea of the cat, the god of cat, and the curse of the cat passed through the history of Egyptian life.

Now Anneht and Sekhmet, the newly joined human god figure was created. Sekhmet returned to the living form. Sekhmet, the cat goddess represented the destructive quality of the sun. She was the female being, a most powerful, significant goddess who was a weapon and protector of life, Re, the ruler of gods. Sekhmet had the capability to destroy the entire world in anger if she wanted. Egypt suffered plagues and starvation brought upon by Sekhmet. She was divine and brought evil. Statues were created in form of Sekhmet to remind men, women, and children about her power. Her being was now forced into Anneht. Anneht asked herself, "What should she do? What should she feel? Who is she now?"

The main terror moved through Anneht and transformed into a calm feeling. Anneht thought, "I am still Anneht and I can still do whatever I did before but now even better, with more confidence, courage, and power." She knew and felt then, that she would become ruler, the next female queen of Egypt. She and Sekhmet together would prove the importance of cats and women. She returned to the village and her Mother and Father. They were forced to accept her

back as their charged ruler. They could see and envision the great things the new Egyptian queen would accomplish.

This story started with the curse from Sekhmet. Sekhmet killed Nasir, Anneht's brother. Sekhmet, the cat, had sealed her soul into the box only to be opened by the chosen young woman. Only a young, capable woman could open the box and survive. Only this woman could live and assimilate to the being. Sekhmet's form as the cat was embalmed in the small box of ruby and golden stones. She came alive once Anneht entered the room and lifted the box lid. She possessed underwent the transformation. She became possessed.

Egypt survived the next many dynasties and once more the noted, treasured box was buried in the pyramids. Along with the box, continued the curse.

Bibliography

Author: Cynthia Skorlinski

Cynthia grew up in Cochrane, Wisconsin along the Mississippi River, Minnesota, and Wisconsin Lakes. She acquired her love of Biology, Music, and Art from her parents and the Midwest Area. She lived in Rochester, MN where she worked as Lab Technician and Computer Graphics Artist Medical Illustrator at the Mayo Clinic. She freelanced as Cynthia's Designs for many years. Currently, she resides in Charlotte, NC and works for Carolinas Healthcare System / Mecklenburg County Health Department. She is working on her teaching degree in Art and Science. She has displayed in Art Galleries such as Mayo Clinic Harwick Art Gallery, Rochester, MN; Spirit Square, Charlotte, NC; and Charlotte Art League, Charlotte, NC. Cynthia has one daughter.

Follow the Creek

Long ago, before cars and iPads and cellphones, two sisters lived in a small cabin at the edge of a beautiful forest. Every day they helped their mother tend their garden of vegetables and colorful flowers. The older sister, Morning Glory (everyone called her Glory) liked planting the seeds and watching the vegetables grow. Little sister Pansy loved helping her mother prepare the flowers to sell at the market.

One morning, Glory leaped out of bed.

"C'mon, Panz," she coaxed, "We gotta go."

Annoyed, her little sister snorted a few times and rolled back over, "But we're not ready," she whined.

Just then their mother walked in, "We need to get ready. The air has turned colder, and it could snow soon."

Every year, the girls traveled through the forest to spend the winter at their aunt's farm. Their little cabin was perfect for tending crops in the summer, but could not withstand the harsh winters.

The best route to their aunt's house was a three day's walk straight through the forest, so the girls packed satchels with clothes and blankets. They would find food in the lush forest along the way.

As they walked along the creek, they happily nibbled berries and gathered nuts for dinner. The first day of their journey seemed easy. Fall had been busy turning the leaves gold, and the forest seemed to glow.

That night, they set up camp in a cozy cave near the creek. They had a fine salad with nuts and wild greens and went to bed with full bellies.

The three of them had been walking less than an hour the next morning when the girls looked up and saw their mother hunched on the ground.

"What happened, Momma?" Pansy's voice quivered. Her mother tried to stand but fell back to the ground.

"I twisted my ankle," she said, "I'm not sure if I can walk..."

Glory tried to stay calm, but she felt terrified, "But we have to keep going, before it snows."

"Well," their mother said, "I need to rest my ankle. You'll have to go on without me." Glory and Pansy looked at each other nervously.

Their mother smiled, "You'll be fine. Follow the creek like usual, and you'll get to Auntie's house by tomorrow evening. Leave me the food we've collected so far. There should be enough for you along the way. I'll be ok."

Reluctantly, Glory agreed. She wiped Pansy's tears and helped her mom move to a nearby cave, arranging their nuts and berries beside her.

The girls trudged along for the rest of the day. The forest didn't seem to glow anymore, and their legs grew tired more quickly than they had the day before. Eventually, the creek widened into a quiet pond. They found shelter in the nearby rocks and slept huddled next to each other for warmth.

When they awoke, Glory peered outside, only to spot an enormous brown bear munching all of the berries by the pond! It was eating their only breakfast and showed no signs of slowing down. The girls watched in silence for a few minutes, but knew they would have to act quickly before the berries were all gone.

"What do we do, Glory?" Pansy whispered.

Glory turned to her sister, "Well, what do bears like more than berries?"

Pansy thought for a moment, then the two sisters devised a plan...

The girls slowly crept out of the cave towards the pond. Pansy hid behind the rocks and started throwing small stones into the pond.

To the bear, the stones sounded just like fish jumping! Curiously, it lumbered to the pond and watched the water, waiting for a fish to jump into its paw. Pansy kept throwing stones close enough to the bear for it to notice, but not too close to risk making contact.

Meanwhile, Glory collected pocketfuls of berries. Just as the bear was about to give up on the fish, Glory motioned to her sister, and off they ran.

As the sun was setting, Glory and Pansy neared the edge of the forest and the end of the creek. All they had had to eat that day were the berries they had managed to get from the pond. The girls were tired and hungry, but they knew they were getting close.

It was nearly dark when they spotted a clearing in the trees and a large farmhouse in the distance. "There it is!" Pansy cried.

The next morning, their Aunt saddled up horses for herself and the girls. With the creek at their side, they found their mother quickly. Once they were all back at the farmhouse, the girls almost forgot about their hunger and fear crossing the woods, but they never forgot about outsmarting the bear.

© Catherine Arguelles, 2013
catherinearguelles@yahoo.com

Serious Sara

Written by: Rebecca Andersen

It was a beautiful summer day in the Pocono Forest. A warm breeze blew through the trees and rustled the leaves just slightly. Sounds of crunching and snapping could be heard all over the forest on this clear blue morning. Critters were hunting, eating and playing all through the woods.

Sara Squirrel poked her head out of her log. She looked left, then right. "Another perfect day to gather nuts for winter" she said aloud. "Gathering again Sara?" Said a voice nearby, which startled her. "Don't you think you should take a break? That's all you ever do!" Charlie Chipmunk said with a huff. "Come play tag with us. Red Fox is on her way." "No thank you," said Sara politely. "Winter will be here before you know it, I want to be prepared!" "Your log is already overflowing with food, let's go, everybody is waiting in the meadow." Charlie exclaimed. "Well, you're all going to be hungry this winter, all you ever do is play!" Sara snapped, forgetting her manners. "You're no fun!" shouted Charlie as he scurried off.

Sara began to gather. Today was a good day, she was finding a lot of acorns and nuts she began filling her log as deep and high as she could. Nearby the sounds of her friends playing throughout the woods was making her a little angry. Actually it was making her quite sad. "How can they play all day when there is work to do?" She thought to herself angrily. "They are going to be hungry!" "Why can't they gather with me sometimes?" At that moment Sara decided to go give her friends a piece of her mind, and off she scampered to the meadow.

There, in the clearing of the field she found her friends playing tag. She marched over to them like a squirrel on a mission! "Sara??" Questioned Charlie Chipmunk. "Yes!! It's me and I am very upset with all of you!" She said angrily. "What did we do?" Asked Red Fox. "Nothing!! That's the point. You don't ever do anything but play!" Sara said not very nicely.

"Well all you ever do is work, work, and work!" Yelled Charlie. Soon all the friends were yelling at one another and chaos broke out.

Perched high up on her tree sat Opal Owl. Listening to the entire argument, and upset by what she was hearing she flew down to lend a wise word. "Friends," Opal started. "Why all the arguing?"

"I'm upset with my friends. All they do is play, play, play!" "I am hard at work every day gathering food for winter." Sara began in a huff. Just then Charlie Chipmunk spoke up. "She never wants to play. All she ever does is work!" Opal Owl was beginning to understand the problem. "Sara dear, I can see why you're so upset. You're doing nothing but work each day while your friends are off playing." "Exactly!" Sara snapped. Opal Owl went on, "I've been watching you all summer Sara, and I can't help but feel sad for you." "Me? Why?" Sara asked quite confused now. "You're always gathering and working. You need balance." "Balance?" Sara questioned. "Yes, Work and play, together. It's like a compromise. A little of this and a little of that." The wise old owl continued. "The same goes for the rest of you. You can't always play either." "Opal said. "If you all worked together gathering food you could do it in less time, then you would have plenty of time to play....together." Sara's face lit up like a light bulb. "I understand. Work together and play together." "That's right!" Opal said with a smile.

"I can't believe none of us thought about this before. Thank you Opal for showing us that there is a better way." said Sara.

One by one each of the friends began to nod their heads and mutter in agreement. Sara asked if she could join them. They warmly accepted her into their game all agreeing to play for a bit and then gather nuts later on.

Thanks to a wise old owl the friends learned to balance work and play by doing it together. As the sun set on the forest on that warm summer evening Sara went back to her log feeling happy. For the hard work done, the new lesson learned and the good friends she had that day.

The End

ANN BAKER JENKINS
501 Scholars Lane
P.O. Box 1675
Solomons, MD 20688

January 25, 2014
About 775 words

DAYDREAMING

My favorite hobby is daydreaming. That's when I can go anywhere and do anything. I can fly a glider to Africa for a safari. I can be an astronaut like Sally Ride. I can be a doctor and help kids. I can be the most popular girl in middle school and get the best grades.

Everyone gives me grief about my daydreaming. Mr. Ferguson in Math somehow knows when I'm far away. Yesterday he asked me to stay after class.

"Maggie," he said. "Your grade in Math is okay, but you'd get a really good grade if you stopped daydreaming in class."

All I could say was, "Yes sir, I'll try." I didn't want to tell him that I don't want to stop daydreaming.

Mrs. Rivera, in Spanish class, puckered her mouth into a little "O" and stared at me. I guess she'd asked me several times to say 'pardon me' in Spanish before I heard her.

That afternoon walking to the bus I thought, I love to daydream. It's fun to go places and see and do exciting things. I want to go to all the places I see on TV and on Dad's iPad. I want to see dolphins and kangaroos and the changing of the guard at that palace in England.

On my way home on the bus, my best friend Janeen sat beside me. She poked my arm with her elbow and said, "Maggie, you haven't heard a word I said. You're off somewhere in a world of your own. I can't talk to you at all anymore. And you don't talk to me either." When the bus was at a stop she scowled at me and changed to a seat beside Jodi. That woke me up for a moment, but my daydreaming soon took over. It's so easy to daydream. No school, no studying, and I can do just what I want.

The minute I got home Mom asked me to empty the drier. "I'll do it right away, Mom," I said.

Instead, I plopped down on the sofa, put my earphones on and my feet up. My thoughts traveled to Venice, the city with canals for streets. Such a great place with its gondolas and singing gondoliers.

"Now," Mom said. That chased away the canals of Venice.

As Dad walked in the door he asked, "How's my dreamer? Gone on safari today? Did you get back home okay? Homework done?"

I hate everyone ragging me about daydreaming. Holding back a sassy answer, I gathered up the clothes from the drier, crept quietly up the stairs to my room, and carefully closed the door. Now alone, I stretched out, stomach down on my bed with my feet waving in the air. I put a pillow over my head to stop the tumbling and jangling thoughts. Why is it so terrible to daydream? Is it something I'll grow out of? Don't grownups daydream? Is it silly to want to do all those things I dream about? Will I ever do anything or go anywhere exciting? I can't wait to do exciting things – It seems forever until I grow up.

Then Mom's voice haunted me – "Do it now." Janeen's voice too – "I can't talk to you anymore." I sighed knowing I would lose my friends and frustrate my parents and teachers if I didn't stop daydreaming all the time. I knew too that when I grow up I will do lots of exciting things and see lots of new places. I didn't know how to stop daydreaming but I had to find a way

Maybe when I do my homework at home I could set the egg timer again and again. Or I could get in the habit of pinching myself. Or I could stand on a bed of nails in my bare feet. That would stop me thinking about anything except my feet. An idea popped into my head and I hurried down to dinner smiling.

The next morning I put a small, sturdy cutting board into my backpack. All day I kept the cutting board on my seat. It's the hardest, flattest seat I've ever sat on. I didn't daydream even once. I could only try to forget how hard the cutting board felt. Mr. Ferguson grinned when I answered questions

right away. Mrs. Rivera's eyebrows flew up to her bangs when I perked up with an answer in Spanish the first time she asked. On the bus Janeen was her chatty self again because I listened and talked to her.

I wonder how long I'll have to sit on that cutting board to kick my daydreaming habit.

Princess Greta

By Staci Hawkins

In a very lucky land lived a princess named Greta. Greta was a very lucky lady. Her parents, the King and Queen of Gargent, gave Greta everything her greedy heart grasped for. Greta not only had a gargantuan bedroom but a gigantic garage filled with girly gifts. Greta's garish garage included games, green dollhouses, great baby dolls, grand books, grandiose pink and purple garments, gaudy jewelry, and stuffed animals galore, but still Greta griped for more.

One day Greta was visiting her friend, Sara, in the countryside. Sara's uncle had a pony named Priscilla and the girls were taking turns prancing him around the pasture.

"This is the most precious pony possible!" pronounced Greta. "I think I will take her to my palace presently."

Sara's uncle proudly proclaimed that Priscilla was not to be had, not even for a proper price. "Sara is way too attached to the pony and it would be piteous to pull the pony from Sara," he pronounced.

Greta was not used to taking no for an answer from anyone. Therefore, she went pouting to her parents and prayed for a new pony present. The King and Queen of Gargent petitioned Sara's uncle for the prize pony, Priscilla.

Sara's uncle said, "No sale, please!" Greta's parents procured no pony for their greedy girl, so the pouting persisted. Greta of the primrose path pouted past the evening. Then the pouting became a pitiful tantrum.

The Queen, Greta's mother, couldn't believe the prolific pounding in the parlor! She pretended not to hear Greta until she could prolong it no more. "Father, please end this profound performance from our princess! I feel our Greta is too greedy for her own good," growled the Queen.

So the King sent greedy Greta to her gargantuan bedroom for a little time out. Greta gasped with shock at her parents' punishment. Greta fell asleep on her bed until she heard a knock on her window and glimpsed a glint of green glitter.

Greta jumped from her bed and ran to the window. Without a word, she wiggled the window open. A gold gargoyle with a green glitter wand waved her out of the way. He waddled his way inside her window. As he walked he introduced himself as Waldo the Gargoyle Wizard. She couldn't believe her eyes and wondered why he was here until he explained...

"I'm a gargoyle wizard wanting to make all your wishes come true. I can give you whatever your greedy heart desires. But it comes at a cost."

"Oh, don't worry about the price. I am a princess and price isn't a problem. I want a precious pony named Priscilla," Greta groaned.

"Before you provide your answer, you may want to hear the price. I will require the sum of your precious pet puppy, Pugsy. Pugsy for Priscilla, is it a plan?"

Greta considered his deal and nodded sadly. In an instant, Pugsy poofed away and Priscilla plopped on top of her purple pillow. How proud Greta was to have procured such a prize pet. However, her pink pudgy toes were now cold in her bed, for Pugsy could no longer warm them. Priscilla was way too plump to lie in her bed. And Priscilla seemed to produce prolific amounts of poop!

This went on for several more wishes. Greta would greedily wish for more and Waldo would use his wand to grant her wish. But with every wish, Greta gave up another friend or family member. First it was her cat, Cathy, next her friend, Sara, then her great grandma, Granny Gilmore. Greta greatly missed all those special friends but she had to have all that stuff. She finally learned her lesson the day she almost lost her parents.

One day while out riding her pony, Priscilla, Greta glanced into a nearby garden. Growing in the garden was a gorgeous gardenia flower. Greta guaranteed that she simply could not live one more day without that gardenia in her own garden.

That evening, Waldo the Gargoyle Wizard waddled into her window once again. This time the trade was tremendous. "How much is a gardenia in a garden worth to a greedy girl?" wondered Waldo.

"Well whatever it's worth, I want it!" warned Greta.

"How about that wonderful father and his wife?" wagered Waldo.

Greta considered this con. She thought about how her mother brushed her braids out at bedtime, made her muffins on Mondays, read her stories right before supper, and fed her soup when she had a fever. She felt faint thinking about her father too. Her father taught her to tie her tap shoes, sang her silly songs to sleep, bandaged her boo-boos, held her hand on holidays, and mangled monsters from under her bed at midnight.

She finally realized what else she'd been missing: Saturdays with Sara, gardening with Granny Gilmore, catnapping with Cathy the Cat, and playing with Pugsy, her precious pet puppy.

She peered at Waldo the Gargoyle Wizard and pronounced, "No way! I won't wish for another frivolous thing. I long for my loved ones. I was once greedy and now I've gained a greedless gratitude. Take all my stuff and return once again the loved ones I've lost.

The Gargoyle grinned and giggled, and then he waved his wand. Suddenly, all her silly stuff slithered slowly into his sack and perched in their place was a pack of perfect people and pets.

Greta's greedy heart melted away as hugs were heaved her way. And on that grand day, Greta grew a grateful heart and that was the best gift she ever got!

Elizabeth Davis

608 Words

305 W Dorado Circle

Picture Book

Litchfield Park, AZ 852340

602-318-2469

erdavis68@cox.net

TENACIOUS TWISTER

Strange winds were blowing. Curious, Zarafa gazed across the savanna. A cool breeze skipped in from the east and a warm breeze danced in from the west.

Tossed between the winds was a brightly colored kite.

Suddenly, the tip of a tree snatched the kite from the winds. Not paying attention to each other, the winds collided. They whirled around and around becoming Twister.

Twister spun himself right around Zarafa's neck!

"You tickle!" laughed Zarafa.

Zarafa ran home to show his mom.

"Mom, look what I found! May I keep him? Please, please, may I keep him?"

Zarafa's mom chewed her cud. "Zarafa, I'm afraid you'll have to take him back."

"But Mom, I'll take care of him, and you'll never have to watch him, and I'll share him with the other calves."

“Twister is a big responsibility. You have to feed him wind and dust. He needs to be taken on very long walks. Besides, Twister is wild. Now, take him back.”

Zarafa slumped his shoulders, “Oh, all right.”

Zarafa stood in the middle of the plain. He wiggled and jiggled. But Twister wouldn’t let go.

Zarafa loped off to find Cheetah.

“Cheetah, I was wondering if you could help me with a problem.”

Cheetah looked at Zarafa with a raised eyebrow. “Yes?”

“Twister has wound himself around my neck and I don’t know how to get him off.”

Cheetah licked an enormous paw and rubbed his whiskers. “If I had Twister around my neck, I would run as fast as I could, leaving him in the dust.”

Zarafa took off galloping through the grass, surely faster than Twister.

Out of breath, he stopped.

Twister didn’t let go.

Zarafa strode off to find Lioness.

“Lioness, I was wondering if you could help me with a problem.”

Lioness grabbed a few cubs by the scruff rearranging her litter. “I would be happy to,” replied Lioness.

“Twister has wound himself around my neck and I don’t know how to get him off.”

“Well,” she said, “if I had Twister around my neck, I would rub him off on the nearest tree.”

Zarafa sped off to find an Acacia tree. He rubbed against a branch. There was a snapping and a crackling.

Twister was still there.

Zarafa went off to find Hyena.

“Hyena, I was wondering if you could help me with a problem.”

“Why the long face?” Hyena laughed.

“Twister has wound himself around my neck and I don’t know how to get him off.”

Hyena shook her whole body releasing a cloud of dust. “Well, if I had Twister around my neck I would I laugh so hard he would shake right off.”

Zarafa scrunched his brow, “How would I do that?”

“Tell jokes of course!” Hyena grinned.

“Sounds fun!” replied Zarafa.

“I’ll go first.” Hyena took a breath, “Why is it hard to play games in the jungle? . . . too many cheetahs!”

Hyena and Zarafa rolled on the ground, snorting with laughter.

When Zarafa stopped to catch his breath, the winds were still there.

He headed back to where he first found the winds racing through the savanna. He spotted the tangled kite at the tip of a tree.

“That’s it! All I need to do is free the kite so Twister has something to play with and I’ll be Twister free.”

Zarafa wrapped his long black tongue around a thorny branch and pulled on it.

Twister reached out and grabbed the freed kite. Giggling, he scampered off with it.

Zarafa was Twister free.

Already missing Twister, Zarafa ambled off to find somewhere to rest for it had been a long, windy day.

Cool Cats in the Neighborhood

"Geez, I thought they would never leave," Cocoa said.

"Seriously! Right?" Nut agreed. "I just want to get outside, already. I want to teach that bulldog, Napoleon, a lesson. My beauty sleep has been interrupted by his all-night barking!"

"Cool it. Take it easy. We can't do anything to draw attention to ourselves.

Remember, we are just a pair of ordinary house-cats," Cocoa warned.

"Yeah, yeah. Whatever." Nut stated nonchalantly.

"Not *whatever*." Cocoa calmly stated. "We can never let people know we can talk and do *anything* they can. Do you really want to get all that attention? Be all over the news? Get chased by paparazzi?"

"Of course not. You are right. As usual," Nut agreed. "I will *try* to portray myself as just a normal, cute kitty."

"Good. Now grab that bone from the trash. We'll use it as bait to lure him into our trick," chocolate-brown Cocoa ordered.

Nut dug her paw into the overflowing, smelly trash bin. She felt what she was looking for before she saw it. She pulled the still-moist bone out.

"Oh, perfect," she said, "a still-juicy bone, still with pieces of meat on it. Check it out, Cocoa!"

"Yeah, perfect," Cocoa purred, imagining the drool dripping from Napoleon's saggy jaw.

The two cats scurried to a side window, unlocked the latch, pushed the slightly heavy framed glass in an upward motion, unhooked the screen, jumped out, and landed on the green blades of grass below.

"Woo-hoo! Freedom!" yelled Nut, her striped black and gray-beige fur standing on end.

"Not so loud, Nut." Cocoa, once again, reminded her sister. "The lady next door might be out, feeding her turtle. She makes me nervous."

"I know what you mean, Cocoa. There is something very weird about her." Nut agreed.

Their mission *today* is to taunt the dog in the adjacent yard, the one with the newly installed pool. The girls will let him know who is in charge of this neighborhood. Cocoa and Nut are *so* tired of hearing that darn dog bark all night long. For no reason! Except to hear his own yippity-yappity voice!

The fraternal twins run across their yard, to the back *ivy-covered* wall. With one giant leap they both land with their paws firmly planted on top of the vine covered, solid bricks.

"As usual, there he is, sniffing the ground, snorting," Cocoa sarcastically said.

Nut smirked, "I'm so glad I am a feline. Dogs are so weird!"

"Oh, Naaapoooleon," Nut teased. "¿Que pasa?"

"What do you want? Don't you have anything better to do?" he shot back.

"Apparently not," answered Cocoa.

"Hey, ToughGuy, we'll throw you this meaty bone if you will do just one simple feat," Nut challenged.

"Interesting. What's the challenge?" he asked.

"All you have to do is jump the width of the pool. Jump from one edge to the other."

"I can't. They just filled it with water. I'm not allowed in it." Napoleon honestly said.

"Chicken! Bock! Bock!" Cocoa teased.

Nut held up the fresh *never been chewed* beef bone for Napoleon to see.

Just as the girls knew he would, Napoleon licked his saliva-filled chops.

"Ha! What a joke! Of course I can make the jump," he challenged back.

The girls high-pawed each other.

Napoleon backed his rear-end up against the sliding glass door. He huffed. He puffed. He ran.

Cocoa and Nut watched, knowing he'd never make it.

With all his might, Napoleon lifted his body into the air. Short legs splayed out. Halfway across the pool, he looked down at the winter-cold water, eyes wide, then he fell.

Suddenly, the sliding door opened. The lady of the house ran out, screaming.

"Napoleon, what did you do?! Get out of there right now!"

All he could do was make a few water-logged barking sounds, as he swam to the shallow end, to the stairs.

Cocoa and Nut pranced down the length of the wall and jumped down into their backyard, whipping their tails to and fro.

Nut tossed the perfect bone into a trash can before re-entering the house through the open window.

"Nut, you and I rule this neighborhood!" Cocoa yelled, once safely inside the house.

"Oh, don't I know it, Cocoa! We make a great team!"

The girls bumped hips, both smiling mischievously.

Just as they jumped onto the comfy brown corduroy couch, to take a much-needed nap, the front door opened.

"Cocoa and Nut are so cute," cooed a young boy as he sat down next to the kitties.

"They are always here, on the couch, when we get home. Just waiting for us."

Cocoa yawned and stretched her forelegs out. Nut gently opened her eyes, yawning also, and winked at her sister.

"So cute!" the boy's mom declared.

The Dark Figure

Anthony, age 11, didn't have the luxury to just do anything he wanted. He still had to ask permission to hang out with friends, go to the movies, stay after school to work on a group project, or any other kind of activity that didn't include his parents. And, well, because of his non-licensed age he also depended on them to take him places, like the local pizza parlor.

"Hey, Mom!" he hollered across the room, his voice vibrating, skimming the walls, traveling into the kitchen, into his mom's willing ear. "How about some pizza and a movie?"

"Pizza? Movie? Why?"

"Come on, Mom. Please. Pretty please. We can go to *Tony's Pizza Shop*, grab a large pepperoni and some bread sticks – "

"Alright," she cut him off.

"Really? And a movie?" Anthony confirmed.

"Yes. Really."

"Cool. Thanks, Mom," he chirped, happily.

Ten minutes later, they were in the car traveling south to their favorite pizza joint to pick up one large cheese and one large pepperoni, which was Anthony's idea, so that there'd be plenty for the next day. And, of course, they had to get the breadsticks and a couple sodas. After picking up their dinner they'd head over to the local store and rent a movie from a big red kiosk, where all they had to do was insert a credit card, make a choice, and *voilà!* out would pop a Blu-ray Disc.

Tony's was fairly busy when Anthony and his mom walked into the small shop. They stood in line, for what seemed like, maybe, 10 minutes, which they didn't mind because the pizza was so worth it. "Extra Ranch, please," Anthony added to their order, feeling his mouth water just thinking about dipping his pizza into a bowl of creamy, tasty, smooth Ranch dressing.

Hot food and cold drinks were carefully balanced as they were walking through a congestion of parked cars, when Anthony noticed a dark figure behind them.

"Mom, don't look back," he whispered, "but I think someone is following us. His mom tried to act nonchalant when she stopped to look at her phone, turning sideways so she could see the person. The dark figure was back a few aisles but seemed to be gaining on them, intent on catching up.

"Go! To the car now!" she said firmly, harshly, under her breath.

After securing themselves inside the car, Anthony's mom turned the key, to rev up the engine.

"Oh, seriously! Not now!" she sounded panicked. "Ugh! I knew I should have had this fixed the first time it happened!" The barrel where the car's key was shoved

in, the ignition, had loosened, causing the key to continuously spin, rather than ignite life into the vehicle.

Just then, there was pounding on his mom's car window. She looked up to see the dark figure standing there, staring at her. For a second, she was unable to move, frozen to her seat. And then a scream shot from his mom's throat. Anthony's eyes grew big and round, and he stared forward, not sure what to do. The dark figure pounded on the window again, reaching out his hand. He was holding something.

"You forgot your Ranch dressing for the pizza!" he yelled, loud.

Anthony's mom slowly rolled down the window. "Oh, thanks," she squeaked, feeling very embarrassed.

Nancy Anne Moller
2868 Sumter Valley Circle
Henderson, Nevada
89052
Telephone: 702-328-8960
Email: danmarknancy@yahoo.com

800 words

Swallows and the Stolen Jewel

Sam stared at the old box with the strange wand attached. "Hey! It's a metal detector!" Snatching it from the shelf of his mother's thrift shop, he turned to his friend Jane. "This could save the swallows!"

They ran to the front counter. "Mom, we're going to the beach to hunt coins."

"For the building fund," Jane added.

Sam's mother smiled. "If that nesting structure is ever built for those birds, they'll have you two to thank for it. Have fun, but don't get in the way of Sheriff Dalton's robbery investigation."

Sam's eyes widened. "What robbery?"

"Mr. Turner's jewelry store was broken into while he was out. Evidently he saw the thief running toward the beach, dropping fake jewels everywhere."

"Fake jewels?"

"Window displays. However, a gold broach is missing, which Mr. Turner was appraising for a distant relative. The owner has already offered a hefty reward."

"Reward? Let's go Jane."

"Sam, leave the detective work to the sheriff."

"After all the wrecked nests I've investigated? I'm practically his deputy."

For weeks, Sam had combed the neighborhoods of ransacked nests, looking for clues. Every spring, barn swallows returned to build new nests or settle into old ones left behind. With fewer barns, swallows began nesting in the eaves of homes. Their eggs hatched into charming but messy fledglings. Even bird-loving residents were losing their patience. Someone was taking the matter into his own hands, secretly destroying nests, empty or not.

Sam and Jane found Sheriff Dalton standing behind police tape, searching the sand with a high-powered detector.

Sam hopped over the tape. "Hi Sheriff Dalton. Can we help look for the broach?"

The jeweler, Mr. Turner, shouted from the sidewalk. "Sheriff, between vandalized nests and jewelry stores, can't you control the children in your town?"

Sheriff Dalton ignored Mr. Turner. "Does that metal detector work, Sam?"

"I hope so. Jane and I want to collect the reward."

"For the swallows," Jane added.

Sheriff Dalton nodded. "You can help me and the swallows. The committee plans to build the nesting structure on the bluff by the old shack. Conduct your search along the beach, and then check out the building site for me."

"Yes sir!"

Mr. Turner stomped off.

They walked along the shore as Sam scanned the beach with the detector.

"Maybe it's broken," Jane said. "It hasn't made a sound."

Sam saw movement on the hill above the shoreline. "Look Jane, there's two swallows flying around the old shack. Maybe they're nesting."

They raced up the hill and onto the front porch. “They’ve built a nest in the porch loft.” Sam inched closer, but not close enough to alarm the two swallows circling above them. The detector clicked rapidly. “There’s something in the nest!”

Keeping her distance, Jane climbed atop the porch railing to look. “One, two, three...five eggs!”

“Eggs can’t set off a metal detector.” Sam noticed old shoe prints embedded in dry mud on the porch. “Go get Sheriff Dalton. I’ll watch the nest.”

As Jane ran down the hill, Mr. Turner emerged from the shadows of the trees.

“What are you up to young man?”

“I’m uh...guarding this nest.”

“You had better leave before I decide to tell the sheriff you’re the delinquent I saw running from my store.”

“We both know that’s not true.” Sam stepped back. The detector went off.

Mr. Turner lunged at Sam, slamming him against the wall.

Sam sank to the porch, his breath knocked out of him. Something shiny, at the bottom of the nest, caught his eye. As Mr. Turner reached for the nest, the two sparrows swooped down, swirling around his head. Blindly swatting at them, he fell off the porch.

Sheriff Dalton arrived in time to witness the scuffle. He pulled Mr. Turner to his feet, as Jane ran over to Sam.

“Sheriff, arrest this boy. He’s a thief.”

“Mr. Turner,” Sheriff Dalton asked, “what brings you out here?”

“He must have overheard you telling us to come here, Sheriff Dalton.” Sam pointed to the nest. “I figure he hid the broach on that ledge days before the swallows

built here. The dried mud and twigs are packed around it. I recognize his big shoe prints in dried mud too. Mr. Turner destroyed the nests, and then staged the robbery to make it look like a local did it all.”

“Jane’s eyes narrowed. “He’s the nest wrecker?”

“Yep. He stepped into plenty of bird messes under the broken nests. Those prints match the ones here, so if the shoe fits...”

Sheriff Dalton carefully extracted the broach with his jackknife. “Mr. Turner, you’re under arrest. Sam, you and Jane have earned that reward.”

Sam grinned. “Don’t forget the swallows. We couldn’t have solved anything without them.”

Verna Safran
1820 University Place
Sarasota, FL 34235
(941) 955-5787
vernafr4@gmail.com

IT'S DARK AS A DUNGEON

Kenny-John Foy was only nine years old when he went down in the mines to dig coal. It was 1933 in the middle of the Great Depression, and children were not only allowed to work, sometimes they had to. Kenny-John lived in a run-down house in Kentucky, a house that some people might call a shack. He came from a big family, and they needed the money. He made 75 cents a day.

And that 75 cents was not easy to earn. You had to work in the dark pit for 14 hours straight, with just fifteen minutes for lunch. And there were dangers: Falling rock, gas explosions, fires caused by the lamps. A friend of his got a broken leg when a section of scaffold fell on him, and he never walked right again.

Every night when Kenny-John came home, he had to take a bath in a metal tub right away, because he was covered with black coal dust. But his skin was not the only part of him that was covered. Everyone working in the mine breathed in the coal dust, and it got into their lungs.

When he came home, he was too tired to do anything but eat supper and go to bed. His little brother Rufus would ask him to play checkers with him, or teach him how to play the guitar, but he would just have to tell him, "Sorry, kiddo, I'm beat. Some other day, maybe."

The only thing Kenny-John did for fun was listen to the songs the men sang and the stories they told at lunchtime. His favorite song was this one:

“Oh, it’s dark as a dungeon

And damp as the dew

Where the dangers are many

And the pleasures are few,

Where the rain never falls

And the sun never shines:

It’s dark as a dungeon

Way down in the mines.”

And his favorite story was the true one an old-timer told – about a firebrand of an old lady they called Mother Jones, who in 1908 led a hundred thousand child miners on a march from Kensington, Pennsylvania to Oyster Bay, New York, the home of President Teddy Roosevelt. They carried banners demanding “We want time to play” and “We want to go to school.” But the president didn’t listen to the children; he listened to the mine owners who said they always treated the kids just fine.

Kenny-John had a crush on a girl named Sally-Ann Rogers who lived down the road, but she would have nothing to do with him. “I ain’t never going around with no miner,” she told

him. "All dirty and grimy all the time. And I sure as heck ain't never gonna marry one, and be broke and in debt for the rest of my life."

One day in the Spring of 1938, one of the men named Corey brought a newspaper to work in his back pocket. At lunch time he took it out and gathered the men around to hear what it said. (Kenny-John wished he could read it, but he couldn't because never had a chance to go to school.) It seems there was a lady named Frances Perkins, who was the Secretary of Labor appointed by FDR, and she had proposed a Fair Labor Standards Act that would prevent bosses from hiring little children.

"Who is FDR?" Kenny-John asked.

"Why he's Franklin Delano Roosevelt," Corey said. "The President. He's the feller making these new laws they call The New Deal."

"It'll never happen," Kenny-John said, remembering the story about Mother Jones.

"Times is changing," Corey said. "Working folks are standing up and asking for things."

And sure enough, on the radio that night, the announcement came that FDR had signed the Fair Labor Standards Act. It set up a minimum wage, and rules about overtime, and it did away with child labor.

"How're we gonna get enough money to feed the fam'ly?" his mom wanted to know.

"That there minimum wage," his dad said. "It makes sure kids don't need to work any more, because their pop gets paid enough to get by."

Next day at work, everyone was buzzing with the news.

“It’s too late for me,” Kenny-John, who was now 14 years old, said. “I’ll be a miner for the rest of my life. But my little brother Rufus will be able to go to school and go out and play in the sunshine.”

THE END

Martha R. Fehl

8125 SMITH ROAD • BROOKVILLE, INDIANA 47012 • PHONE/FAX (765) 647-5823
First North American serial rights

807 words

Three Wishes

By

Martha R. Fehl

The teacher and her friends called her Petal, but her father, who was a descendant of the Lenape Indian tribe, named her Petalonwa because she was born during a spring rain.

The fall breezes were cool now, and frost scribbles crowded the corners of the window panes. From a distant she could see the yellow school bus snake down the lane leaving behind a whirling cloud of dust.

Petal's family usually moved each spring when school closed. The small house they lived in now had a walnut tree in the front yard. Petal's hands remained stained for weeks after gathering and storing them. Some of her classmates poked fun at her stained fingers.

Mother came from the kitchen in her bulky blue flowered gown with the large red zinnias. "Guess what?" she said to Petal. "How would you like to go to Florida for Christmas?"

Petal shivered. Her faded robe clung to her thin form and her large round brown eyes were the color of the trees in winter. Strands of coal black hair hung like toothpicks across her forehead and trailed down her back.

The school day went as usual. Petal waited patiently as Mrs. Solar called the lunch roll and they said their pledge to the flag.

Friday was the day the children brought items for the Science table. Her friends Samuel and Mirando usually had something unusual and the teacher was always pleased. The only time she had anything to share was a cow horn in the pasture, and feathers she had collected from the remains of a quail while walking in the woods.

She hoped Mrs. Solar did not make her read her three wishes before the other students. They wouldn't understand. She wanted to stay over Christmas this year and never move again.

Mrs. Solar's voice boomed loud and clear, "Petal, would you like to read your essay for us this morning?"

She scooted out of her seat and made her way to the front. Slowly she fingered the paper and began to read, "My three wishes for Christmas are: a chicken, a tree, and a cookie jar." Some of the kids giggled. Others just stared at her until she took her seat.

She didn't remember much of the day that followed except there was Math and Social Studies, and Music.

As they were getting their jackets and lunch boxes for home Mrs. Solar gently took her by the arm and said, "Petal, could you help me straighten the bookcase?" Petal quickly fell down on her knees by the shelves and began to arrange the books into neat piles.

"I'm curious about your wishes, Petal" she said stacking some books in her drawer. "Could you tell me a little more about them? Why the chicken, and a cookie jar? I can understand the tree."

Petal whispered the facts. She had never been in an area when it snowed and had a tree for Christmas. If she had some chickens, they would have fresh scrambled eggs every morning, and they would not be able to travel with chickens in a car so far.

Wishes – Fehl – 3 -

She had remembered the birthday's parties that other children had when they brought beautifully iced chocolate, peanut butter, or sugar cookies to share. She dreamed of a whole cookie jar of favorites with a different kind for each child.

Mrs. Solar's quickly went to her purse for a tissue, "I see," she said, and thanked her for helping.

Each year the children chose someone in their class that they wanted to give a Christmas gift.

The teacher asked them to choose by Friday and place their contribution into a box on her desk. Two weeks before Christmas they would count the votes and the money.

One day ran into another over the next few weeks. Mother kept talking of how it would be nice to have the warm sun and not have to wear a coat. Petal feared the time was coming for trip.

One evening, she heard her father talking loudly in the kitchen with her Mother.

Then he came to her door and said, "Come see what your Daddy has for you."

He twirled her into the air. "Daddy has good news," he said.

"I have a job as a janitor in one of those fancy sections in town. Not one with poor people like us, but those that work in Sunday clothes, and drive all the latest model cars. Besides, they leave good things for the garbage trucks," he babbled.

He set down the large wastebasket with a dent in one side and started to unwrap his treasure in brown paper bags. The first was a three foot Christmas tree with one stem missing. He pulled a small silver star from his pocket and placed it on top. The second was a bag of leftover feed. "I thought we could buy some chickens so you would have those eggs you like.

Andrea Shapiro
7831 Whetler Terrace
Potomac, MD 20854
h) 301-983-0508
c) 410-300-9151
December 28, 2013
wdnmph@hotmail.com

word count:434

Einstein's Birthday Surprise

Einstein, the octopus, sat alone by the rocks in his home under the sea. "It's my birthday and I didn't get any presents." He tried to be happy and played hide-the-shell with his eight arms.

A flash of yellow swam by. It was his friend, Fossey, the angelfish. "Happy Birthday," Fossey said. "I have a special present for you."

"I love presents," said Einstein. "An octopus can play with eight presents at the same time."

Fossey said. "Your present is in this cave. Try to guess what it is."

Einstein put his arms in the cave. He felt something hard and round.

"Is it a rock?" said Einstein. "I love rocks because I can hide behind them."

"Nope. It's hard and round, but it's not a rock," said Fossey. "Pull it out and see."

Einstein pulled on the hard round thing. At first, it looked just like a rock, then out popped a neck and head. Two eyes blinked at him. It was his friend, Jacques, the sea turtle.

"What a nice birthday present" said Einstein. "A friend is better than a rock."

"I have a present for you, too," said Jacques.

The three friends swam to a giant sea sponge. "Feel behind this sponge and guess what your present is," said Jacques.

Einstein felt something long and slimy.

"Is it a rope?" said Einstein. "I love ropes because I can play tug-of-war with myself."

"Nope. It's long and slimy, but it's not a rope," said Jacques.

Einstein grabbed the long slimy thing and pulled. Out slithered his skinny friend, Franklin, the eel.

"I like my birthday present very much!" said Einstein. "A friend is better than a rope."

"I have a present for you too," said Franklin. "Feel again guess what it is," said Franklin.

Einstein felt something cold and smooth.

"Is it a bottle?" asked Einstein. "I love bottles because I can balance them on my head."

"Nope. It's cold and smooth. But it's not a bottle," said Franklin.

Einstein pulled on the cold smooth thing. Out crawled his friend, Newton the lobster. Newton, waved his two claws. "Happy Birthday," he sang.

"What a great present!" said Einstein. "A friend is better than a bottle."

"Thank you for remembering my birthday," he said. "I'm a lucky octopus to have such wonderful friends. This is a terrific birthday party."

"But what's a birthday party without a cake?" said his friends. They gave him a three-layer seaweed birthday cake. Einstein cut the cake and gave everyone a piece. He smiled a big smile. It was a wonderful birthday surprise.

Andrea Shapiro
7831 Whiterim Terrace
Potomac, MD 20854
h) 301-983-0508
c) 410-300-9151
December 28, 2013
wdnmph@hotmail.com

Word count: 450

Oh, Yummy!

Gertrude the Giraffe strolled through the African savannah looking for something good to eat. She came upon a mongongo tree. The leaves were dark green and shaped like funny little hands. She tasted one. "Yuck, too bitter" she said. She found a jackalberry tree growing on a termite mound. She ate a leaf. "Too tart," she said.

Gertrude saw Elmer the Baboon sitting by the acacia tree sucking his hurt finger. The acacia tree had gray-green leaves that looked good. But there were long sharp thorns on the branches.

"Are acacia leaves good?" she asked Elmer.

"They're delicious," he said. "But they're too tricky to pick. The thorns stick my fingers."

"No problem for me," Gertrude said. She wrapped her long purplish-black tongue around the branches, careful to avoid the thorns, and got a mouthful of the leaves. "Oh, yummy!" she said.

She gave Elmer a big bunch of leaves too.

"Oh, yummy!" he said.

They passed the rest of the day quietly eating acacia leaves. The leaves made them thirsty so they walked to a watering hole. Gertrude spread her legs way out, lowered her long neck, and took a big slurp of cool, clear water.

"Oh, yummy!" she said. "What else do you like to eat?"

"I like baobab fruit," said Elmer.

"What does that taste like?" asked Gertrude.

Elmer led Gertrude to a tall tree with a gnarled trunk and snarled branches that reached way up high. On the branches were fuzzy yellow-brown fruit. She plucked one from the lowest branch, chewed it, and her lips puckered.

"Yuck! Too sour," she said.

"Try another piece," said Elmer.

She picked one from the next highest branch and chewed it a little longer. She liked it much better.

"Oh, yummy!" she said.

Gertrude wanted more baobab fruit. As she ate, she reached her neck up, around, and through the branches. Soon it was all swirls and hoops and loops and she was caught in the tree.

"Oh no," said Gertrude. "How will I get out?"

Elmer scratched his head. Then he climbed up the tree and sat on her neck. He reached from branch to branch and carefully unwound her.

When her neck was straight, Gertrude said, "Thank you for helping me. I like baobab fruit, but they're too hard to get."

“I have an idea,” Elmer said. You like baobab fruit, but you get all wound up in the branches. I like acacia leaves. But I get stuck by the sharp thorns.”

“I’ll pick acacia leaves for you,” said Gertrude.

“And I’ll pick baobab fruit for you,” said Elmer. “And we’ll meet every day at the watering hole for a picnic.”

“Oh, yummy!” they said.

Andrea Shapiro
7831 Whiterim Terrace
Potomac, MD 20854
h)301-983-0508
c) 410-300-9151
December 28, 2013
wdnmpm@hotmail.com

Word count: 446

TOMMY, TOMMY, TOO MANY TOES

The sleeping kittens exploded into two furry bundles of energy. Tommy rushed out the flip-flop door into the back yard and Trina rushed after him. Soon they were playing tug with a string. Trina held tightly onto the string, but Tommy won.

“Let’s play again,” Trina said. She grabbed the string and pulled. Woosh. Tommy pulled it out of her paws.

Trina grabbed as hard as she could, but Tommy pulled harder. She looked at her paw and counted her toes. 1...2...3...4...5. She counted Tommy’s toes. 1...2...3...4...5...6?...7?!

“Tommy, Tommy too many toes!” She danced and teased him. “Tommy, Tommy too many toes!”

Tommy’s tail twitched. He thought and thought. Then he said, “ Let’s go to to zoo. I want to see something.” The kittens raced down the alley, under the fence, and into the zoo.

First they saw the zebra.

“How many toes do you have?” said Tommy.

The zebra wiggled his ears. “Why don’t you count them and see?” he said.

Trina inspected his feet. “You only have one toe on each foot.”

“That’s all I need,” he said.

Next they went to the llama.

Andrea Shapiro
7831 Whiterim Terrace
Potomac, MD 20854
h) 301-983-0508
c) 410-300-9151
wdnmph@hotmail.com
December 28, 2013

word count: 412

What Should I Do Now?

Ding. Ding. Ding. The alarm clock woke Purrcey, the cat.

I wish that noisy thing would stop, he thought. Mornings are for sleeping.

Penny wanted to sleep, too, but it was a school day. She jumped out of bed and threw on her clothes. She grabbed her backpack and ran out the front door.

Purrcey got slowly out of bed.

Yawn.

Stretch.

Lick.

Scratch.

What should I do now? I'm hungry. I hope Penny left some of those yummy crunch bits in my bowl for me to eat.

Purrcey strolled downstairs to the kitchen and looked at his food bowl. It was empty.

What should I do now?

He tried to play with his favorite squeaky ball. He tapped it with his paw, it rolled, but then it just sat there.

It's no fun to play by myself. What should I do now?

Purrcey walked down the basement steps and out through the cat door. He sat on the porch and looked around for someone to play with. *Can I play with birds? No, too high.*

Squirrels or chipmunks? No, too fast. What should I do now?

Yawn.

Stretch.

Lick.

Scratch.

He was just about to go back inside for a nap when he saw a frog sitting near a puddle.

Maybe the frog will play with me.

Gently, very gently, Purrcey picked up the frog with his mouth and carried it to the kitchen. He put it down and looked at it. The frog just sat on the floor.

What should I do now?

Purrcey sniffed the frog.

Hop! Now the frog was up on the kitchen counter.

This is a great game!

Purrcey leaped up on the counter and he sniffed the frog again.

Hop! Hop! The frog landed on a box of cat food. The box tipped over. Crunchy bits of food fell right into Purrcey's bowl.

Yum.

Purrcey jumped down and began to eat.

When Penny came home from school, she saw Purrcey sleeping next to his empty bowl.

“Good Purrcey,” she said. Would you like some food?” Then she saw the cat food box tipped over on the counter.

“Bad Purrcey,” she said. “You made a mess.” Then she saw the frog on the counter.

“Very bad Purrcey,” she said. “Frogs don’t belong inside.” Penny took the frog outside and it hopped away.

Purrcey thought, *What should I do now?*

Yawn.

Stretch.

Lick.

Scratch.

Then he followed Penny upstairs to see if she would play with him.

Andrea Shapiro
7831 Whetierim Terrace
Potomac, MD 20854
h) 301-983-0508
c) 410-300-9151
wdnmph@hotmail.com
December 28, 2013

word count:441

Why Did the Turtle Cross the Road?

My big brother, Alan wouldn't play with me so I walked to the park alone. I was just about to cross the road when I saw something moving slowly. It was a brown turtle, as big as two fists. The turtle started to cross the road so I picked him up. "I'll take you home where it's safe. Next time you should look both ways before you cross the road and you will See-More." So I called him Seymour.

When I got home, I put him in a big plastic tub and he walked around. I put in some dirt and grass and rocks. I wasn't sure what else to do, so I asked Alan.

"Maybe he's thirsty. I'll look at him later. I've got homework to do," Alan said.

I put in a little dish of water, but I didn't know what to feed him. "Go dig up some worms," said Alan. Then he closed the door and went back to his homework.

On the first day, Seymour sat in the sun. Then he sat in his water dish. Then he ate a bunch of worms and some grass.

On the second day, he ate only one worm and sat under a rock.

On the third day, Seymour wouldn't eat. When I picked him up, he kept his head in his shell. I got worried.

“Seymour doesn’t look happy,” I told Alan. “Do you think I should bring him back to his home.”

Alan looked like he was going to tell me to go away. “Please, Alan. I really need your help.” He put down his book and grabbed two of his favorite baseball caps. He put one on his head and slipped one over mine.

“Come on,” he said. “Let’s take Seymour for a walk.”

We went to where I found Seymour. “He was here,” I said. I pointed across the road at the park. “He was going that way. Why do you think he wanted to cross the road?” I asked.

“Maybe his big brother was in the park,” Alan said.

“And Seymour wanted to play with him,” I said.

We both laughed. Then we went into the park and I put Seymour down. He walked a little way, turned his head, and winked. Well really, he blinked, but it was almost a wink. Then he disappeared into the woods.

“Look,” Alan said. “Seymour said goodbye to you.”

Alan still sometimes tells me to go away. But other times he smiles and says, “Why did the turtle cross the road?” We laugh. And then we walk to the park together. We play ball and talk about Seymour.

Andrea Shapiro
7831 Whiterim Terrace
Potomac, MD 20854
h) 301-983-0508
c) 410-300-9151
December 28, 2013
wdnmph@hotmail.com

word count: 445

How the Puppy Learned to be Good

I was all alone in a cage at the Animal Shelter. Soon, a family came to choose a puppy. I loved the way the boy smelled...like soft-hugs-and-cinnamon.

I wagged my tail. *Pick me. I promise I'll be good.* And he did!

The first day in my new home, the boy played with me. When nighttime came, he showed me a crate and said some words I didn't understand. But I wanted to please him, so I walked in and curled up on the soft blanket.

I'm being good.

He closed the door and walked away. I howled. *Please don't leave me. I'll be good.* I guess he understood, because he carried me upstairs to his nice warm bed. As I fell asleep, I thought, *I'm being good.*

My boy taught me three tricks. "Sit." "Stay." "Speak." Sometimes I got them confused. Then I taught him a great trick. He learned to give me a big hug and treat whenever I did what he wanted. The treat was tasty but the hug was even better.

Once, the family left me alone all day. That was not good.

First I went to the kitchen and dug all the interesting smelly bits in the garbage. Then I stood at the door and howled, but no one came. I got scared so I jumped up on the sofa but that

Andrea Shapiro
7831 Whiterim Terrace
Potomac, MD 20854
h) 301-983-0508
c) 410-300-9151
wdnmph@hotmail.com
December 28, 2013

Word count: 397

Triplet Blues

The triplets wanted to go to the fair, but not dressed like this. They pulled and tugged at the blue dresses. "Can't you wear them, just for today?" their mother said.

"No," Laurie said. "Blue is boring."

"No," Frannie said. "Blue is for babies."

"No," Bobbie said. "Blue is bad."

Each triplet had a favorite color.

Laurie liked lemon-yellow best. She put on a lemon-yellow t-shirt and shorts. She grabbed her lemon-yellow pocket book and put her hair in a lemon yellow elastic band.

Frannie liked peach-pink best. She put on her peach-pink twirly skirt and a peach-pink top with peach-pink sparkly shoes to match.

Bobbi liked just about every color except blue.

She put on her rainbow dress and her rainbow tights. Then she added her rainbow bead bracelet just for good measure.

"Ready to go," their mother asked? A swirl of triplet color ran past her and out the front door.

When they got to the fair, the first ride was the carousel. The music played a happy tune while they chose their seats. There were animals of every color to ride on.

Frannie found a peach-pink horse.

Laurie found a lemon-yellow elephant.

“Anything but the blue whale,” Bobbi said, as she climbed onto an orange ostrich.

The ride started and the jumble of sights wooshed by as they rode around and around.

After the carousel ride, the triplets wanted to buy balloons. Bobbie liked red, orange, and green balloons. She couldn’t decide between them, so she got one of each. Laurie got three lemon-yellow balloons and Frannie chose three peach-pink balloons. They tied the balloons to their wrists and watched them bob along as they walked through the fair.

Now it was time for the best ride of all, the Ferris wheel. They climbed into the big chair. Up, up, up it went. They looked down at the tops of the big trees. They waved at the tiny people. They saw small puffs of clouds dancing on the wind. Then they looked at the bright blue sky all around them. Amazing!

Bobbie said. “Blue is beautiful. It’s my new favorite color.”

“Mine too,” said Frannie and Laurie together.

On the way home the triplets bought t-shirts to remember the day at the fair. They all wanted the same color...Sky Blue.

Edited

SETTING UP MANUSCRIPT
FOR PUBLICATION

*Highlights for Reading
After the Golden Rule
St. Edward*

Irene Phillipuk
PO Box 971
Highland Lakes
New Jersey
07422

Approx # Words : 2,006

BRUCE THE LOOSE GOOSE
By Grandma Renee

Once upon a time there was a goose whose name was Bruce. No one knows how he got his name but, Bruce was considered a loose goose ever since he was a gosling. A gosling is a young goose.

When Bruce was born and started to walk, he waddled instead. That means that his feet walked from side to side instead of forward as we do. When he waddled from his left to his right, he looked like he was going to fall over but he never did. Bruce also had webbed feet that made him look funny. There was no space between his toes, and he looked like he was wearing mittens. Oh yes, Bruce also jostled (that means he bumped into everything).

Well now, that means our story is about a goose that was loose whose name Bruce, who was jostling since he was a gosling and he had webbed feet that really looked neat. Or so they say!!

Bruce and his mom and dad and two sisters lived on the side of a big pond in a park, in a small country town called Huckleberry. It was always warm in Huckleberry so Bruce never had to worry about being cold.

The pond in the park where they lived was large enough for other geese families to live also. (Geese means more than one goose).

Each goose family had several family members and they all got along really well. Sometimes Bruce would think he was funny and tell his friends that they lived in a goosy-loosy neighborhood and played in a pond they were fond of. Bruce was surely a loose goose and his friends would just look at him and say “oh, Bruce“, and walk away.

When Bruce was still a young gosling, he had several gosling friends at the pond where they lived in that small town. Even though his friends liked him, they sometimes used to get angry with Bruce because he would jostle one of them as he waddled past them on the grass and knock them right into the water or, if they were already swimming in the pond with Bruce, he would jostle one of his friends and knock them right back onto the grass.

Bruce never meant to do this on purpose, he was just a loose gosling who grew up to be a loose goose. While he was growing up and not yet a goose, the other goslings played with him but they mostly tried to stay out of his way and sometimes Bruce would think that they were ignoring him. He felt bad but understood that it was because he was clumsy and they didn't want him to knock them over.

Bruce had a best friend named Henry. Henry was always there to play with Bruce even though Bruce jostled him. Henry felt sorry for Bruce because he knew he couldn't help the way he was and Henry always felt that he wouldn't want to be ignored so he paid special attention to Bruce and became his best friend.

Henry always played in the water and on the grass with Bruce. He didn't care when Bruce accidentally jostled him and knocked him over because he knew Bruce couldn't help it. When Bruce used to jostle Henry into the water or onto the grass, Henry used to always say to Bruce "Bruce, you're a loose goose who just knocked me for a loop". They would laugh and Bruce thought how lucky he was to have Henry as his best friend ever.

One day it was raining out in the town of Huckleberry. The geese families who lived in the park down by the pond, sat in their warm, dry, homey caves on the side of the pond and just watched the raindrops fall onto

the water and thought “how peaceful and nice it looked”.

Some of the geese families stayed inside their homes on the sides of the pond that protected them from the rain, but after a long while it continued raining so some of the parents thought that because it was a warm day it would be fun to go out and play in the rain by the pond with their little goslings. The goslings loved to swim in the pond on rainy days and catch the raindrops in their beaks, but they also liked to play tag on the grass because the grass was always slippery when it rained so when they played tag they would slip and slide and that was real fun. Kind of like when Bruce would bump them but instead of being jostled, they would be gostled which meant that the goslings would “slip and slide” and bump themselves.

So, the brave ones went out in the rain and were playing tag for a while sliding on the grass while some others were catching raindrops in their beaks and some were just swimming in the pond trying to catch the raindrops falling onto the pond.

All of a sudden, one of the mothers who was watching her young goslings playing in the rain on the grass happen to look down the path and saw Bruce waddling down the path along side of his parents and sisters. She said “oh boy, here comes Bruce we better be careful to get out of his way”.

The parents liked Bruce and his mom and dad and sisters very much

but they knew that if they came near Bruce, especially in the slippery rain, they would be jostled as he waddled and they could really go flying. Even though geese and goslings know how to fly when they are very young they didn't want go flying in the rain that day.

So all of the goslings and their parents ran onto the grass away from the path where Bruce and his family were walking because they knew that Bruce was going to slip and slide for sure.

Well, his parents and sisters got to the rest, they left the path and walked down the wet grass to the water's edge to join in on the fun with everyone. Bruce was right behind them and just as they got to the water's edge, Bruce (as expected,) lost his balance and gave out a loud gosling yelp, and yelled out loudly, "watch-out", and down he went, slipping and sliding on the grass and slid right into the water.

His mom and dad were able to get out of his way in time but his two sisters went flying into the water with Bruce. They made such a big splash that everyone close by got soaked whether they wanted to or not. Of course, they all yelled at him but Bruce just said what he always says, "I'm sorry, and I didn't mean it".

Another time after that, on a nice warm sunny day, Bruce was floating on the water and all was okay, so all of the goslings decided to play tag with

each other in the water. But they still watched Bruce very carefully and stayed away from him.

Bruce's best friend Henry looked across the water and saw Bruce just floating and daydreaming peacefully so Henry asked his mom if he could swim across the pond to play with Bruce. Henry's mom said of course, for a little while but she reminded him to be careful. He agreed and off he went.

Henry swam over to where Bruce was and Bruce was so glad to see Henry that he started flapping his wings and yelled out "Hey Henry" and as usual, in his excitement, he hit Henry with his wings and knocked him right under water. When Henry came back up he laughed so hard and said to Bruce "you dunked me you monkey" and Bruce and Henry giggled as they swam back up onto the grass to sit and talk about things.

While they were sitting on the grass and talking in gosling talk, Bruce happen to look up and saw two boys walking down the path toward them. They were looking ^{at} ~~and~~ Bruce and Henry. At first, Bruce didn't think anything of it, but it started to rain again that day and Bruce knew that people didn't often walk in the park down by the pond in the rain but he thought, maybe they were just trying to get home out of the rain but when they got closer Bruce noticed that one of the boys was carrying a handful of small rocks in his left hand and his left pants pocket was bulging with

something that looked like more rocks. The other boy had a loaf of bread in his hand.

Bruce became confused and immediately got a bad feeling and something made him feel very uncomfortable about what the boys were up to. He thought, “Why would one boy have bread in his hand and the other boy have rocks in his hand? People usually just give bread to us when they come to the pond but no one ever carry’s rocks. Something just doesn’t feel right.”

Just then, Henry noticed the boys also and knew right away what they were up to and so he said to Bruce, “ run, let’s get out of here, those boys are going to try to make us think they are being nice and give us bread then throw rocks and hurt us”, so Henry took off for the pond and swam to the other side of the pond thinking Bruce was right behind him. But he wasn’t.

Bruce tried to follow Henry, but he kept slipping and sliding on the wet grass and wasn’t going anywhere. The boys finally reached Bruce and one of the boys smiled a real mean smile and tried to grab Bruce but Bruce kept sliding all over the wet grass. Bruce didn’t know what to do. He became really scared. Finally, Bruce thought, “geese and goslings can fly” and even though Bruce never tried to fly until now, he started flapping his wings as hard as he could to try to fly.

Bruce had a hard time getting his wings to flap enough to get off of the ground into the air. He was really trying. He flapped his wings harder and harder and the boys were laughing, still trying to grab him. Bruce became so angry that he wasn't flying that he flapped his wings so hard, he finally opened them really wide but instead of flying, one of his wings hit one of the boys in the face knocking him down onto the wet grass, and his other wing hit the other boy knocking him down and the boy banged his head. Then Bruce lost his balance again and slid on the wet grass and jostled (bumped) into the boys and jostled and jostled them. Bruce was quacking very loud and making noise. He kept trying to fly but he kept hitting them with his wide wings and sliding into them making them slide on the wet grass. The boys thought Bruce was attacking them but he was just trying to get away from them.

By now, the boys stopped laughing and became very frightened. They tried to run away but kept sliding on the wet grass. They finally were able to run to the edge of the park and ran down the road as fast as they could. They never returned again to the pond where the geese families lived.

When the boys ran away, they dropped the rocks and bread and when the other geese and goslings across the pond saw what Bruce did and that he chased the boys out of the park, they all started quacking and they were

calling Bruce “their hero”. Bruce just looked around at everyone and thought “huh, what did I do”. They didn’t realize that Bruce was trying to get away, they thought he was protecting them. They all came swimming over to Bruce and circled around him giving him “beak kisses” and quacking how much they liked him for saving them. Bruce became their hero.

Bruce was too tired to explain what really happened. Besides, he liked the idea of being their hero for a while instead of their klutz so he decided to enjoy the attention.

Well, the geese and goslings in Huckleberry, down by the pond decided they had to honor Bruce, so while he was resting from his ordeal, they took the rocks that the bad boys had brought to hurt them and piled them under a big elm tree in one part of the park and made a “hero seat” for Bruce.

After he rested they called him over to his “hero seat” and told him that it was his very own seat just for him. They also gave him the loaf of bread that one of the boys dropped when he ran out of the park. They said that it was all his for saving them.

Bruce proudly sat on the seat they built from the rocks but he took the loaf of bread and shared it and gave everyone who was there a piece of bread and kept one piece for himself. He said they all deserved to have some of the

bread. They thought that Bruce was clumsy but he was also kind.

Bruce didn't know what to say. He was so excited that they were paying attention to him but he had to tell the truth. He tried to tell them that all he did was try to get away but the others thought that Bruce was just being Bruce and said that they didn't want to hear that. They were sure that Bruce was just being humble and shy. They said "you are our hero Bruce, you saved us". So that was that. Bruce became the clumsy hero down at the pond, in the park, in the town of Huckleberry.

From then on all of the geese and goslings down at the pond, paid special attention to Bruce when he came to play but they never forgot that they had to get out of his way and wait until he caught his balance and then they all would to play with him.

Everyone had such fun with Bruce from that time on. They finally realized that Bruce was a very special friend even with his flaws and Bruce's best friend Henry just sat back and looked at Bruce and smiled and said "Bruce, you are the luckiest loose goose I know." When we grow up, you'll have a story to tell. And he did.

Bruce and Henry are all grown now but are still best friends. Oh yes, and Bruce is still as clumsy as ever.

Note:

Although, this is a story rooted to animal life, it gives the child a good concept of imagination that anyone whether - person or animal - who has a handicap can overcome being different by choosing to live as best they can. Bruce showed that no matter what obstacles that stood in his way, he could do anything that his friends could do just differently. He even went further by becoming a hero without expecting to. He felt he had to save himself, not realizing that he saved his family and friends also. It gives the child a positive outlook on their handicap.

Lucille-Mattiola-Baron

7 Shore Acres Road

Staten Island, New York 10305

The Beautiful Storm

by

Lucille Mattiola-Baron

“Save me, Daddy! Save me!”

While running to Emily’s room, Daddy called out, “What’s wrong, Em? What’s happening?”

Daddy didn’t really need an answer. He knew the summer storm was frightening her. Flash, crash.

“I don’t want to stay alone.”

“You’re not alone. I’m here.” Daddy sat on the bed and Emily crawled into his arms. Once again lightning streaked the sky. Then the thunder roared. Emily hid in Daddy’s arms. “Peekaboo. I see you.”

Flash, crash. Again she hid.

“Em, let’s not play peek-a-boo. Let’s watch the storm together. We’ll see something beautiful.”

“Beautiful?”

“Lightning in the sky is quite beautiful.” Emily was very confused. Daddy picked her up and carried her in his arms. He walked to the back door, opened it and said, “Let’s sit on the floor and look out the screen door.”

Emily wasn’t sure she wanted to do this but she felt safe sitting next to Daddy.

Flash,crash. Quickly, she turned to her father. “ I’m here, Em. I won’t leave you. “

Rain poured down. Again the thunder rumbled while lightning lit the night sky. Again she glanced at Daddy. He smiled. She smiled back.

Flash, crash.

This time she kept looking at the storm while Daddy held her tightly.

The rain continued to fall but the thunder could only be heard in the distance. The lightning was barely noticeable.

Rain slowed down.

Lightning disappeared.

Thunder stopped.

Emily yawned.

“Are you tired? Ready for bed?”

“If you tuck me in.”

“It’s a deal. You know it was so brave of you to sit with me and watch the storm. Not many people would do that.” Dad tucked her in and kissed her good night. The storm left and sleep came to Emily.

The next day the rain returned with its friends, lightning and thunder. Daddy wondered where his little girl was. He looked until he found her on the back porch.

“What are you doing out here?”

“I’m drawing a picture of the beautiful storm.”

Daddy smiled.

Anita Nahta Amin
312 Ponce de Leon Blvd.
Belleair, FL 33756
727-595-7767
aamin0506@aol.com

789 words

DRAGON SOUP
By Anita Nahta Amin

“A pinch of this, a pinch of that,” Mom sings, shaking jars over a pot that’s about to boil over. The spices falling in look like grass, seeds, and sticks.

I wonder what Mom is making. When I try to peek, she shoos me away. “It’s a surprise, Randi,” she says. She gives the pot a final stir and turns off the burner. “Dinner time!” she shouts out.

Dad strides into the kitchen. I’m already there because it’s my turn to set the table. My older sister Max shuffles in, her nose in a book.

Mom carries the pot over to the table. Brown slime sloshes out when she sets the pot down. “My own recipe,” she proudly says.

We all peer into the pot. I think it’s supposed to be soup. It looks chunky and chewy. I can see the grass, seeds, and sticks floating around. Max and I look at each other.

Mom ladles the soup into our bowls, then sprinkles something that looks like fried noodle bits on top. Now, the soup looks chunky, chewy, and crunchy.

We all sit in our regular spots. Mom watches us, her hand on her spoon. She's waiting for us to start first.

Dad takes his cue and slurps up some of the stuff. "Mmm...", he says as if it's the best thing he's ever tasted. Apparently, he's passed the test, because now Mom is watching Max and me.

Max ladles up some soup on her spoon and announces, "What an unusual potpourri of ingredients. Did you know synonyms for soup are goulash, mulligan, pasticcio...?"

Like all tests, Max aces this one, too. Mom is so proud of her daughter, the genius. Mom doesn't even notice Max hasn't tasted the soup.

Now, Mom's staring at me. I stare down at my soup.

"Mmm...", I copy Dad, hoping that is enough.

Mom's still watching me.

"It looks unusual," I say, copying Max.

Now, Mom's frowning. "Try it," she nudges.

So, I pick up my spoon and poke at the soup. I see something scaly slide around in it. I hold still and stare at it. Then, I look at Mom and say, "I can't eat this. There's a dragon in it!"

Dad's spoon freezes. Max snorts. Mom gives me a stern look and says, "Eat your soup, Randi." Everyone goes back to their meal, including Mom, who has decided not to wait for me.

After a moment, I slowly swirl the soup around. The dragon curls its tail and opens its mouth, blowing warm steam kisses in my face.

I want a better look at the dragon, but the noodles, grass, seeds and sticks are in my way. I skim them off the top with my spoon and wipe it in my napkin. Then, I lean closer and knock my knees together like I always do when I've been sitting too long.

The dragon begins to wriggle around as if unhappy. I notice some red beans and potatoes have surrounded it. Maybe the dragon is claustrophobic. One by one, I scoop out all of the beans and potatoes from my soup and drop them on my plate.

"Stop shaking the table," Max whispers to me. Mom and Dad just glance at us.

I keep my knees still. The dragon isn't squirming anymore, but it also isn't blowing kisses at me. What else can be wrong?

I see some carrots and onions floating nearby. Maybe dragons don't like carrots and onions. I fish them out, too. After a moment, I take out the peppers, too.

I catch Mom frowning at me.

"Dragons don't like vegetables," I explain.

"Randi," Mom warns.

"Okay." I sigh, knocking my knees together again.

The dragon's wings are vibrating now. They change color, from shimmering purple to orange to red. A chunk of beef bounces near it and the dragon curls up as if it has a stomach ache. Better take the beef out too, I think. So, I do.

The phone rings. Max jumps up, bumping the table. It's probably just one of her math whiz human calculator friends, but she rushes to the phone as if the President is calling.

"No phone calls during dinner," Mom complains.

I barely hear her though, because I'm looking at my soup instead. The dragon is gone. I slide my spoon around to see if the dragon is hiding underneath, but no, the dragon is really gone.

I feel a little sad, but then I see the soup looks like gravy now. I like gravy and decide to try it. I lick the brown coating from my spoon. It tastes like gravy, too. I smile and say, "Soup tastes better without dragons in it." I finish my bowl of soup.

The Christmas Gloves
by Brooke Reedlunn
Word Count: 610

Miles pulled out his hand-me-down bike and slipped on his warmest gloves for the bike ride to school.

“I wonder if the Mystery Man will be riding today,” Miles thought.

Miles spotted him quickly. He couldn’t figure the old guy out. The strange man had a raggedy coat and a dirty yellow beard. But the things Miles noticed most were his open-mouthed grin and taped-together gloves. “Can’t he afford new ones?” Miles wondered.

Miles never had to worry about stuff like that, but he guessed the Mystery Man did. The only thing Miles needed was a new bike. His was so banged up that it squeaked and groaned as he rode. Embarrassing! “Maybe I’ll get one for Christmas,” he thought.

As the Mystery Man approached, Miles got up his courage and called, “Hi!”

“Hello, Joe! What d’ya know?” beamed the mystery man. Then he sped away, still smiling, with fingers sticking through his gloves. Miles wiggled his own warm fingers. He’d already gone through several pairs of gloves, because he kept losing them.

They went on like that, saying hello each morning. Sometimes, when he rode with Patrick and Justine, they looked at Miles funny as he called, “Hi!”

“Hello, Joe! What d’ya know?” answered the Mystery Man.

“Is that your friend?” they asked.

Miles just shrugged, but he didn’t stop saying hello and he didn’t stop thinking about the Mystery Man. “Does he even have a home?” wondered Miles, with a shiver. One thing was for sure, winter had arrived. Miles felt it in the growing cold and in the countdown to Christmas.

That afternoon, Miles' mom was taking him shopping to spend the Christmas money from his grandparents. He'd been looking forward to it for weeks. "If I use all my money I'll have just enough for the bike!" he thought. "The red one with the flames and shocks."

At the Super-Store, Miles and his mom headed to the back where they kept the bikes. On the way, Miles noticed a display of cozy winter gloves.

"Waterproof, Windproof, Winterproof," said the sign.

"If only the Mystery Man had those," Miles thought. He tried to push the gloves out of his head.

They arrived at the bike section and Miles stared at the shiny red one. He wanted it so badly! "What if he could buy the bike and the Winterproof gloves," he wondered. "Nope, not enough money."

He hopped on the bike and imagined himself riding it to school. No squeaks, no moans... but also no gloves. He got all the way to the front of the store and stopped. He dragged his feet back to the gloves and made himself leave the bike leaning against the rack. "I'll come back for the bike after I save a little more money," Miles said. His mom looked at him like he had lost his mind, as he bought the men's Winterproof Gloves instead.

On Christmas Eve, Miles set out on his bike carrying the new gloves. They were tied together with red ribbon. As the Mystery Man approached, Miles stopped and held the gloves out.

"Merry Christmas," Miles said.

"What d'ya know?" the Mystery Man smiled. "I'll remember this, Joe!" He already had his hands tucked in, soft and warm, as Miles road away with a grin.

The next morning, Miles woke up. Christmas!" he yelled. He ran out to see what Santa had brought. His mouth dropped open with surprise as soon as he saw it. The shiniest red. The fiercest flames. The springiest shocks. It was his bike. But it was the note that surprised him more than anything

else. "Hey Joe, Thanks for the gloves! Love Santa"

Samantha McEachin
44 Foothill Place
Wheatley Heights, NY 11798
(631) 624-2537
samantha.mceachin@gmail.com

about 575 words

PHOEBE AND THE BUZZY BEES

by

Samantha McEachin

Phoebe liked to sit in the family room and color. Her mother had told her that it was a good way to feel more “Zen” while waiting for dinner to be ready. Phoebe was very good at coloring within the lines. But if she ever got a little sloppy with her artwork she never got down on herself. After all she was only 5, it was not like she was 9.

Phoebe liked drawing swirly clouds and kittens the most, but one day Phoebe wanted to draw something different but could not think of anything new to draw. She was stumped! First she scratched her head then she rubbed her chin. She thought and thought and then she sat and sat. Phoebe didn’t realize that she was sitting in the chair with one leg tucked under the other until she heard her mother say “Phoebe sit up straight with both feet on the floor.” Phoebe didn’t know why her mom had said that until she ended up with funny feeling that would not go away. Her feet had fallen asleep!

Oh my, she thought. Her feet were beyond asleep. It felt like there were buzzy bees in her feet! She could actually feel them fluttering all around. Phoebe imagined an entire swarm had moved in there, right in between her little “toesie woesies”. You would have thought that Phoebe would be afraid of these bees, but these weren’t your average bees. In Phoebe’s feet is where glamorous “celeb-bee-ties” lived.

Somewhere between her heel and big toe there was a whole community of fabulous fuzzy buzzy bees. They wore fancy yellow and black striped outfits and jewelry made from honey. Right

around where her ankle was, was a row of high-end hive mansions. Phoebe's bees even had their own TV show called *The Real Housebees of Stingapore*.

"Phoebe...dinner is ready!" her mother called from the kitchen. Her mother's voice pulled her back from her imagination. Phoebe tried to get up from the chair to go eat but she couldn't. Her feet flat out refused to move. Her feet had gone from feeling like buzzy bees to feeling like lead. *Oh no*, she thought. What was she going to do? Phoebe first took a crayon and gave her foot a poke, but she didn't feel a thing. Next she tried giving her foot a pinch. Nope...nothing happened... her foot didn't even budge.

Mmmm...dinner smelled *so* good, Phoebe couldn't take it anymore. She just had to get out of that chair! Finally, Phoebe grabbed her foot and flung it towards the floor. Then she leaned on the couch and pulled herself up. After a minute or two her foot started tingle again. The sensation was coming back!

When Phoebe ran into the kitchen, her mother asked her what had taken her so long. "Were you in the den or in China?" Phoebe told her mother about what happened and how she could not move. She told her about the buzzy bees and their TV show. Her mother chuckled, "Phoebe you are so funny and so cute. That imagination of yours is quite impressive for a 5 year old."

After dinner, Phoebe went back into the family room. She put crayon to paper and let her thoughts soar. All of sudden she was no longer stumped. Thanks to her feet and a few buzzy

bees she knew exactly what to draw. She could draw everything and anything that her mind dared to explore!

Samantha McEachin
44 Foothill Place
Wheatley Heights, NY 11798
(631) 624-2537
samantha.mceachin@gmail.com

about 600 words

SNOW DAY BIRTHDAY

by

Samantha McEachin

Brooke's birthday was coming up on the 7th of December. Brooke was afraid that no one would remember due to all of the holidays. This year Thanksgiving was late, Hanukkah was early and Christmas well...was CHRISTMAS. She could not find a pink or purple cupcake in the stores anywhere. Everything was either red and green or blue and white. Brooke sometimes thought it was can be a real bummer having a winter birthday. She often wished she had been born in the summer instead.

Having a birthday in June would be cool she thought, because she could have a pool party. She would play "Marco Polo" with her friends and eat hot dogs. Brooke thought that having a birthday party in July could also be nice. Maybe she could have the party in the park where there are beautiful flowers, and butterflies. She could play hide and seek with her friends or maybe they could have a big picnic. A beach barbeque in August could be pretty awesome too. There would be plenty of sunshine, smiles and sandcastles while celebrating her special day.

Winter or summer, at this point it no longer mattered. Brooke just wanted to have some birthday fun, but Hanukah and Christmas were oh so near. Brooke thought long and hard to come up with a plan to celebrate and enjoy her big day. Finally it came to her. *How about a princess birthday ball*, she thought. She could just see it now. She would beg her parents to have it at a fancy place. Then she could have pink and purple balloons and pretty flowers. She would invite everyone from her elementary school and everyone from dancing school. Ooh and she couldn't forget about the glitter...it wouldn't be a princess ball if everything didn't sparkle. Brooke became so excited that she immediately starting working on making her party invitations. This was going to be the best birthday ever!

Brooke sent out the most sparkly and fanciest invitations ever made. They were little scrolls that she had tied with pink and purple ribbons. It read: "Crowns, Gowns, and Castles Too...Nothing Short of a Royal Celebration Will Do! Princess Brooke is Turning Five. Come Celebrate With Us December 7th."

The day of the birthday ball had arrived and Brooke sat in front of the TV as she got dressed. That is when she overheard the weather man say that it was 32° below and there was a winter storm warning. *Oh no! Would that mean that the birthday ball would be cancelled due to snow,* Brooke started to get nervous. Outside the snowflakes were really coming down and the news report said getting around town was getting tricky. Brooke started to cry. This was terrible. Her plans were ruined! This was a disaster! Well...unless there was another plan she could come up with a different plan.

It was like a light bulb had gone off in her head. All of a sudden she had a great idea. She could still have a party of grand design...outside! Brooke could have a "snow ball" instead of a princess ball! It could still be fabulous. There could be ice skating and sledding. Then her guests could build snowmen or maybe even make snow angels. Then when her friends got cold, her mommy could serve hot cocoa. It was decided, this is what she was going to do! Brooke quickly sent out emails and texts and made phone calls about the change of plans. In no time flat, all of Brooke's friends arrived one after the next. A great time was had by everyone. It did turn out to be the best snow day birthday party ever after all!

A Beary Nice Visit

It was a bright, sunny, morning. Yummy scents flowed from the window of the little house in the woods. You could smell the oatmeal, hot buttered buns and hot tea with honey.

Mama Bear had just finished serving Papa and Junior their breakfast.

Then, she sat down to join them.

"I think I'll go out and get some berries for my oatmeal" Papa said, as he got up.

"Besides, my food is too hot."

Junior Bear asked politely, if he could go along. He said his food was too hot, also.

He liked hiking in the woods with Papa. So, the two bears left.

They left Mama all alone.

"Well, I don't think it's too hot." Mama grumbled to herself.

She was not happy. She was alone. She sat there and waited.

She waited and waited. She did **not** like to eat all alone.

Suddenly she heard a sound! Someone came into the back door!

"Oh! I'm sorry! I thought the house was empty!" said Goldy Bear.

"I have been walking a long way. I'm tired and hungry."

The food smelled yummy.

Goldy Bear was hungry, but she did not want to be rude.

Goldy Bear was ready to leave.

"Please, stay." said Mama Bear, she was glad for the visit.

"We always have plenty of food to share." she said, happily.

Then Mama Bear served Goldy Bear a bowl of hot oatmeal.

She also served hot buttered buns and tea with honey.

Then, she sat down to join her.

The two of them ate together.

They enjoyed the food. It was not too hot. It was just right.

Alice Hope
30 York Rd.
Pennington, NJ 08534
609.818.0333
Roh9510@aol.com

Picture Book
390 words

JUST A LITTLE PARTY

by

Alice Hope

Yes Aba, you can have a little birthday party, say Mom and Dad.

Yay, that will be so much fun! I'm going out to play and tell my best friend.

I see Bumble first and tell him. "What fun this will be!"

Here's Calalou and Dingee? I'll tell them too.

"Thanks, see you there," they say.

I don't want to forget Eco and Ferro. They can tell Gobi.

There goes Hilly walking with Icie.

When I tell them about my little party, they say, "Terrific, we can't wait."

We just saw Jackie and Kitzi over the hill. Cool, I'll tell them now.

I haven't found my best buddy yet. I'll keep looking.

Loki is at the park. Moolo is coming down the slide.

Hey guys, I'm having a little birthday party. Wow! We'll be there.

Please tell Noya. I want to invite her for sure.

Have you seen Ottie? I don't want to forget him.

No, but Palomaloma already knows.

Then Quivy knows for sure, I thought happily.

Great, I'll see them at my little party.

I still don't see my best friend anywhere.

Roto rides by. He's one of the triplets and will tell Soto and Teppo.

This is going to be the best party ever!

I don't want to leave out Ukie. He loves parties - a real party animal!

(art - dancing Ukie)

I went to Velo's party last week and I want him to come to mine.

There he is. Guess what? (art - Aba telling Velo)

Winnie and Xona are so much fun. I have to remember tell them about my little party.

I'll see Yelly at swim lessons this afternoon and will tell him then.

Finally! I see Zuri, kicking a soccer ball. There you are!

I've been looking for you everywhere. I'm having a little party.

Zuri laughs. "Yes, I know. I heard about it" she says. "I'll be there.

You know I would not miss it."

I go home for snacks.

Mom and Dad, what a wonderful little party I'll have!

Yes, Aba, it will be great fun! Let's count how many invitations we should send.

When I told Mom and Dad about my busy play time outside, they laughed.

"Oh, my. It's not such a little party anymore!

We must send them all an invitation,” says Mom.

Dad asked, “Now, how many kids did you say will be at your party?

They all came to my BIG party! What fun we did have!

Nancy F. Christensen
9685 E. Clark Rd.
Laingsburg, Mi 48848
517-641-4312

Approx. 700 words

HEARTS FOR MATAMOR

BY

Nancy F. Christensen

Joey hurried into his first grade classroom. “My mother is sending cookies for our Valentines Day party!” he said.

Mrs. Meyers, his teacher, was staring at the classroom, and looking very puzzled.

Joey stared at the rows of desks and the messy room. Valentines they had made last week were scattered all over the room and bits of red paper and lace were everywhere. “Part of my valentine is missing!” he said. “It looks like someone has taken a big bite of it!”

Mrs. Myers frowned. “I don’t know who would have created this mess in our classroom,” she said.

The children spent the morning cutting new valentines or pasting bits and pieces together.

“It’s time for recess,” Mrs. Myers said. “We’ll finish valentines in the afternoon.”

After a chilly recess, the children marched back into the classroom. The room was a mess again! Then everyone stared at Joey’s desk.

A very guilty-looking dragon was sitting at Joey’s desk, calmly munching on a bright red heart and dribbling white lace down the corners of his mouth. In each claw, he held another valentine.

Joey tiptoed towards his desk and faced the dragon. “You’re sitting at my desk, and you have eaten my best valentine *twice!*”

The dragon turned his fierce-looking head towards Joey. “My name is Matamor, and I’m terribly sorry I’ve eaten your valentines again. I can’t seem to help myself.” A large tear rolled down his cheek and plopped on the floor at Joey’s feet.

The rest of the children gathered around Matamor. They had never seen a dragon in class before.

Matamor slid to the side of the seat so Joey could sit next to him.

“Everyone, please go to your seats so we can get back to work,” Mrs. Myers said. She eyed the dragon suspiciously. “Matamor, could you please tell us why you are visiting our classroom today?”

Matamor roared softly. “I was cold and hungry and the classroom looked so warm that I thought I could visit for a short while,” he said.

Joey scowled at the dragon. “But why did you chew our valentines? You ruined all of them!”

Matamor looked embarrassed. “I don’t really know *why*, except that I was hungry and suddenly I was gobbling valentines. I’ve had a stomachache ever since.”

Joey put his arm around Matamor. “Don’t worry, we can make new valentines,” he said.

Matamor looked pleased.

While the children did their schoolwork, Matamor sat quietly next to Joey. He seemed happy to watch the children write their names and read from their books.

He walked to face his teacher. “Mrs. Meyers, I know why Matamor came to visit our classroom. He was looking for love. And wherever he’s gone, he has taken it with him.”

Mrs. Meyers smiled. “Wasn’t it nice that we could give love to someone who needed it so much?”

Joey gazed out the window. I think Matamor is probably passing valentines around to all the other dragons right now,” he said.

Plantain Stew

A Tale from Southwest Kenya

(793 Words)

Jogoo's call woke Kidogo from a deep sleep. *Ku-ku-ku-kuraroo!* She stretched and scrambled out of the burrow. The sun had not even peeked over the green hills. "Bwana Jogoo, why must you call so loudly?" she complained.

"I promised your sister I'd wake you early this morning!" From the top of the mango tree, Jogoo opened his wings and shook his black tail feathers. "Don't tell me you've forgotten that today Grandma Rabbit visits?"

Kidogo rubbed her eyes with her paws. There would be no time to pick breakfast from the big garden. Grandma always wanted Plantain Stew for lunch, and this morning they would gather the plantains from the tree growing at the edge of the dark woods.

"Look, here is something for your collection," Jogoo said. He opened his claw and a brightly colored feather floated through the air.

Kidogo rubbed the soft red feather. Then she tucked it into the pouch hanging around her waist, along with a crocodile tooth, a pebble the color of gold, and a smooth black coffee bean that smelled like earth after rain.

Her sister, Sungura, poked her head out of the burrow. "Kidogo!" she scolded. "Come! We have much work to do!" Sungura looped a basket around her neck and sang:

"Plantain Stew for Grandma Rabbit!

What is it that must we find?

Peanuts plucked from bushy green;

Potatoes dug and washed so clean;

carrots from the cool, dark ground;

plantains, mashed, heaped in a mound!"

As they hopped through the high grass, something caught Kidogo's eye. A snail had left his shell behind. The more Kidogo rubbed it, the shinier it became.

She tucked the shell into her pouch. When she looked up, Sungura's brown tail was just disappearing around a corner. "Come!" Sungura called. "Quick, before Old Dog wakes!"

Kidogo and Sungura sneaked through the garden. Flies buzzed around Old Dog's face as he snored.

"I'll gather the peanuts," Sungura said. "You get the carrots and potatoes. Hurry, Kidogo, and *pay attention.*"

Kidogo yanked two carrots and tucked them under her arms. She dug up two perfect potatoes. But what was that? It wouldn't hurt to take just a small look. . .

Kidogo held a lacy potato leaf up to the sun. "I'll tuck it in my pouch," Kidogo whispered. . . .

"Ra, ra, ra, ra, ra!"

Kidogo smelled Old Dog's sour breath. Teeth snapped at her tail. Kidogo scrambled under the garden fence, just in time.

"When will you learn to pay attention?" Sungura sighed, adding the carrots and potatoes to her basket. Three more glinting pebbles, black, white, and green, dropped into Kidogo's pouch.

At the edge of the dark forest, Kidogo saw a beautiful round stone at the foot of the plantain tree.

“Too bad!” she thought. “It is much too big for my pouch!”

Sungura gazed up into the branches. “Is there anyone up there who will throw us some plantain?” she called.

A big bunch of plantains dropped to the ground, but something else fell, too, something that gleamed bright green. It slithered slowly toward Sungura.

“Bwana Mamba, sir, I am so sorry to disturb you.”

“Don’t be sssssorry,” Mamba hissed. “I will eat you for lunch.”

“Wouldn’t you rather have these nice peanuts?”

“No.”

“Nice potatoes?”

“Two rabbitsss sound better.” Mamba coiled, ready to strike.

“Wait!” Kidogo shouted. “Before you eat us, please show us your treasures, for I have heard that every great mamba has beautiful treasure.”

Mamba flicked his tongue in displeasure. “I have none.”

Kidogo untied her pouch. “But I do. Come and have a look, Bwana Mamba.”

Kidogo’s treasures shone in the sun. Mamba’s eyes glittered greedily. “I will take them all,” he said, “And then I will eat you.”

Kidogo shrugged. “Fair enough. But before I tie the pouch around your neck, I will add one last treasure. Sungura, come help me.”

Kidogo and Sungura huffed as they rolled the stone from the foot of the matoke tree.

“You will be the only Mamba in all of Africa to own such a large, beautiful stone!” Kidogo wrapped the stone in the pouch, and then she tied it tightly around Mamba’s neck.

“Now, I will eat you, rabbitssss--*aiiee!*” The Mamba could not move with the stone tied around his neck. “You tricked me!”

Kidogo snapped two matoke off the bunch and called to her sister. “Come, Sungura!”

The two sisters reached the burrow just in time to cook and mash the plaintains.

Grandma Rabbit ate two bowls of the delicious stew. Then she sat in the shade of the mango tree and sewed Kidogo a new pouch. “It will not be long until you fill it again, little rabbit,” she said. “After all, the world is full of treasures.”

*

Kiswahili Translations:

Kidogo: *Little*

Sungura: *Rabbit*

Jogoo: *Rooster*

Mamba: *Venomous Snake* (There are two kinds of mambas in Kenya, both to be avoided: the Green Mamba, and the Black Mamba).

Genevieve Smith

P.O. Box 23

Nisula, MI 49952

(906) 338-2558

Words: 1,715

Goldifox and the Three Hares

Once upon a time there were three hares.

Now, I know what you're thinking. "Hares? I thought it was supposed to be bears!" And you'd be right. There is that very famous tale of the three bears who lived in a house in the woods – porridge, Goldilocks, and so on. But then there's also the story of the three hares that you've probably never heard before. And that's because bears always get all of the credit. Ever since Peter Rabbit crawled under the fence into Mr. McGregor's garden, rabbits have been given a bad rap and are thought of as the naughty creatures in literature. Well, I'm here to change that. So get comfy and sit back (unless, of course, you're on a stool), and get ready for the little-known story of:

Goldifox and the Three Hares

Once upon a time, in a nice little rabbit hole in the woods, there lived three hares. A mama hare, a papa hare, and a baby hare. Together they made up the Hopsalot family.

One sunny summer day, Mama Hare was making cooked carrot casserole (which as we all know, is a rabbit favorite), for lunch. She had done everything right - the carrots, the cream of carrot soup, the salt, put it in the oven at 350° - except for one thing. The timer. The family was

sitting in the living room waiting for lunch when all of a sudden, a smoky, burnt-carrot smell filled the room.

Mama Hare (who had been knitting by the window), shot up from her chair and hopped into the kitchen, only to find a smoking pan full of dry, black carrots.

“Oh, no!” she thought. “What are we going to do?” She set the casserole of burnt carrots in the sink and an idea popped into her head. She hopped out of the kitchen, clapped her paws together and said:

“Everyone pack up, we’re going to Carrot King for lunch!”

“But what about the casserole?” asked Papa Hare, putting down his newspaper, *The Daily Hop*.

“Don’t ask,” she said, grabbing the car keys.

“Whoopee!” exclaimed Baby Hare, who, unlike most little bunnies, wasn’t a big fan of cooked carrot casserole.

And they all got in the car and went to lunch.

In the meantime...

“Gir...” gasped Goldifox. “Girl Sc...Girl Scout cookies!” She stopped and wiped her forehead on her sleeve. “O-only...fi-five dollars...a...a box.”

She sat down on a nearby stump to catch her breath. It had been quite a morning. She pulled out her list of places to sell to and crossed off the Gingerbread man. She would remember to tell the troop leader not to send someone to try and sell cookies to him again next year.

So far this morning, she had (in addition to selling 44 boxes of cookies),

- Helped Little Bo Peep find her sheep
- Fetched a pail of water for Jack and Jill
- Baked bread with the Little Red Hen (who had refused to buy any cookies unless she helped), and
- Chased the Gingerbread man all over the woods, listening to him yell, “You can’t catch me I’m the Gingerbread man!” over and over.

She sighed, worn-out but thankful that she hadn’t been asked to sell to Rapunzel as well, because, even though she always bought cookies, Goldifox just didn’t feel like making that big climb.

The only place left on her list was the Hopsalot family. Taking one more breath she stood up and began to pull her cookie wagon, hoping that the Hopsalot’s would just buy cookies without her having to chase them or help them find their sheep.

After a few minutes she arrived at their house. She knocked on the door, but no one came. She knocked three times more, but still no one came. Finally, she just gave up, grabbed the last few boxes of cookies from the wagon, and opened the door.

“Hello?”

No answer. Where was everybody?

She crawled inside. “Hello?” she called again.

Something sure smelled awful. Goldifox, forgetting that she shouldn't go snooping around other's houses, followed her nose into the kitchen, where, along with a tad of smoke hanging in the air, she found the sad remains of what used to be a cooked carrot casserole.

"No wonder no one's home," she said, going back into the living room and seeing three chairs all in a row. "Oh well, at least I can sit down until they get back."

She ran over to the biggest one, jumped, and landed on it.

SMACK!!!

Pain shooting through her tired body, Goldifox slowly stood up. "Well that's too hard," she said.

She looked over at the next chair – Mama Hare's. It was a plump, cushiony chair that looked much softer than the last one. Goldifox positioned herself, ran, and leapt onto the chair.

SHOOMP!!!

Like quicksand, Goldie was sucked into the extreme plushness of the chair. She kicked and squirmed furiously, fox-paddled, and finally made it to the top. She gasped, thankful to be reaching oxygen again. She slowly rolled out onto the floor. "Well that," she said, straightening her uniform. "Was definitely *too* soft."

She lay there a minute, wondering if the last chair was even worth trying at all. But, remembering the old saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again," she walked over to it. She slowly sat down, and was surprised to find that it was perfect! Not too soft, not too hard – just perfect! A little creaky, but not too bad. She sighed, finally reaching comfort. "Well, this," she said, as she shifted to make herself more comfortable. "Is just right."

CRASH!!!

Next thing she knew, she was lying on the floor, surrounded by the pieces of what used to be Baby Hare's chair.

"Ouch!" she said, standing up, brushing wood chips off of her uniform. "That's going to leave a mark." She picked up her cookie boxes, and decided that what she needed now was a good long nap.

She went into the next room and found three beds - a big one, a medium one, and a small one.

Remembering the incident with the chairs, Goldifox carefully pulled back the covers and laid down on the smallest bed, hoping it was a bit stronger than its cousin the chair. "Ahh," she sighed, as the bed creaked. "This is just right- "

CRASH!!!

The bed creaked for the last time and there she was again, lying on the floor in a pile of wood.

"Never mind," she finished, and too tired to get up, she pulled the covers up to her chin and went to sleep.

A short while later...

The three hares came home, their bellies full of carrot burgers and salad.

"Well that was tasty," said Mama Hare. "Hey, what's this wagon doing here?"

"I don't know," said Papa Hare.

“I’ve never seen it before,” said Baby Hare.

The three went into their hole, hopped in to the living room, and knew right away that something was up.

“Why, somebody’s been sitting in my chair!” said Papa Hare, going over to his favorite seat.

Mama Hare and Baby Hare went over to their chairs, too.

“Somebody’s been sitting in my chair, too!” said Mama Hare, pointing out the large dent that Goldie had made. “Oh dear, who do you suppose it was?”

They turned to Baby Hare who looked at them forlornly, and, unable to form any words, whimpered. In front of him were the sad ruins of what used to be his favorite chair. All that was left was a pile of kindling, the only detection of it once being a chair was, well, nothing.

“Oh no!” exclaimed Mama Hare, and the search for the intruder was interrupted for a brief moment as she fetched the broom and swept up the pieces, tossing them into the fire that was raging in the fireplace.

Baby Hare stood and watched the chair engulf in flames, eyes wide, and let out the only noise he could (which would be best described as a cross between a sigh and a whimper – a swimper, if you will).

“Well this is preposterous!” Papa Hare exclaimed. “Who-”

Then all of a sudden, a long snore came from the bedroom.

They all looked at each other.

“A BEAR!” cried Baby Hare. “It’s a BEAR! The bear’s in there that broke my chair!”

“Shhh,” said Papa Hare. “Let’s go see what it is.”

He slowly pulled open the door and they all tip-toed in.

“Nobody’s been sleeping in my bed,” said Papa Hare.

“Mine either,” said Mama Hare.

Baby Hare crept over to his bed, (scared of what he’d find there), turned on the lamp and shrieked. Not only because it was now just a big pile of wood, but because sleeping on top of that pile was Goldifox. “S-somebody broke my bed,” he said. “A-and there she is!”

Mama Hare and Papa Hare quickly hopped over.

“Who is it?” asked Mama Hare.

“I have no idea,” said Papa Hare.

Just then, Goldie rolled over, yawned, and sleepily opened her eyes. She froze. “Uh ... hello,” she said calmly (well, as calmly as someone in the situation of waking up under the close observation of three strangers could be).

“It’s alive!” cried Baby Hare.

Tension hung thick in the air. Mama Hare looked at Papa Hare. Papa Hare looked at Goldie. Goldie looked at them both, and Baby Hare, feeling somewhat lost and confused, let out another swimper.

“M-my name’s Goldie Fox,” Goldie stammered. “And ... Uh Would you like to ... I mean ...,” she gulped. “Girl Scout cookies?”

The silence persisted for a few more seconds until broken by Baby Hare.

“You got any chocolate chip?” he asked, no longer afraid of the intruder.

Goldie quickly checked the boxes in her arms, hoping that she still had some. “Yes, yes I do,” she said.

“Well ...” said Papa Hare contemplatively. “What are we standing around here for? Everyone in the kitchen for cookies and milk!”

“YIPPEE!” cried Baby Hare.

“Here, here!” said Mama Hare.

And they all went into the kitchen.

And every year after that when she was selling cookies, Goldifox would stop at the Hopsalot’s to rest and have a snack of cookies and milk.

Oh, and they all lived happily ever after.

The End

Helene Thomas
1316 S. 21st Ave
Yakima, WA 98902
509-452-1534
Helenethomasq@gmail.com

860

That Gooby Software

By

Helene Thomas

I was chewing on a drumstick and working the keys on my computer searching for the nearest wormhole. I needed to hook up to the satellite sky map for the Andromeda Galaxy. That can be tricky at times because wormholes aren't always stable, and have to start all over again and find another wormhole to connect with my cam-pal Amprutushka; I call him Amp for short, and we use a galactic translator to communicate.

I accidentally dropped the bone on the floor and decided to pick it up later.

With my Vision Helmet, I maneuvered my way to Amp's site. He lives on the planet Aquatipol, and like me spends all of his spare time after school on the astral VR network. We can't travel physically through a wormhole, but scientists have sent millions of satellites through wormholes to many galaxies in the universe.

My laser guide finally connected me to the communication link to my pal Amp, when I suddenly heard a loud voice saying.

“Hey Ryan—planning on sitting all afternoon?”

I tore off my optical head gear and quickly looked over my shoulders to see who was sneaking up on me. There was no one in the room except me. Suddenly I heard

thumping next to my feet and glanced down. It looked like a bone with big lips and guessed it was my little brother's robot toy. I figured my silly sister recorded the sound bite, and I pushed the bone away with my foot.

"Yeah you, I'm talking to you. Your bones aren't going to look good if you keep sitting in a chair all day."

"Not real." I said, and grabbed the bone and tossed it in the garbage.

"What about last night when your younger sis beat you in arm wrestling—heh, heh, I suppose that wasn't real either, it looks like your muscles are puny too."

I stared in the waste basket and said. "Man—this is creeping me out?"

"Take a good look at me. I'm brittle and porous and can turn into a hump back. I need exercise, and oh yeah some milk would do instead of all those sodas you're always chugging down, while talking to your buddy Amp."

I bolted out of my room and ran into the kitchen.

"Eddy just called and wants you to come over and play some basketball." Mom said.

"Okay" I said still shaking, and I ran across the street to Eddy's house.

I played basket ball for a couple of hours, man was my body sore and I could hardly walk. I crashed on my bed not wanting to move, when I suddenly heard rustling sounds coming from my waste basket. I sat up, and wondered if I should hi tail out of my room, or look in the basket. If that creepy bone was still in there, I might just have to tell my dad. But then, if he doesn't see lips on the bone, he'd take away my computer privileges', thinking my common sense was hijacked from hours on the wormhole net.

I looked inside the basket. What a relief! A horsefly buzzed around, and the drumstick looked like a regular chicken bone.

I decided to stay away from the computer for a while, that was hard. My parents were happy in my sudden change of activities, playing basketball after school at the school gym.

I couldn't stay away from my computer any longer, since it had been three days already. I planned to limit my computer time to two hours instead of six hours a day.

I contacted my friend Amp, and I told him I could only go galaxy hopping with him for two hours every day.

"How come?" Amp asked me.

I decided to tell him about the talking bone and how it scared the wits out of me.

The weirdest alien laugh came through my helmet. My friend Amp resembles a squid and lives in a water world.

When he quit laughing Amp said, "You went through a Gooby Land phase shift that scans your body and found your bones weakened by sitting so much, and a hologram created a reality in your mind to remind you to exercise your body. Neat isn't it?"

"Gooby Land? Never heard of it!"

"An alien race we don't know much about placed that Gooby software in all the satellites, kind of like a parental control." Amp said and started giggling again.

"What's so funny?"

"Your talking bone." He said hysterically, then he told me about his encounter in Gooby Land, and now he doesn't eat so much.

Suddenly Amp got all excited and said, “My dad just sent me the link to the real time Bora map. There is a spacecraft on planet R27 in your Milky Way and, and there are sentient beings in weird looking space suits walking around.”

I quickly linked up the Amp’s Bora map. Wow, the space ship was totally alien, nothing that we have on earth.

Gosh, maybe they’ll share their technology in building safe wormholes for us to travel in, and then someday I can meet my friend Amp in person.

Ann Dulhanty
109 Bruce St.
Oshawa, ON
Canada L1H 1R1
ann.dulhanty@gmail.com
905 447 1820
Twitter @anndulhanty
www.anndulhanty.com

The Monster

by Ann Dulhanty

"I'm magical," said the bat who had a rude awakening after he emerged from his daytime slumber in the rafters. He was pinned to the attic floor by a great black and white cat whose tree-trunk of a paw rested on his wing.

The cat glared at him in a not very clever way.

He arched his black, furry chest like a python and screeched, "Let me be, let me be, let me be," and added in a velvety tone, "I'll make it worth your while."

The cat sat down, but did not relinquish his hold.

Baring barbed teeth, the bat struck, tasting blood, as the cat's and his own mingled in the inflicted wound. Then he reconsidered; his attack went unnoticed by the cat. If he could survive until moonrise things would be different. Clearly he couldn't win a battle against this monster, so he changed tactics.

"What do you want?" he asked the cat.

Head lowered, the cat stared intently into his eyes.

Oh no, thought the bat. Dad warned me, *'Never get into a staring match with a cat. They always win. And then eat you.'* He slumped down onto the sinewy wood floor, wedging his nose into the grain, and tried to look dead.

The weight of the paw lifted from his wing. He raised his head and looked up, right into the harrowing hold of the huge green eyes.

"I can grant you a wish," the bat said. He dared not fly away, that would surely get him swatted out of the air.

The cat opened his maw of enamel pikes. And yawned.

"Anything you like." He was frantic. *What did this creature want?*

A white paw lifted over the bat's head and a pink tongue extended.

This is it. The bat cringed. *The blow and bite to break my neck.*

The cat bent its head, curled the tip of its tongue, eyed the bat and...

The bat tensed and hoped it was quick.

...the cat licked its extended paw, pausing over two red dots on one toe. "I want to fly," said the cat, like it was good at monosyllables. "Be the only cat that flies."

The bat released the breath it had been holding. "No problem, no problem." Screwing up his entire face, he blinked repeatedly, punctuating gestures with a flap here and a screech there. The drama was unnecessary but amusing and it bought him time waiting for moonrise. The idiot feline had no idea what was about to befall it.

Through the window above the door, a pearly glow peeked.

All but the cat's ears shrank, its tail and sturdy limbs drawn into a furry, bat-sized body. It flopped onto the floor, struggled to lift its head on slender, finger-tipped arms.

The bat surveyed the transformation; he'd turned many a creature, but never seen one with white feet before.

The white-footed bat glared in a not very clever way.

Then the pair flapped off through the open window.

Elizabeth G. Smith
9320 Waltham Woods Road
Baltimore, MD 21234
(410) 661-2771
dl9320smith@gmail.com

Word Count--461

THE APPLE TREE
(A STORY OF THE FIVE SENSES)

After school, the twin brothers raced to their favorite spot—the apple tree. They enjoyed playing guessing games while sitting on a limb. Quizzing each other was challenging and fun. They climbed up the tree trunk, shimmied across a thick branch and began shooting questions at each other.

Each day they discussed a different subject. Today, their topic was the five senses. That's because they heard their grandfather mention to their mom last night that he lost his glasses, and they were concerned. "Can you name all five senses?" Dennis asked Charlie.

"Well, I know one because of what Granddad said last night. He needs glasses to see better. Sure hope he finds them soon so his sense of SIGHT can improve."

"Me too," said Dennis. Okay buddy. Tell me more."

Charlie looked up to the sky and thought. Then he pulled an apple off a tree branch and removed its stem. He wiped it over his pants for it to shine. He took a bite. "This apple tastes awesome! Try one."

"There you go," said his bro. "You just mentioned another sense, TASTE."

While they were sitting there a skunk ran past the bottom of the tree. A fox chased him. All of a sudden they both yelled "Gross, yuck, double gross!!!"

“That skunk smells stinky!” Charlie said while holding his nose.

“Yeah but hey, SMELL is another sense,” replied Dennis. He added, “It would be nice if skunks smelled like homemade brownies or a new baseball glove.”

“Sure would.” Charlie grinned.

A minute later, the boys heard a train whistle blow in the distance. Dennis liked HEARING train whistles because it made him feel peaceful. “Another sense!” he said. The brothers gave each other a high-five.

After awhile, Charlie looked over to his left side. He noticed a caterpillar walking on a leaf. He gently picked up the caterpillar and touched the soft, fuzzy fur. “That tickles,” he giggled.

“There you go,” said Dennis. “TOUCH is our fifth sense. That’s sweet. We named them all.”

It was getting late, so the boys climbed down from the tree, and walked home. That night, Charlie had a dream about their tree conversation. He dreamed that his school principal awarded him a huge, five foot long certificate for knowing all five senses, and a five year supply of ice cream!

When Charlie woke up from his dream, he told his brother all about it. They both laughed so hard their stomachs hurt. That night for supper, Mom served ice cream for dessert. The boys looked at their bowls and then at each other and burst out laughing. When they settled down, Dennis said, “Wouldn’t it be good if we could have a sixth sense called laughter.” They gave each other another high-five.

(numbers indicate page #)

Drawing of a mother tucking her child to bed.

- 1) "Mommy, how did you and Daddy meet?"
- 2) "Well, that's an interesting story, Honey. I was in the park and your Daddy walked by. I was eating an apple, when *out of nowhere*... a squirrel grabbed my apple and ran up a tree."
- 3) "Wow! Then Daddy saved your apple?"
- 4) "No, the apple dropped from the tree and when I went to grab it, *out of nowhere*, a duck scooped it up and ran into the lake with it!"
- 5) "Wow! Then Daddy jumped in the lake to chase the duck?"
- 6) "No, the duck swam to the other side of the lake, then *out of nowhere*, a snake came out of the bushes and grabbed the apple and slithered off behind the trees."
- 7) "Then Daddy chased the snake and fought with him to get the apple back?"
- 8) "No, then *out of nowhere*, a dog grabbed the apple from the snake and started running towards me."
- 9) "Oh, and Daddy stopped the dog and wrestled the apple out of his mouth?"
- 10) "No, the dog jumped over the fence and I started chasing it, and *out of nowhere*, I tripped over your father who was sitting on the grass playing his guitar."
- 11) "Wow Mommy! Then Daddy got up and cleaned you off and you fell in love?"

12) “No, he was upset that I broke his guitar, and I kept chasing the dog. But *out of nowhere* that dog saw another dog and dropped the apple.”

13) “Then you finally got your apple back?”

14) “No, because *out of nowhere*, a boy picked up the apple and threw it, and it flew high in the air!”

15) “*Then* what happened?”

16) “It flew over a fence, and *out of nowhere*, a man playing tennis hit it thinking it was the ball, and it flew even higher in the air.”

17) “Then what happened?”

18) “I don’t know.”

19) “You don’t know?”

20) “No, then I went home, I was tired from all the excitement!”

21) “But... how did you and Daddy fall in love after all that?”

22) “I got home, and *out of nowhere*, my doorbell rang... and when I opened it, your Daddy was standing there with a brand new apple for me.”

23) “Aw, Daddy fell in love with you.”

24) “I was so happy that I hugged him... and I dropped the apple.”

25) (drawing of a dog running up to the apple from outside)

26) ...and *out of nowhere*... The end

Susa Silvermarie
650 Caribou Road #219
Asheville NC 28803
828-989-4691
ssilvermarie@gmail.com

The Singing People (667 words)

All around, Walter hears singing. He hears his mother, as she hangs the wash, sing for a breeze. He hears their neighbor who has just filled the birdfeeders, sing an invitation to the goldfinches. He hears his big brother, ready for apple-picking, sing to the tree to bend down its branch and lift him up. The breeze billows his mother's sheets on the line, the goldfinches flutter down to feed, and Walter's brother, high on a branch, fills his bag with apples.

Walter weeds the garden and worries. His own voice sounds so scratchy. And when will his words come out in *song*? Everyone among the Singing People receives their Gift around the age of seven, and Walter is eight already. Maybe he doesn't belong to the Singing People!

Worry makes Walter clumsy. He kneels on a carrot shoot, and then jumps up.

"Walter," sings Mama, "I'm off to the village market." She looks down at the garden. "Careful," she sings.

Walter's brother goes along to help carry vegetables to the market.

Walter is glad to be alone. As he weeds, a new poem takes shape in his mind. Row after row of shoots, Walter murmurs words under his breath. He tries them out, feels their weight on his tongue. He strings them into shining lines, and he plays with their rhythm. Making poems makes time pass fast for Walter.

He stands and stretches his cramped muscles. But then he remembers – words that don't come out in song aren't enough!

A parrot whirrs past Walter's ear in a flash of colors. It perches on the scarecrow facing Walter in the next row.

"Walter," the parrot screeches into his face.

"Whhhat?" Walter lurches.

"You have to do something! No one else is around!"

"About what?" Walter says, his hands jammed over his ears to muffle the parrot's squawk.

"It's the forest. It's on fire!"

The parrot flies off, her shrill words growing faint. "You have to do something, before it's too laaaate...."

Walter smells the smoke. The whole village depends on the forest, for fuel and for food and for medicine! He grabs two half-full watering pails and runs toward the trees.

Fire is licking the bark of a young pine at the forest's edge. Walter dumps his water just there, and the flame sizzles out. But it creeps up the bark of another tree, deeper in the woods. The baby fire is growing into a monster.

Walter's legs wobble as ^{he} races back toward the village well. How can he, the only one with no Gift, save the forest?

At that moment, a poem rises up and fills him like the breeze that filled Mama's sheets.

"What good is a poem," he cries out.

But he stops and turns back. At the edge of the burning forest, Walter opens his throat, and the words boom out through his lips.

Fire go to sleep!

Be blanketed by dew.

The flames falter. But then one flares and bites Walter's toes with heat. He stumbles back. He takes a breath and, like roaring rain, rolls out more of his poem.

Fire now be doused

with drops of silver blue.

Walter takes another huge breath, and throws out his arms. In a torrent, he pours out the final words.

This is the poem I give:

Let our forest live!

A last puff of smoke rises. And vanishes. The air clears.

Walter digs his bare feet into the scorched forest floor. Cold!

His mother's alarm song gallops into Walter's ears, then, along with the pound of many running feet.

The first villager, sloshing a bucket of water, sings out. "'Quick! Where is the fire?'"

Walter's reply flows from his mouth without a scratch. "I tamed it with a poem."

When he hears Walter's voice of silvery water, the villager's eyes grow large.

"My son!" Mama walks toward Walter with her arms wide. "Your voice tames fire!"

His Gift is different, yes. But now he knows— he belongs! Hidden in Mama's hug, Walter grins.

Sherlock of Timberton

“Mr. Weatherby’s been kidnapped.”

Eleven-year-old Shane Jones pushed his empty plate forward and looked up, surprised.

“Old Man Weatherby?”

His father nodded and began loading his own plate with mashed potatoes. “That’s why I’m late for dinner. The police are baffled. They asked me to put the crime scene on the website, hoping someone in the community will find a clue and solve this case.”

Mrs. Jones smiled. “And by someone, you mean the mysterious Sherlock of Timberton.”

In the small town of Timberton, whenever the police were stumped, they posted the crime on the Internet, and within hours, they’d get an e-mail from an unidentified source, solving the case. The police department had nick-named the anonymous detective, Sherlock, after the fictional Scotland Yard detective.

He nodded again. “They’re hoping he figures it out before seven o’clock tomorrow morning.”

“What happens at seven o’clock?” Shane asked.

“That’s the time the Weatherbys are supposed to deposit the two million dollar ransom.”

Shane glanced slyly at his younger sister, Sally. She nodded once and cleared her throat.

“Daddy, may we be excused? I need Shane to help me with...some homework.”

Mr. Jones grinned, a twinkle in his eye. "Sure, Sweetheart. And, just out of curiosity, does your 'homework' involve the *Aliens versus Zombies* video game you got for your birthday?"

She smiled shyly. "Maybe."

Mrs. Jones poured some lemonade for her husband. "Did you both finish your real homework?"

They nodded.

As soon as their father excused them, the kids ran upstairs and turned on the laptop.

"Think *Sherlock* will be able to figure this one out?" Sally asked and put a stick of gum in her mouth.

"I have to. The Weatherbys are counting on me." His fingers flew over the keyboard. "Okay, let's see what they've got. According to the housekeeper, Crystal Jennings, a little after ten o'clock last night, Mr. Weatherby answered the front door. She heard two men laughing, then the voices disappeared into the den. Soon after that, she went to bed."

Shane leaned back in his chair. "When she went to wake him up in the morning, his room was empty and his bed had not been slept in. She ran to the den and found it empty, too. On the desk was a ransom note, written in red pen by Mr. Weatherby himself, saying to deposit two-million dollars into an online account."

Sally blew a big bubble and popped it. "Why would Mr. Weatherby write that note?"

"The kidnapper wouldn't want to write it in his own handwriting or he'd be identified. Still," the boy paused and bit his lip, "the old man must've known his kidnapper. He let him in the house."

“What else does dad’s webpage say?”

He scrunched his forehead. “The police found no clues and there were no fingerprints except for Mr. Weatherby’s. The three main suspects, James Anderson, Tim Hartford, and Stanley Adams, were questioned but all claimed they had nothing to do with it. Since there was no evidence, the police let them go.”

“So there’re no clues at all?” Sally looked disappointed.

“Hold on.” Shane pointed to a photograph on the screen. “The police took a picture of Old Man Weatherby’s desk. Check it out.”

The two kids studied the photo. The young boy moved the cursor around to zoom on different parts of the desk. One corner had a statue of an eagle. The other had a daily calendar, with yesterday’s date circled. In the center sat a large telephone.

Sally pointed. “What’s that thing next to the phone?”

He zoomed in. “That’s a rolodex.”

“A rolo-wha?”

“A rolodex. It’s an ancient card machine people would use to store their contacts’ phone numbers.”

She stretched the gum out of her mouth, then stuffed it back in. “Why not just put them in your cell phone?”

Her brother shrugged. “Old people are weird. Hey, hold on a second.” He zoomed in. “There’s a phone number written on that card.”

“Didn’t you just say that’s what the rolo-thingy-ma-bobber was for? To store contacts?”

“Yeah, but this number’s written in red, just like the ransom note. I bet Mr. Weatherby was trying to leave us a clue.”

“Let’s call it.” She whipped out her phone and dialed the seven digits, 2797825, then hit the speakerphone button.

“I’m sorry, the number you have dialed is not in service. Please check your—”

She hung up. “Out of service. Besides, the cops aren’t *that* dumb. I’m sure they called the number, too. Now what?”

Shane didn’t answer. He took the cell phone out of his sister’s hands and was just about to try the number again when it hit him.

He grinned at Sally. “Start typing the e-mail. I know who the kidnapper is.”

WHO IS THE KIDNAPPER?

Answer on page 5

Shane figured out that the seven digits weren't a phone number, but numbers used to spell out a message. 2797825 on a telephone keypad spells out CRYSTAL. After the e-mail was sent, police arrested the housekeeper. Crystal Jennings, who confessed to kidnapping Mr. Weatherby and holding him hostage in a nearby cabin.

Bonnie Coffin
24 Moose Court
Schroon Lake 12870

Assignment 7
Kristin Wolden Nitz
September 10, 2010
About 800 words
Children's Playmate

AVQ0274

WHAT IS IN THE BOX?

"Andrew, come here please" Grandfather called.

Andrew ran over to grandfather with outstretched arms and gave him a hug. He thought that grandfather was going to tell him one of his several stories. Andrew was surprised when grandfather said, "This is for you," as he placed a wooden box in Andrew's hands. "Be careful with what you put in this box."

AVQ0274

Andrew noticed that it was like grandfathers wooden box, which was on the fireplace mantel, except the wood on grandfathers box was worn with age. "Thank you," replied Andrew. "What is in your box?"

"You will know in time Andrew," he responded.

"What shall I put in my box?" Andrew asked his dog Kole.

Kole wagged his tail as Andrew led him into his bedroom.

Andrew chose a red scarf, a collapsible toy telescope and four large pebbles that he collected on a trip to the seaside. He placed the items in his box and closed the lid. "This will do for now, Kole." "What should we imagine?" Andrew paused for a moment. "I know, Kole let's pretend we are pirates!"

He went to the broom cupboard and took out a broom and a plastic pail.

Upon returning to his bedroom, Andrew grabbed the pillows, blankets and sheets from his bed, putting them in the center of the room. Then he took the cushions off the bedroom chairs and threw them on the blankets. Kole tugged at a blanket. "Good boy, Kole. We need to make a boat." He placed the pail among the pile of cushions. He opened the wooden box and took out the red scarf. Andrew tied the scarf at the end of the broom. He then leaned the broom in the pail. The pail fell on its side. "Oh, no. How can I make the broom stand up, Kole?" He opened the wooden box again and took out the four large pebbles. He placed them in the pail. The broom

AVQ0274

still would not stand up; as the pail fell on its side again. I need something else to find to put in the pail. My sneakers help me when I stand. Andrew took off his sneakers and placed them in the pail. The broom leaned but the pail did not fall on its side. "HURRAY!" shouted Andrew. "Kole, now this is our mast and flag."

The tide was coming in as Andrew involved Kole in a bubble of imagination. The swirls in the carpet became the water swirling. The water was becoming deeper and was now up to Andrews' knees. "Start doing the dog paddle, Kole." Andrew said laughing. They both got into the boat just in time. The wind blew the boat. Seagulls flew overhead. Fish were swimming all around them.

'THUD!' "OH NO! The boat has hit a coral reef, Kole. The boat has a hole in it. The water is coming in! I must stop the water before it floods the boat and we sink!"

Andrew looked around the boat. He took the pillow, which he had taken from his bed, and placed it over the hole. He pushed and PUSHED. "YEAH!" The water has stopped coming into the boat.

In the distance, Andrew saw a boat. He reopened his box and took out the collapsible toy telescope. He looked through it. "Kole, it looks like an old boat with a blue scarf tied to its mast."

"OH, NO!" shouted Andrew. "They think we aren't friends and are firing the cannon!"

AVQ0274

What appeared to be a cannon ball was in fact a water balloon. Kole nudged up alongside Andrew to protect him. "Kole, don't be afraid, water balloons are being fired from the cannon. You are a brave dog." Water balloons were landing on either side of the boat. 'SPLASH, SPLASH!' Fish were jumping out of the water. "The balloons are missing us, Kole. They are missing us!" Andrew spoke too soon because as he looked up a water balloon was heading right for their boat. Andrew put his arm around Kole and they both closed their eyes.

Mother's voice could be heard. "Time for dinner," mother called. Andrew and Kole opened their eyes. The bubble of imagination had burst. The cushions, pillows, blankets, broom and pail lay on the swirled carpet.

"Coming," Andrew responded. Kole wagged his tale and made his way to the kitchen. Andrew put on his sneakers and washed his hands. Kole was licking the last of his dinner from his dog bowl when Andrew entered the kitchen. "What are we having for dinner tonight?"

"Grandfather suggested we have fish," answered mother. Grandfather was sitting in his chair at the head of the dining table. Andrew pulled out his chair to sit down but before doing so he noticed grandfather's box on the fireplace mantel. What appeared to be the corner of a blue scarf was preventing the lid from being closed. Andrew sat down slowly. Andrew looked at grandfather. Grandfather gave Andrew

AVQ0274

a grin. Grandfather had told him in time he would know what is in the box. Now
Andrew knew. Andrew would put the same thing in his box - STORIES.

Bonnie Coffin
24 Moose Court
Schroon Lake, NY 12870

AVQ0274

Assignment 2
Kristin Wolden Nitz
November 19th, 2009
About 1,000 words
Readership 6-8

THE UMBRELLA
or
A SHOWER WITHOUT SOAP

It's going to be a rainy autumn day thought Chantal as she looked out the kitchen window. The distant clouds in the sky were dark gray and the wind was blowing them in the direction of her village. She liked this time of year. The colors of the leaves changing to reds and yellows made her smile. The weather was cooler so she could wear sweaters that made her feel cozy. Today Chantal choose to wear her favorite sweater. It was white with different shades of blue stripes knitted within its pattern. She had just finished helping her mother with the morning house chores. She enjoyed helping her mother, especially watering the plants. "Can we go shopping now?" Chantal asked with excitement. Her mother had promised that they would go shopping when the housework was done. She also said that Chantal could choose an umbrella on their next shopping trip.

“Yes, all the house work is finished. It was good that you watered the plants to help them to grow.” replied her mother, “Thank you for helping. Put on your raincoat because it looks like it is going to rain.”

Chantal and her mother dressed to go out, left the house and walked to the nearby bus stop. To pass the time they played games while waiting for the bus. “I spy something beginning with the letter ‘C’” said Chantal. Her mother looked around. Across the road she saw a cat sitting on a porch. “Cat” mother said. “No, Clouds.” answered Chantal. She saw that the clouds had formed a darker shade of gray and were even closer than when she had seen them from the kitchen window. “Your turn.” “I spy something beginning with the letter ‘B’” said Chantal’s mother. Chantal noticed the bus coming up to their stop. “That is easy.” Chantal said “Bus!” “You’re right,” Answered her mother “Well done, now let’s get on the bus.”

Chantal enjoyed the bus ride. She watched as the other passengers sat talking with their friends, reading newspapers and looking out of the windows.

The bus stopped outside a shop that sold brightly colored clothing. It was Chantal’s favorite place to go shopping with her mother and she knew they also sold umbrellas too. After getting off the bus they rushed into the store not only because Chantal

was so excited but also because it was beginning to rain a little. Once inside Chantal found the umbrellas and called for her mother. Her mother came over and asked if she Chantal if she would like to choose an umbrella. "That would be nice" Chantal said, but it won't be easy to choose one because they all look so nice. She looked at the various patterns and prints on them. Finally she said, "I like this one" with delight. It was white with different shades of blue stripes just like the pattern on her favorite sweater. The umbrella also had a toggle attached to the end of the handle. Mother asked her if she was sure of her choice. Chantal nodded and she handed Chantal the money to pay for the umbrella. Chantal felt grown up as she handed the cashier the money for the umbrella. The cashier asked if Chantal would like her to put the umbrella in a bag. "No thank you" Chantal said and looked at the dark clouds/a light sprinkling of rain, "I think I will be using it very soon". She was so pleased with her umbrella that she wanted to carry it by the handle out of the shop. Her mother finished paying for the rest of the shopping and then it was time to go home. Once outside, they waited for the bus again.

"Don't want to put your umbrella while we wait Chantal?" Chantal proudly held on to her new umbrella. "Not yet" Chantal replied to her mother "It isn't raining hard enough yet."

When the bus came they got on and Chantal sat next to the window. She put the umbrella on the seat and looked out of the window. During her ride home she saw

children trying to float autumn leaves in the nearby stream and people raking leaves. Soon they were back at the bus stop near her house. "Be careful stepping off the bus." cautioned her mother. As they were getting off Chantal noticed another girl in a yellow rain jacket waiting to get on the bus.

Chantal's mother said that they must hurry as it was starting to rain much harder. Chantal went to open her umbrella. "Mother, I don't have my umbrella! I left my umbrella on the bus!" Chantal started to cry. "Don't be upset." said mother. We can enjoy the rain. It is like taking a shower outside but without the soap!" Chantal felt the rain on her face. She started to wave her arms and then dance. Mother started to sing and Chantal joined in on the chorus. She said, "Being in the rain can be nice", and with that she jumped into a big puddle making a good ^{splash} splash. Chantal laughed some more.

As the bus started to pull away, the girl with the yellow rain jacket looked out of the bus window. She noticed Chantal and her mother singing and splashing. She put her hand down on the seat to push herself upright to get a better look at them. Her hand brushed against something on the seat. She found the object to be Chantal's new umbrella.

"This is so sad," said the girl in the yellow rain jacket to her mother "someone has lost their beautiful new umbrella and now it starting to rain."

"Maybe they left it so someone else wouldn't get wet" her mother comforted.

The girl in the yellow rain jacket and her mother got off at their bus stop.

"Did you take the umbrella with you?" asked the mother.

"No" said the girl, "I left it so that someone else won't get wet."

Her mother smiled and said they must hurry as it was raining hard. The girl remembered seeing Chantal and her mother from outside the bus window. She started to wave her arms and then dance. She said, "Being in the rain can be nice, like a shower without soap." Her mother didn't hear her because she was singing. The girl jumped in a puddle and ^{then} joined in the chorus.

Bonnie Coffin
24 Moose Court
Schroon Lake
New York 12870
AVQ0274

A HIGH FIVE FOR DADDY

Andrew ran to the front of the house when he heard a car drive into the driveway. He thought that it was his daddy arriving home from work. It was not daddy but his friends Susan and Gavin who came to visit him at his new house.

"Invite your friends into the house for a hot chocolate." said his mommy who had come to the front door. Andrew thought this a good idea. He was starting to feel chilly from playing outdoors from jumping in the autumn leaves that covered the lawn.

Andrew showed his friends the different rooms of the house. He was very happy to show him his own bedroom and play room. Mommy had helped him to unpack his clothes and toys. Andrew was able to put them wherever he wanted to because they were his special rooms. "Your rooms look great!" said Susan. Andrew smiled.

Mommy said that the hot chocolate was ready. They sat at the kitchen table enjoying the cup of chocolate and home made cookies. Andrew was excited to tell Gavin and Susan about his new house. He was happy to tell them about his adventures playing in the back yard. Their visit was fun.

"It is time for us to go home." Susan said as she finished her hot chocolate. "Thank you for the hot chocolate and cookies."

"High Five." said Gavin as he raised his hand up and Andrew held his hand up touching Gavin's saying "High Five."

"Now give a High Five to my mommy." said Andrew. Gavin said "High Five" to Andrews mom. She said "High Five Gavin."

"Andrew" said Susan "I am going to leave something for your daddy to have when he gets home." "What?" Andrew questioned. Susan turned to the kitchen counter and placed her hand on it saying "A High Five." Andrew shouted "DADDY'S HIGH FIVE." Andrew then giggled.

A WAVE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

He lifts his tiny feet high as he walks through the snow piled hill in the front yard. His slim yet sturdy legs help support his small frame. His chestnut-colored quilted jacket, with white piping, bellows out giving the false impression that he is overweight. His eyes reflect the color of his jacket. A mist starts to form on the lenses of his eyeglasses that are slipping from the bridge of his tiny nose. A blue woolen hat, with earflaps, frames his fair freckled skin. Brushing wisps of brown hair away from his face, with his small hands that are covered by blue mittens, he continues on his quest. The impression of small boot prints leaves a mark of his trail. Nearby a tall boy shouts "Andrew!" The boy stops and looks in the direction where his name is coming from, giving a wave of acknowledgement. Then the small boy continues up the hill towards the snowman surrounded by the cool winter air.

Upon reaching the steadfast snowman the boy burrows with his hands in the snow towards a red object. He pulls out a ruby red woolen hat that the winter wind has blown from the snowman. He takes off his mittens. With long slender fingers, he grasps the hat. He stretches up on tiptoe towards the five-foot high snowman and gingerly places the hat on an angle on its head. With his long arms, the boy reaches into the back pocket of his blue jeans. He tugs for a moment and then pulls out a carrot. He gives several gentle pats on the snowman's face. A gap of a tooth is seen when the boy giggles while he looks at the snowman when the nose replacement is a success. The boy puts back on his mittens with a tug to the left mitten to fit over a brown leather wristwatch.

He turns around and flops in the snow, sliding and rolling to the bottom of the yard. When he stands up, he brushes the snow from his jacket and his snow dampened jeans. While stomping his feet, snow loosens, and falls off his boots. A gleam of pride appears on his face turning into a grin.

THE TAIL OF A DRAGON

"Wow, look at all the snowmen!" Andrew shouted. Kole, his dog, barked and wagged his tail in response. Snowmen of different shapes and sizes stood with pride in the neighboring yards. "Perhaps I could make something out of snow that isn't a snowman. I like making things that are different."

Andrew pulled his toboggan by its rope as he headed up the snow-piled hill in the front yard. Kole followed him.

"Can you hear that roaring sound, Kole?" Andrew asked as they reached the top of the hill. "It is the sound of a snowplow. That gives me an idea."

Andrew formed a small ball of snow and then began to roll it across the yard. Push...push...push. Andrew rolled the snowball until it formed a large size ball. Andrew then formed another small ball of snow and then began to roll it in the snow on the ground. Push...push. Andrew pushed the snowball until it formed a medium size snowball. He placed it on the large snowball. Andrew formed yet another small ball of snow. He stood on tiptoe and placed it on top of the large and medium snowballs.

"Go fetch a stick, Kole." Kole wagged his tail and ran to get a stick. "Good boy," Andrew said as he took the stick from Kole when he returned. Andrew broke the stick into small pieces. He placed the pieces in the small snowball to form ears, eyes, a nose and a mouth.

Kole bumped into the toboggan. It started to slide down the hill. Andrew caught the rope before it slid any further. He leaned the toboggan next to the piled snowballs. "It's a tail, Kole" Andrew said. "It's a dragon's tail. I have made something different. I have made a snow dragon." 'ROARRR'...Andrew and Kole knew it wasn't the sound of a snowplow. This time it was the snow dragon. Andrew smiled and Kole barked and wagged his tail. The snow dragon continued to roar.

David L. Amadio
214 Blythe Ave.
Drexel Hill, PA 19026
610.284.2057
amadio4@hotmail.com
Word Count: 864

The Butcher, the Baker, and the Candlestick Maker

Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub: and who do you think they be?

Well, we all know who they be: the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker. The question we want answered is this: how on earth did they get in that tub? Everyone has their theories, but the following story offers the best explanation I've come across, and I've come across quite a few.

Many, many years ago, in a far-off place called Devonshire, there lived a wealthy landowner named Lord Doogan. Lord Doogan lived in a graystone castle on the edge of a steep cliff, high above a slow-moving river. More than anything else in the world, Lord Doogan loved banquets—huge parties with food and drink, song and dance. One Sunday morning, quite out of the blue, he ordered a banquet to be held in the castle's great hall. The banquet would be attended by some twenty-five noblemen and women, and the servants were told to spare no expense in making it the finest feast the castle had ever seen.

An hour before the start of the banquet, while Lord Doogan and his guests were still getting ready, the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker sneaked into the great hall. Confident that no one else was around, they crept over to the high table and looked with wonder at all the food the servers had so carefully laid out. There was enough to feed a hundred hungry knights—and their horses.

The butcher, a big-chested man with strong arms and wide shoulders, said, "Meat is the most important part of any banquet. Lord Doogan will find my prime cuts of beef most delectable."

The baker, a short, fat man with rosy cheeks and small pink ears, replied, "Are you out of your mind, butcher? Everyone knows that sweets are the most important part. Lord Doogan will find my cheese buns and fig pies delicious beyond measure."

The candlestick maker, a long, thin man with darting green eyes and curly orange hair, chimed in, "You're both wrong. Meats and sweets are fine and good, but they're nothing if you can't see them. Lord Doogan will find my handmade candlesticks the most important part of this grand feast."

He took a long match from behind his ear and struck it on a bench. Cupping the flame as he went, he proudly lit all six of the table's candles.

"Move your candle away from my beef," ordered the butcher. "Wax is going to drip on it."

"Your beef is rotten," sniffed the candlestick maker. "I'd sooner eat the wax."

"If that beef is rotten," interrupted the baker, "I don't want it anywhere near my gingerbread."

He reached for the plate of beef, but the butcher gave him a firm shove backwards. The baker stumbled into the candlestick maker, who bumped against the table and knocked over two of his candles. The linen tablecloth caught fire right away, much to the mens' bewilderment. The flames spread quickly, igniting everything from the lowly straw mats to the red and gold tapestries hanging on the wall. Anyone peaking in would've thought the great hall had just been breathed on by a dragon.

The butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker, knaves all three, ran through a side door and up a long narrow staircase to the top floor of the castle.

Shaking and out of breath, the baker cried, "Lord Doogan will put us in jail for what we've done. We'll spend the rest of our days in the forgotten place."

"We need somewhere to hide," said the candlestick maker, looking around anxiously.

"There," said the butcher, and he pointed to a washroom at the end of the hall.

The three men hurried into the washroom and shut the door behind them. A large oak tub was standing in the middle of the room. Too panicked to be picky, the men quickly climbed inside, crouching down so their heads were just below the rim of the barrel.

The candlestick maker peered out and said, "This barrel is in a bad spot. The first person who walks in will trip right over us."

"Then let's move it," urged the butcher, and he began shifting his weight back and forth, trying to rock the barrel into motion. The other two did the same, and soon the tub was "walking" at a steady pace. So good were the men at rocking in unison that they walked the tub clear across the room and straight out the window. It fell down the side of the cliff and landed with a hard splash in the sleepy river below.

The butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker poked their heads out of the bobbing tub and took one last look at Lord Doogan's graystone castle. Smoke tumbled from the windows of the great hall, as the armor clang of rushing knights echoed in the gallery.

"The most important part of that banquet is not my meat," confessed the butcher.

"Nor is it my sweets," admitted the baker.

"Nor is it my candles," sighed the candlestick maker.

No, the most important part of that fiery feast—they all agreed—was water.

Lisa Batchelder

22321 Banyan Hideaway Drive

Bonita Springs, FL 34135

508-272-7611

lisamusic7@gmail.com

TWO LEAVES

By Lisa Batch

"It's fun hanging out with you."

"Yah. I'd rather be near you than on a branch with that puny little leaf or that old, shriveled one."

"They're just at different stages of life than us. We all have a beginning, middle and end."

"True, but we have nothing in common right now."

"Well, we're all on the same tree so that makes us connected."

"I'm ready to take off."

"Just remember if you leave there's no returning."

"It's just boring hanging here.... no offense."

"Oh, I think there's wonder all around us. Every day brings new surprises."

"How's that?"

"Sometimes there's a breeze and we sway up and down. Sometimes a gentle rain wets us and sometimes we whip around like a roller coaster."

“I like those wild days a lot.”

“Then peace returns. The sun peaks out from behind the clouds. Its warmth feels so good.”

“I know what you mean. I like soaking up the rays.”

“Of course every day is followed by nighttime, which has its own mystique and sounds...like a hooting owl or a cricket.”

“Yep, I like that too.”

“Sometimes you can hear a distant train or a church bell or a far-away howling dog, and you know we are a part of life all around us.”

“It is something to think about.”

“Who knows? Today a baby bird may land on our branch and sing its first song!”

“That’s cool!”

“Or a ladybug may walk across us.”

“Yah, that tickles!”

“Life is full of wonder.”

“Come to think of it, life is good right here.”

“Hang on. Here comes a breeze!”

Jonathan Schwiebert
1719 10th Street Blvd NW
Hickory, NC 28601
(828) 358-4645
johnpyle.writer@gmail.com

about 250 words

My Picky Food Day

by John Pyle

"What do you want for breakfast?" my dad said.

"A bagel," I said.

"Really? I thought you didn't like bagels."

I shrugged. Truth is, I don't like bagels that much. But I ate this one, tearing off bites, one after the other. I chewed them up as much as I could. Then I swallowed that big lump of dough in my throat. But it didn't work.

"Taco or pizza?" asked the lunch lady at school.

I thought for a minute. "Taco," I said.

"Really?" said my friend Aaliyah. "You're not having pizza?"

I shrugged. Truth is, I like pizza a lot more. But tacos have a nice hard crunch, I figured. So I ate the whole thing, one crunch at a time. I had to wash the flavor down with milk. But it still didn't work.

"I want a quesadilla, too," I told my dad at supper. My brother was having one, but I had soft, squishy pasta on my plate.

"You like pasta!" he said.

"I don't want pasta," I said. "I want a quesadilla."

"You don't even like them that much."

I shrugged. He gave me a funny look and went back to the stove and made me a quesadilla. He even cooked it too long, so it was tough and chewy. It was so chewy that at last it happened.

I grinned at my dad. I grinned at my brother. No more bagels. No more tacos. No more quesadillas.

That stubborn tooth had finally come out.

Alice Hope
30 York Rd.,
Pennington, NJ 08534
609 818 0333
Roh9510@aol.com

Picture Book
486 words

THE BIG CAKE MISTAKE

Everything was fine until noon!

The table for the wedding cake is here. But, no cake.

The decorations are finished.

Here's my basket with petals.

I know that the flower girl has a big responsibility.

I can't wait to see the big wedding cake.

I go into the dining room. Hi Mom, where's the wedding cake?

"It should be here soon Mitzi,"

I peek in the kitchen. Hello Chef Bubbles. The cake is missing.

"What's that - a snake is hissing?" she replies.

No, no, the wedding cake is missing.

"I'm very busy, Mitzi. It should arrive any minute."

The ceremony is about to begin. The music starts.

I walk down the garden path and sprinkle petals on the ground.

I keep thinking about the cake.

The bride and groom walk down the path behind me.

The wedding is super!

Everyone takes pictures with the bride and groom. Me too!

I look around again. Still no cake! Hi guys, where's the cake?

"You're right Mitzi, something is wrong." says Chef Bubbles.

She calls The Busy Bee Bakery. "What's that? What did you say?"

The wedding cake was delivered to the wrong farm! Oh dear, what will we do?"

(art work - chef and waiters in kitchen looking very puzzled and somewhat panicky.)

I have an idea Chef. But, we must act fast.

I whisper in Chef Bubbles' ear. "Yes Mitzi. That is a great idea."

The bride looks at the empty cake table and asks, "Where is the wedding cake?"

The waiter says cheerfully, "Everything is on schedule."

The bride looks perplexed!

I sit down for dinner. It was yummy!

Many people congratulate the bride and groom.

I see The Busy Bee Bakery Delivery Truck pull up behind the kitchen.

My plan is working.

Time for dessert! I'll be right back, Mom and Dad.

The kitchen door flies open. Music begins.

I march out first with my basket of petals.

Behind me come a line of waiters, each one carrying a cake.

The first waiter brings out a chocolate cake. Next comes a cherry cake.

**In a speedy line, out comes an apple cake, a strawberry cake, a walnut cake,
a pineapple upside-down cake, a blueberry cake, a lemon lavender cake,
and a pistachio spice cake.**

Chef Bubbles brings out the last one - a carrot cake.

The bride and groom cheer each one. All the guests applaud.

One lady says, "Oh, how creative!" Someone else exclaims, "This is so artistic!"

"Extraordinary," cheers a gentleman!

One-by-one, the cakes are placed on the cake table.

The bride and groom say with great joy, "This is fantastic! What a surprise.

So festive. So much fun! By the way, who thought of this?"

Everyone looks at ME.

The groom whispered to me, "You saved the day. I heard about the big cake mistake."

"Thank you so much Mitzi," beamed the bride. This is wonderful!

I thought to myself, "I wonder if any other flower girl has had this much fun and excitement?"

Wild for a Day

My first human was given to me when I was a baby. Her name was Sarah. She was very happy to be mine and played with me every day. She always fed me and cleaned my litter box. But there was something she would never do for me. Sarah would never let me outside.

The day I decided to go out for an adventure Sarah and her Mom were going out the door. Each day Sarah's Mom walks her to school. It must be a long way to the school because they are both gone all day. I have to stay inside by myself. It gets lonely and boring. I watch the birds outside, eating seeds from a box. I play with my toys for a little while and then sleep on the furniture. I am banned from the furniture when the humans are home.

Today, though, I got outside to have an adventure, just like a wild cat. Sarah had forgotten a book and rushed back in the house. She left the door open a crack, just enough for me to slip out. Sarah's Mom was looking for something in her purse. That gave me time to slink behind a bush beside the door.

After they left I was a little frightened. It was very noisy out there with all the cars going by. It sounds much quieter from inside the house. I hid behind the bush until my ears got used to the noise. I walked around the house to the backyard and saw the same birds I see from the window every day. They were eating seeds from the box high up on a pole. I crouched down and started to hunt, just like a wild cat. I snuck across the lawn one step at a time. When I was finally under the feeder they didn't pay any attention to me. They just kept spitting seed cases down on top of me. Yuck! I tried to climb the pole but it was slippery and my claws could not grab it. I left the birds and walked to the corner of the house to wash my paws and face. I didn't want a bird anyway. I'm sure the feathers would just get stuck in my mouth.

Movement at the end of the yard caught my attention. There was a squirrel down there hopping along and digging holes in the grass. I started to hunt. As I crouched down in the grass, sneaking up very slowly, the little animal didn't see me getting closer and closer. Suddenly, I made a dash to him. He took off, climbed a pole, and then ran along some thick wires. I climbed the pole after him but got stuck half way. It was a very tall pole and I was too scared to come down. I cried, but there was no one near enough to hear me. Little by little I backed down the pole. When I finally got down I just sat on the lawn, panting. I could smell water nearby so I followed the smell and had a drink. There was mud in the puddle, but I was so thirsty I drank it anyway because that's what wild cats do. I had finished drinking and was washing my face when I heard a dog behind me. He was really big and barked very loudly. I took off running as fast as I could.

I got lost.

I yowled because I was afraid I would never find my way back to Sarah. She would not know where to find me. When I thought about how sad she would be I cried even more.

A lady found me while I was mewling and picked me up. I began to purr right away. The lady looked at my necklace and started calling me Shugga. I wondered how she knew my name. She carried me to her house and put me on a blanket. I heard the can opener and ran over to see what she had for me to eat. She gave me some fish and a drink of clean water. After I was done eating and drinking I fell asleep. I was tired after my adventures.

When I woke up Sarah was there petting me. She picked me up and I purred very loudly to let her know how happy I was to see her. She hugged me tightly and sang to me all the way home.

I will never sneak outside again. Adventures are for wild cats. Not for me.

Dylan's Cold Day

by Emily Landreaux

"I'm home!" sang Dylan as he walked through the kitchen door after school. The wind blew sharply into the room before he managed to get the door shut. "Brrrr, it's cold out there! Better turn on the heater today, Dad!"

"I don't think so, Dyl," said Dad, putting down his newspaper. "I've just been reading an interesting article. It says that if we can cut back on electricity, we can save money and help prevent air pollution in the environment."

"But, Dad!" protested Dylan. "It's almost cold enough to snow! How will we stay warm enough without the furnace?"

"Oh, there are lots of ways," replied Dad cheerfully. "For one thing, we'll have a fire in fireplace after dinner's over."

"Great, Dad! Want me to go out and bring in some wood?" suggested Dylan.

"Sit down and have a little chicken broth, first," said Grandma, bring Dylan a steaming bowl of golden broth from the stove. "I've been cooking it since last night and the heat from the stove has kept the kitchen warm all day. When I bake bread in a few minutes, the stove will get so hot that it will warm up the whole house!"

"Wow!" exclaimed Dylan. "I didn't know that. Hey, this is delicious, Grandma!" Grandma smiled and went on kneading her bread dough. Dylan slurped every last mouthful of warm broth until he felt heated all through, right down to his toes.

Dylan went upstairs to put away his bookbag. His brother Mark was digging through one of his dresser drawers. "What are you looking for, Mark?" he asked.

"I'm getting out some of my sweaters and scarves to keep warm," replied Mark. "We won't have to turn on the furnace if we bundle up with some extra layers of clothing."

"That's a great idea," said Dylan. "I'm going to put on a sweater *and* a fleece jacket."

The boys went downstairs to bring in some wood for the fire. They trooped into the living room with their arms full of logs and found their sister Carissa. She was reading a book with a warm cup of tea in her hands. "You look cold, Dylan! Do you want a sip of my tea?" Carissa offered. "It's keeping me nice and toasty while I read my book."

"Thanks!" said Dylan, taking the cup. "It's pretty cold outside, but this will warm me back up again."

After a hot supper of chicken noodle soup and Grandma's fresh-baked sourdough bread, the whole family gathered in the living room in front of the roaring fire. They sipped cocoa and played cards. "This is nice," said Grandma. "It reminds me of when I was a girl. We didn't have central heating then, so we always had a warm fire in the fireplace on winter nights."

"Weren't you cold at night after you went to sleep, Grandma?" asked Carissa.

"Oh, no. We always piled lots of warm blankets on our beds. People used to share beds, too, to keep each other warm. I shared one bed with my two sisters for years."

"Didn't you wish you had your own bed, Grandma?" Dylan inquired.

"Oh, no," laughed Grandma. "I didn't mind. Especially not in the winter! We were quite warm and comfortable."

"Well, it's pretty cold, but Mark snores. I'd rather not share with him," said Dylan gravely. Everyone laughed.

At bedtime, Mom came into Dylan's room holding a funny-looking thing with an electric cord. "What's that?" asked Dylan.

"This is a space heater. It plugs into the wall and generates enough heat to warm a small room," said Mom, plugging it in and turning the dial. "We'll let it warm up your room and then turn it off before you go to sleep."

"Won't it use up electricity?" asked Dylan, looking concerned.

"Not as much as our furnace would," said Mom, smiling. "Don't worry – it only needs to run a few minutes to make the whole room nice and warm."

Soon Dylan's mom came back to turn out the light. She switched off the heater and lay a few extra blankets on his bed. "There," she said. "You should be nice and cozy tonight!"

"Thanks, Mom," said Dylan, sleepily. He burrowed under the covers happily. "Mom, today was fun. Maybe we should try to see if we can go the whole winter without using the furnace!" Mom laughed.

"Well, we'll do our best, honey. We might turn it on sometimes, but if we can get by without it, we'll certainly try. Good night."

"Good night, Mom," said Dylan. As he drifted off to sleep, he thought of how he would tell his friends at school the next day how he and his family had braved the cold and enjoyed a winter evening without having to use their furnace.

© Emily Landreaux, 2014