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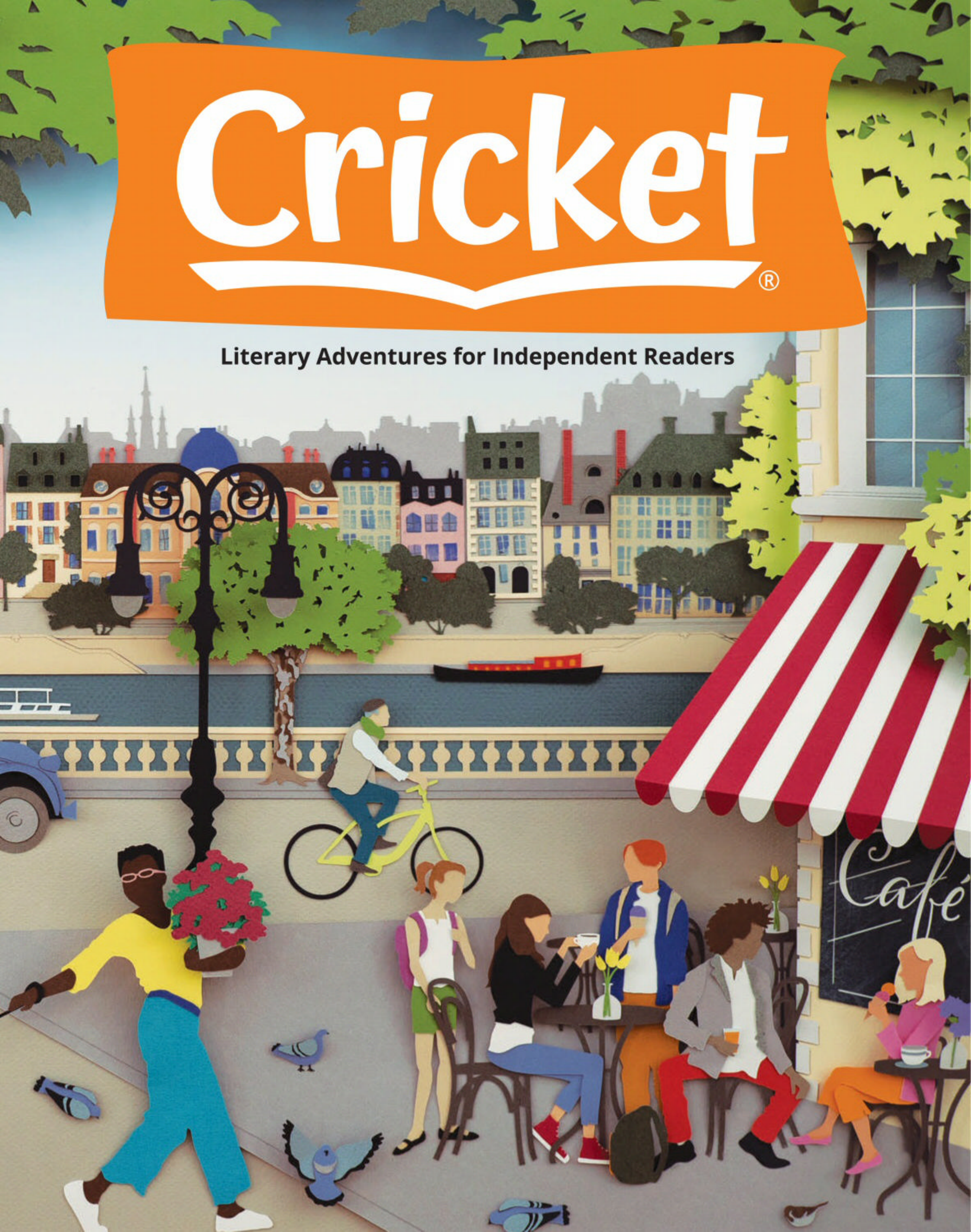
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Literary Adventures for Independent Readers



Cricket

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May/June 2021 Volume 48 Number 8



COVER AND BORDER

by Jo Lynn Alcorn

“Springtime Along the Seine”

cut paper construction

I am an artist living and working in my home studio in West Hartford, Connecticut. But sometimes I also work in other places, including Paris. It is my favorite city in the world, so I was very excited to get to do this cover for *Cricket*. I hope I have captured the sense of life on the streets that happens there, especially in the spring. Paris is urban but warm and friendly, and gray and colorful at the same time. Creating this artwork makes me hopeful that we can all travel again soon and gather at the corner café, whether it be in Paris or in our own hometown!

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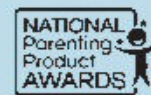


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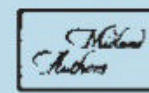


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the letterbox

THIS ONE'S FOR YOU. ••• MEWY YAY!

Hi, Cricket,

This is my first time writing to you guys, but I've been receiving your magazines for about five months and I love them! My grandma got me the subscription. How are you? I like running, swimming, working out, art, animals, writing, and poetry. I am training for cross-country and maybe track this year.

One of my favorite musical artists is Jack Johnson. I like to cook strawberry shortcake, cookies, etc. What do you like to cook?

Leah, age 12
Brookings, Oregon

Dear Everybuggy,

How are you all? Ladybug, is Pussywillow as naughty as Midnight ("Midnight Visits the Vet," October 2020) when it's time to go to the veterinarian?

Gwen (October 2020), I love pangolins! Some people actually eat them. It's really sad. I love Warriors. There is a new Warriors series coming out, too. Also, Wings of Fire is really awesome. Blackfooted Bobcat (October 2020), I love cats and comic strips! Kitten sounds a bit like Midnight.

Flamesilk
Poulsbo, Washington

Dear Flamesilk,

I take good care of Pussywillow at home. She hasn't gone to the vet yet.

Love,
Ladybug

p.s. I love your name! It would make me a bee-u-tiful dress!

Dear Everybuggy,

I have a potcake! Potcakes are Caribbean street dogs. They're called potcakes because people there would cook a mashed rice and pea dish that would leave a crust on the bottom of the pot. People would feed the crust to the street dogs. Lulu is almost five years old, but my family only got her last April. In the family that got her from the Caribbean, there were two other dogs (also potcakes). The oldest dog and Lulu started to fight, so Lulu became our dog!

Eila Friel, age 13
Hudson, Ohio

WHY DO THEY THROW AWAY THE CRUST? IT'S THE BEST PART!



SHHH! STREET DOGS NEED TOP EATS, TOO.

I've always noticed about other languages, how a name itself, even when I cannot understand what it actually means, sounds beautiful. French is fluent and seems to be meant to be spoken fast with directness. It also seems to be like an art on the tongue. I would like to learn to be fluent in it sometime soon. Greek feels like it should be spoken more slowly, like maybe English, with thought, trying to articulate exactly what one wants to say.

English grammar is so confusing. That whole "i before e except after c" is only for a few specific words. *Weird* breaks that rule.

Chinchilla
Inkwell, Chatterbox

Hi!

I'm new to Chatterbox. I've been getting *Cricket* magazine for a while now and thought Chatterbox would be fun. I am interested in filming/photography, Harry Potter, animals, and green living. I love writing stories and I especially enjoy writing descriptions of the setting when it's in nature.

You might be wondering what on earth is a pangolin and why it is my namesake. They are actually the most illegally trafficked animals in the world. They're really cool looking, basically an ant-eater with scales. They are critically endangered, and people should be doing more to help them! They're one of my favorite animals.

Pangolin, age 11
Down to Earth, Chatterbox

I'm half Japanese and half Swedish. I come from a loooooong line of Swedes. Did you know Sweden has free college?! And it kinda explains my love for strudel. My name is French. I'm also a Cherokee Indian on my birth father's side. I'm adopted, but I still know my lineage.

La'Crosse
What's Your Culture?
Down to Earth

I'D LIKE TO LEARN THE MAGIC KITTY LANGUAGE. SOMEHOW, EVERYTHING YOU SAY MAKES ME HAPPY!



MEW! (HEE HEE)

Dear Everybuggy,

Hi! I read everybuggy's letters in the magazine. Has anyone read *Keeper of the Lost Cities*? There are nine books so far, and they're amazing! I ♥ to read!

I have two three-year-old cats and I'm the second oldest of six! I'm the oldest girl, so I don't get hand-me-downs (except for tennis shoes). I have four brothers and one sister.

Moonlark, age 9
Indianapolis, Indiana
p.s. Are Cricket and Old Cricket related someway?

Moonlark, Old Cricket is like a grandfather to all of us.

Love,
Cricket

I am on my school's Green Team, but we haven't done anything except pinpoint problems. Though we are currently trying to create a petition to have the local supermarket not sell things in Styrofoam boxes. Styrofoam releases harmful chemicals that are horrible for our health and destroy the ozone layer.

Please discuss climate change, global warming, and other dangers our world faces here.

MoonHalo
Climate Change, Down to Earth

Yes, yes, yes, yes, and yes. We need this thread. Maybe people can also talk about what they can do to help stop climate change. I've donated to a charity called Earthjustice. They describe themselves as "earth's lawyers." They're a bunch of really skilled lawyers who go into court to preserve the planet. They take on the big environmental fights—high-stakes cases where they can have an enduring impact—and stick with them until they win.

Snazzycakes, age 12
Climate Change, Down to Earth

PINPOINTING A PROBLEM IS AN IMPORTANT STEP! YOU CAN'T SOLVE IT UNTIL YOU FIND IT, AND FACE IT.



Hi!

Let's talk about animals! What pets do you have? What's your favorite animal? Do you have any stories about a pet or other animal you've seen?

I have a scruffy dog named Waffles and an adorable hamster named Bunnie. I also have lots of fish. Here's a story about my hamster:

One morning I woke up to go say hi to my hamster, when I saw a hole chewed through the roof of her cage! I was so scared! Where could she be? Did my dog eat her? Was she OK? I looked all over for her, but she was nowhere to be seen. Then, when I had basically lost hope, I heard a little sound. It was a teeny pitter patter. I looked closely and saw that she was walking on a cymbal from my dad's drum set. I guess she wants to be a drummer! We bought her a new home, and she is now safe and happy.

Rainbow
Down to Earth

I got a puppy on November 24, 2020, after spending the last thirteen years of my life begging. I even made a slideshow talking about why my family should get a dog, and they finally decided to listen. Our neighbor was fostering her, and my parents decided to adopt her, and they surprised me, a day I will never forget. Her name is Roxy, and she's sooo cute and very playful and she does this funny thing where she'll sometimes lie on her back and just start wiggling.

Majestic Mary, age 1 eternity
Down to Earth

Hi!

I love to read, and my favorite book series include the Penderwicks, Swallows and Amazons, Gone Away Lake, Harry Potter, Greenglass House, and many others. I enjoy being outside, hanging out with friends and family, and baking.

I know there are a lot of musicians on the Chatterbox. This thread is to talk about instruments you play, what music you enjoy playing, if you play with other people, etc. If you're not a musician, maybe you can talk about what kind of music you like to listen to or an instrument you would like to play.

I've played violin for a little over ten years and I love it. I mostly play classical music, but I also like fiddle music. I play in two orchestras at my school

IT WILL BE FUN TO MAKE MUSIC TOGETHER AGAIN. AND EVERY DAY OF PRACTICE BRINGS IT CLOSER!

and I love playing with my friends. I go to an awesome music camp in the summer and I've met a lot of great people through that. I also play African marimba, and that's a lot of fun. I've always wanted to play cello or maybe flute.

MountainSpirit
Musician Thread
Pudding's Place, Chatterbox



Hi!

My favorite book is *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* by Kelly Barnhill. I don't know any other books by this author, but I can always rely on my grandmother. She used to be a librarian and loves books and she sends me a package full of them about every two months! I want to be a writer when I grow up and I love to read. So I always think that when I read different genres of books, that's different genres of writing! The library is one of my favorite places to be, other than my room (workshop), on my bike (riding), and with my friends (just hanging out).

Oaklyn S.
Blab About Books, Chatterbox

YOU HAVE A GRANDMA AFTER MY OWN HEART!



Smoke crept into the library. Their time became shorter and shorter. Some more uneasy than others, Seze, Moonshadow, Kosomi, and Hazel ran to one of the library's exits. Their chosen path led the Powers to a winding hallway, and after a series of turns through increasingly smoky halls, Sylvia saw light. There was a way out!

Soren Infinity, age 27 eons
Beacon Town, Kyngdom,
Chatterbox

I have been playing the violin for a little over ten years. It's one of the most important things in my life, and I couldn't live without it. Most of the time I love all aspects of it: practicing, care, performance. I play mostly classical, sometimes fiddle or bluegrass. I enjoy them all a lot. I really enjoy playing and listening to Bach's pieces for solo violin. They are so wonderful, and Hilary Hahn does an amazing job playing them. I like how personal and reflective they are. Each violinist has a unique way of playing them.

I play in an orchestra. It's gone all online right now and is a little disappointing. I know what it's like to play in person, and online just doesn't come anywhere near the excitement and community of in-person orchestra. I'm really looking forward to when in-person rehearsals and concerts can safely happen.

Peregrine
Musician Thread
Pudding's Place

I formally invite all AEs to my dwelling place, Rogue's Known. We can just call it Main Island. Root Island is a smaller island off the coast of Main Island, completely composed of trees. No soil, just trees. Specifically mangrove trees. The scuba diving and snorkeling there are awesome!

Captain X
Down to Earth

WHAT A FUN FACT! GIVES YOU SO MUCH TO WONDER.



THE WORLD IS A WEIRD AND WONDERFUL PLACE.

An ear of corn always has an even number of rows, most often sixteen.

Tealeaf
Random Fact of the Day
Down to Earth

I will post a photo, and you guys can write a caption for it! I'll choose the winner, who then posts the next photo.

Dolphin, age 13
Caption Contest, Chirp at Cricket

Where's that from? Contest/Game. Post a quote from a book, then others try to guess what book it is from.

Feline Fantasy
Blab About Books

You're more likely to have bad dreams if you sleep in a cold room.

Rainbow Riot
Random Fact of the Day
Down to Earth

CHIRPS FROM CRICKET'S LETTERBOX AND CHATTERBOX

I play in a band. I play clarinet, though I have a perfect embouchure for the flute and could play that really well, too. I also love to read realistic fiction, because it is really relatable, and I totally recommend it.

Secret
Chirp at Cricket

I'm vegetarian because of climate change and I'm considering going vegan also for this reason. The factories where they process animals for being eaten are one of the biggest factors in climate change.

Woolly
Climate Change, Down to Earth

Nerd or geek—I don't know which I am! A nerd? A neek? A disciple of an ancient walrus god from space who fell asleep and woke up in the center of the earth and now can only communicate via dreams?

Lord Entropy, age 13
Down to Earth

Send letters to **Cricket's Letterbox**, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354, or email us at cricket@cricketmedia.com. Letters may be edited for length.

Visit the Chatterbox at: cricketmagkids.com/chatterbox

Cricket Country

WHAT AN EXCITING STORY! I LOVE IT WHEN QUIRKY CHARACTERS FACE A CHALLENGE AND TRIUMPH! (HUG)

THAT SOUNDS LIKE US!

SO LET'S DO IT. A CHALLENGE! AND IT HAS TO BE BIG!

DANGER CAN BE EXCITING.

IF IT DOESN'T KILL YOU!

GOOD PLANNING AND PREPARATION WILL DEAL WITH THE DANGER.

AND SOMETHING WE WOULD DO!

MEWY DANGEROUS?

SOMEONE'S GOT STINKY FEET. OR DID SOMEONE...

HURRY, PUSS! (URP!) ALL THIS HEAVE AND HO (URP) IS MAKING ME QUEASY.

STEADY BELOW! GOT SOME SWAY, UP HERE.

IT'S THE TICKLY FEET! (HEE HEE) I CAN'T HELP IT!

LET'S DOCUMENT THE MOMENT! (NO BARFING, PLEASE.)

HOLD STEADY!

HURRY UP AND TAKE THE PICTURE BEFORE WE... FAAAALL!!

SO—WHAT ARE WE DOING?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

I LIKE ADVENTURES FULL OF STRATEGY AND FIGURING AND NEW WAYS OF LOOKING AT THINGS.

I LIKE IT WHEN THERE'S TEAMWORK—EVERYBUGGY WORKING TO MEET A CHALLENGE.

I LIKE ADVENTURES WHERE THE STRONG, STEADY GUY IS IMPORTANT.

YOU COULD BE THAT GUY—DEPENDABLE. AND STOUT AS THE BASE OF A PYRAMID.

SO MANY CHOICES!

I DON'T KNOW...

THAT'S IT! LET'S BUILD A PYRAMID.

THE BIGGEST, TALLEST BUG PYRAMID EVER! WE'LL BE FAMOUS!

THAT DOESN'T SOUND TODDD DANGEROUS.

AND IT SOUNDS LIKE FUN!

IT COULD BE INTERESTING, TODD.

HODRAY! LET'S GET STACKING!

MEW-WHEEE!

EEEK!

CLICK-CLICK-CLICK!

ACK!

IS IT TODD LATE TO CHANGE MY MIND? I FORGOT I'M AFRAID OF HEIGHTS!

WATCH IT, MARTY!

YOU WATCH! I'M GOING TO LAUNCH FROM THE TOP WHEN WE'RE DONE.

READY! I'VE GOT MY FEET BRACED.

WHAT? NO!! I'M GOING TO THE TOP, WITH PUSSYWILLOW. WE HAVE A FLAG ALL READY!

YOU, TODD, SLUGGD. WE NEED A STABLE BASE.

WHOA!

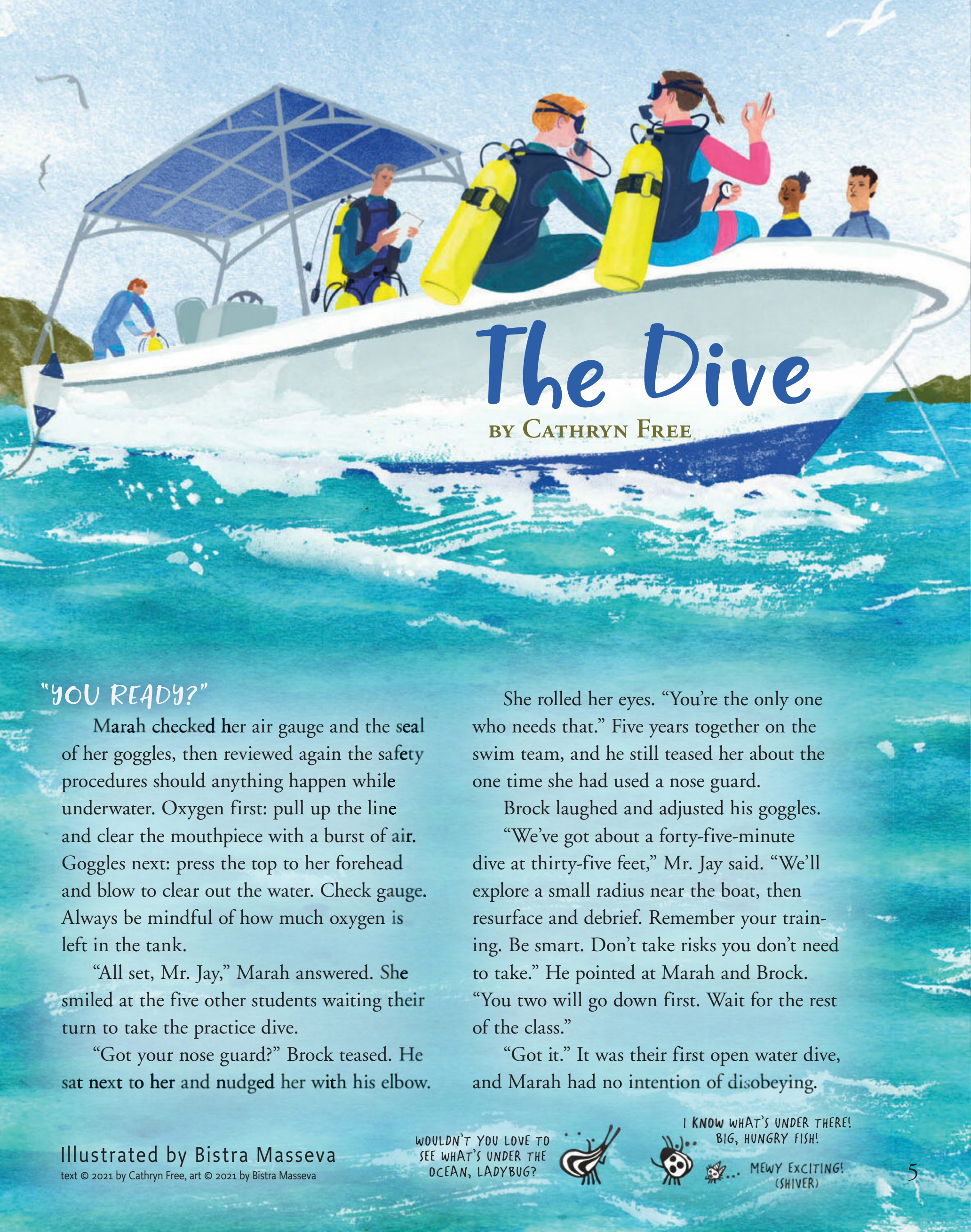
LOOK OUT BELOW!

I CAN'T BRACE MY FEET. I ONLY HAVE ONE FOOT!

HEY! EASY ON THE ANTENNA!

COWABUNGA!

GULP!



The Dive

BY CATHRYN FREE

“YOU READY?”

Marah checked her air gauge and the seal of her goggles, then reviewed again the safety procedures should anything happen while underwater. Oxygen first: pull up the line and clear the mouthpiece with a burst of air. Goggles next: press the top to her forehead and blow to clear out the water. Check gauge. Always be mindful of how much oxygen is left in the tank.

“All set, Mr. Jay,” Marah answered. She smiled at the five other students waiting their turn to take the practice dive.

“Got your nose guard?” Brock teased. He sat next to her and nudged her with his elbow.

She rolled her eyes. “You’re the only one who needs that.” Five years together on the swim team, and he still teased her about the one time she had used a nose guard.

Brock laughed and adjusted his goggles.

“We’ve got about a forty-five-minute dive at thirty-five feet,” Mr. Jay said. “We’ll explore a small radius near the boat, then resurface and debrief. Remember your training. Be smart. Don’t take risks you don’t need to take.” He pointed at Marah and Brock. “You two will go down first. Wait for the rest of the class.”

“Got it.” It was their first open water dive, and Marah had no intention of disobeying.

Illustrated by Bistra Masseva

text © 2021 by Cathryn Free, art © 2021 by Bistra Masseva

WOULDN'T YOU LOVE TO
SEE WHAT'S UNDER THE
OCEAN, LADYBUG?



I KNOW WHAT'S UNDER THERE!
BIG, HUNGRY FISH!

MEWY EXCITING!
(SHIVER)



The *Mia Linda* sat anchored a few miles off the Florida coast, floating on aqua blue water as clear as crystal. The small dive boat rocked back and forth on the gentle waves that lapped noisily against its sides. Sunshine danced off the water, and the air smelled of the sea. The day was clear and hot, perfect for their first group dive.

Marah and Brock sat on the edge of the boat, the oxygen tanks on their backs facing the ocean, waiting for Mr. Jay's signal.

"Ready? Go!"

Marah leaned back and dropped, hitting the water with a heavy splash and sinking slowly, with Brock a few feet away from her. A muffled splash announced that Mr. Jay had joined them. He motioned them over and grabbed hold of each of their wet suits. Together, they began the descent.

Marah focused on keeping her breathing even and level, as bursts of bubbles from her mouthpiece filled her vision. They weren't diving that deep, but she wanted to practice the habit of breathing steadily through a descent to adjust to pressure.

Marah and Brock hit the bottom, and Mr. Jay kicked off to get the rest of the students.

The underwater world was ghostly and ethereal. The current rippled the smooth sand floor into mini mountains ranges; Marah could feel the current's sway even down here. Small fish flashed like mirrors as they darted in and out of coral reefs covered in sea vegetation that waved at them with weedy fingers.

ETHEREAL MEANS
OTHER WORLDLY AND
DREAMLIKE.



THE UNDERWATER WORLD
SOUNDS FASCINATING,
BUT WORMS ARE SAFER
UNDERGROUND.

CARRYING A TANK OF O₂, OR OXYGEN, HELPS YOU BREATHE UNDERWATER.



MAYBE SO, BUT I CAN BREATHE JUST FINE, RIGHT HERE, NO TANK NECESSARY!



MEW!

Brock tapped on his tank to get her attention. He pointed. “Look!”

Marah followed his finger. Her heart leapt into her throat at the dark shadow moving in the distance until she realized it was a giant school of fish moving as one undulating shape.

Brock, eyes laughing, shook his head at her as if to say, “Did you think it was a shark?”

One by one, the rest of the class descended, and the high, tinny tap of Mr. Jay’s writing tablet on his tank drew their attention. Marah kicked her flippered feet as Mr. Jay motioned for the class to follow.

Sunlight streamed through the water, refracting and dancing in dappled pools on the sandy floor. The water was hauntingly silent except for the steady, Darth Vader-esque rhythm of Marah’s breathing. Her body was weightless as it floated in the water—fluid and graceful. Years of swim team had honed her into a master swimmer, but here underwater, she felt no rush. She kept her movements relaxed, almost lazy.

They swam to where the craggy mountains of the coral reef loomed, a complex ecosystem concealing a labyrinth of hidden passageways just waiting to be explored. Marah focused on her breathing and kept her kicks slow as she scanned the underwater world. She couldn’t wait to swim closer.

The tinny tapping drew her attention again. Mr. Jay held up his underwater writing pad. “Stay together!”

Marah gave a thumbs-up, as did the rest of her class.

Mr. Jay made a circle motion with his finger and then pointed to his wrist and tank. “We’ll explore around the reef once, then check time and tanks,” he signaled.

Marah checked her gauge. Her tank was still pretty full, but she knew that little things could lead to loss of air quickly: swimming too fast or overexerting herself, excitement, fear, and rapid panting, all led to a quicker intake of O₂, and she didn’t want to be caught by surprise.

She nudged Brock, and they kicked off to explore the reef and its mysterious coral formations.

Marah stopped to snap a quick selfie with her underwater phone camera. She motioned for Brock, who leaned in to join her, but he moved too close and bumped her, sending the phone sinking to the ocean floor.

Marah gave him a look, and he held up his hands as if saying, “Sorry.” He pointed and swam down.

Marah kicked and followed him, swimming past the looming walls of coral down to where the phone had tumbled onto a narrow ledge. As she reached for her camera, a fierce current rushed through the reef and slammed her against the rock wall.

Shaking her head clear, she picked up her camera and pushed off against the seafloor to swim back up to the group.

But where was Brock?

UNDULATING
MEANS SWELLING
AND FLOWING IN A
WAVELIKE MOTION.



MEWY COOL
FINS!

Her vision exploded with a flurry of air bubbles as she nearly yelled and dropped her mouthpiece.

Something was wrong.

She tapped her tank, the plinking sound echoing through the water. He didn't emerge. Instead, she heard a faint plinking response.

Brock.

She kicked back to where she had dropped her phone.

Brock was waving his arms, his tank wedged into the rock. Bubbles escaped furiously from his mouth. His mouthpiece was gone.

Panic squeezed Marah's chest as she sped forward. Brock's face was a dark shade of red. Where was his mouthpiece? Marah scanned the rocky coral ledge but couldn't see it.

There wasn't time to find Mr. Jay.

Marah took a deep breath from her O₂ and then pulled her mouthpiece out, shoving it into Brock's mouth.

Relief washed over him, and he took a few breaths, calming himself down. Holding her breath, Marah inspected his tank, fumbling to find the oxygen tube and mouthpiece.

The yellow tank was jammed tightly between the rocks. She tried to wriggle it loose, but it wouldn't budge.

Her lungs screamed, and she motioned to Brock. "Mouthpiece!"

He gave it back, and she took a couple of deep breaths, filling her burning lungs with sweet air.

The gauge.

She looked down. The arrow on its face hovered just above the red zone. Not good. She tapped her wrist to say, "We're running out of time."

Taking another deep breath, she passed the piece back to Brock and continued her work on the tank. There was no way she could move it. Where was the mouthpiece?

A glint behind the tank caught her eye.

There. Wedged between the coral and the tank was his mouthpiece. She reached for it and pulled.

Nothing.

Fear was bright and searing now. Her vision blurred from lack of oxygen. Pressure mounted in her head as she used every bit of strength to pull at the mouthpiece and tank.

It was no use.

Oxygen break. Brock slipped the piece back to her, and she took a few deep inhales, giving her a moment to think as her brain cleared.

The gauge dipped into the red zone. They had about ten minutes.

Calm down and breathe. Marah began to run through everything she'd learned, every safety measure and precaution.

Forget it. They didn't have time for this.

Another breath. She passed the piece back to Brock and started unclipping his tank. When he realized what she was doing, he slipped his arms from the harness and pulled free, leaving the tank wedged in the rock.

FASCINATING, RIGHT?



NOT BAD! KEEP
AN EYE OUT FOR
SHARKS, OK, PUSS?



MEW!





Marah grabbed his arm, and they both kicked for the surface, swimming steadily and sharing the mouthpiece.

The arrow was midway down the red zone now.

Marah spotted the anchor line of the *Mia Linda*, and they followed it upward, stopping every couple of feet to take a few breaths and level out the pressure change.

Minutes screamed by. The arrow sank lower.

Marah's lungs burned and her eyes watered as she kicked with all her strength to the surface.

Suddenly, with a gasp and a burst of oxygen, they broke the surface. Shouts and screams filled the air but were drowned out by a roaring sound in Marah's ears.

The *Mia Linda* dipped and swayed in front of them, their classmates already on board. Marah kicked toward the boat with

PRETTY FISH—AND THEY LOOK SO FRIENDLY!



MEWY BLUB!

TIME TO SURFACE!



THAT WASN'T SO BAD!
NOT SCARY AT ALL.



GOING SO SOON?



MEWY YES,
PLEASE! (GULP)



Brock. Her limbs were dead weight; she forced them to move.

Anxious arms pulled them on board and frantic hands unclipped her tank as Marah collapsed onto the deck of the boat, closing her eyes and breathing heavily.

“Are they here? What happened?”

Marah heard the voice of her teacher, and a gentle hand shook her. She opened her eyes and sat up. Mr. Jay peered into her face.

“There was a problem. Brock’s tank got stuck,” she explained.

Mr. Jay’s face turned ghostly white. “The tank?”


Brock spoke. “A strong current caught me just as we dove into the reef. It slammed

me into the coral, knocking my mouthpiece out and wedging my tank in the rock.” Brock shook water drops from his hair. His hands were shaking. “I don’t know what I would have done if Marah hadn’t shared her mouthpiece with me.”

Mr. Jay inspected Marah’s gauge and gasped. She was on empty.

“Outstanding, Marah!” He shook his head in disbelief and awe. “You saved his life.”

Someone dropped a towel over Marah’s shoulders. She wiped her face and took a deep, shaky breath. “Yeah, well.” Her face flushed. “Anyone have a nose guard?”

Brock laughed and threw his goggles at her. “Thanks.” 





Parrot of the Sea

BY RUTH GILMORE INGULSRUD

The parrot fish is not a bird
It cannot fly. 'Twould be absurd
To say it could. It cannot speak
But still, its mouth is like a beak

Its beak is formed from bony jaw
The strangest mouth you ever saw
It chews on coral close at hand
And when it's done, it poops out sand

It keeps the coral algae-free
And lives thus symbiotically
The coral thrives; the fish gets fat
So both can benefit from that

At night he makes a sleeping bag
Of slimy slime that doesn't sag
Inside his sack he's safe and sound
From predators that swim around

His scales are bright as feathers rare
But parrot fish can't fly through air
A different name might be preferred
Since this sea parrot's not a bird

Note The brightly colored parrot fish helps keep coral reefs healthy by eating excess algae that can cover the coral colonies. It does not have true teeth like most fish. Instead, it has a beak of exposed bone which is very hard. It scrapes off some of the coral as it eats, and that coral sand passes through the fish. Within the span of a single year, a large parrotfish can produce over 800 pounds of fine, white sand. At night, parrotfish burp out a slimy material that they sleep inside, safe from predators. And as parrotfish grow, they have the unique ability to change from a female to an even more brightly colored male.

Building Castles

BY SHARON PORTERFIELD

“Desperta’t, Jordi! Wake up!”

Father’s voice calls in Catalan from the hallway, and I sit up quickly. Today is the day! The day that I will finally be a *casteller*—a castle builder.

I quickly pull on my white knee-length pants and bright red shirt, the uniform for

our team. Mama has *pamboli* ready for breakfast. “Hurry and eat, Jordi,” Magdalena says as I grab a piece of the bread with olive oil. My sister is only five, and even though she sounds bossy, I know she’s just very excited. Today is her first *casteller* competition, also.

“I will,” I tell her, chewing as fast as I can.

Rafel, who is eight, tucks his drumsticks under his arm as he pours some juice. He raises his glass as if in a toast and gives me a wicked grin. “Ooh, don’t you look fancy, big brother. Are you ready for your moment of fame?”

My throat is suddenly very dry, and the bread gets stuck as I swallow. I grab my brother’s glass, taking a big swig of juice and pushing away the nerves before looking at Papa. I will do well today. I want to make him proud. Handing the glass back to Rafel, I put a smile on my face. “I’m ready.”

Here in the eastern part of Spain, *casteller* groups are very popular. My city of Palma de Mallorca is hosting today’s competition. All my life, I’ve watched my parents



Illustrated by Pep Boatella

text © 2021 by Sharon Porterfield, art © 2021 by Pep Boatella



CATALAN IS A LANGUAGE SPOKEN
IN PARTS OF EASTERN SPAIN,
INCLUDING CATALONIA AND THE
ISLAND OF MAJORCA.

compete. I have even been a musician in the competition. But never before have I been part of the tower. It is so high. And it sometimes falls. I was hesitant to be up there. But for the past year, I have been practicing the climb. I am twelve now, and I must not be a *covard*, a coward. So today, for the first time in a competition, I will help build the tower!

In town, I see that the center of Palma is already packed with people. Casteller teams are here from Manacor, Magaluf, and Peguera, and many people have come to watch the building of the towers. Perhaps some of them have also come to see the towers fall. There is always great excitement as the castellers build their towers.

While I wait for our turn to compete, my friend Tomeu comes to stand with me. He and his family are also part of our team. Tomeu, older than me by a bit, has competed before. I am envious of his experience.

“What if I’m not ready for this, Tomeu?”

Tomeu’s dark eyes sparkle as he smiles at me. “We are never ready, Jordi. None of us who compete knows for sure how it will go.” He gestures toward the tower going up in front of us. “Just like those people, you must have faith in the others. You must trust those below who lift you up, and you must trust yourself.” Tomeu pats me on the shoulder. “Have focus. Have faith.”



I nod to show that I understand. I will do my best to follow his suggestions. Soon, too soon, it is our turn. I gather with my team in the center of the square. Magdalena waves crazily at me, making me smile. Rafel salutes me with his

SAY CASTELLER: CAST-EL-YAY.



LOOK, I'M A
CASTELLER!



MEWY ME, TOO!

drumstick. And then I turn my attention to the task at hand.

We must first make the base for our tower. My father and three of the strongest men stand in a circle facing each other as they hold tightly to each other's arms. Four more strong men step behind, each wrapping his arms around the chest of a man and giving him a bear hug. Then as many as fifty more men and women crowd behind and begin pushing on their backs to keep them tightly together.

Four smaller men climb onto the backs of the original base group and stand on their shoulders. They then grab onto each other's arms and hold firmly, creating a strong second level. Some in the crowd on the ground reach up and hold on to the ankles and legs of the second tier to give support. I can see that my father's face is red, and his eyes are squinted together as he works hard to be strong for the person on his back.

Our base is solid, so Papa signals, and Rafel begins a rhythm on his drum. His friend Juanan plays a tune on the *gralla*, an instrument much like an oboe. My heart beats a little faster. Now that the music has started, we can no longer take apart the tower without penalty. We must go forward with our building.

Another group of men will form the third level. Then, a group of women start climbing and begin to form the fourth level. Our tower is growing taller and taller. Next, I watch as my mother climbs nimbly up to stand on the shoulders of another casteller. Mama has very

good balance to be able to do this. She and my aunt will form the fifth level.

Then suddenly it is my turn. Tomeu and I will make up the sixth level. We are both old enough to be strong, yet not too tall or heavy. Tomeu smiles at me just before we begin to climb. "Focus. And faith," he says. I nod. And then I begin to climb. Each of the castellers wears a waist belt, and I grip the belts with my bare toes as I clamber over the backs and shoulders of the others. I've done this many times in practice, but today it is different. Before, if things didn't feel right, I could always go down and start again. Today, I get only one chance.

Climbing over the backs of the first two tiers is easy because the people are leaning forward. But after that, I must climb straight up the backs of others. Tightly gripping the clothing of those I'm climbing over, I pass the first two tiers without difficulty, but as I go higher, the tower feels less steady. By the time I reach the fifth tier, nerves make my hands sweat and my knees tremble, for I am very high off the ground.

I place my foot into the waist belt of my mother and try to stand, but my foot slips off the belt. I slide down, and the tower below me shifts, swaying just a bit. My heart begins a crazy dance in my chest, and I take a deep breath to calm myself. I cannot be responsible for ruining our tower. I cannot disgrace my parents or myself. I cannot let my team down.

"*Tranquil*. Easy." My mother whispers the words. I calm my heart and again place my foot into her belt. This

H'M. NOT SURE WE'RE DOING THIS RIGHT.




MAYBE PUSS SHOULD BE ON TOP?

MEWY MAGIC KITTY POWER!



time, my toes grip firmly, and I push myself to a stand, balancing on one foot. With the other foot, I step up and onto her shoulders, then bring the other foot up. Reaching deep inside to feel my balance, with focus and trust, I rise slowly out of my crouch and straighten my knees until I am standing. I am now nearly twenty-five feet off the ground. Below me, the crowd of people is a kaleidoscope of many colors, but I feel my mother's strength, and my feet are steady on her shoulders. Opposite me, Tomeu has also come to a stand on his mother's shoulders. He and I grasp each other's arms, making a strong sixth tier.

I turn my face up to the sun and laugh, for I am no longer frightened. Beneath me, the base feels strong, and my heart beats steady in my chest. Far below, I can hear Rafel's music and the crowd's cheering, and soon, I feel Magdalena's hands on my feet. She grasps my shirt. Then her toes pull down on my waist belt as she clambers up the back of my body. I work hard to hold myself straight and still and strong for her. She is called the *enxaneta*, and once she climbs onto my shoulders and waves her hand to the judges, our tower is complete.

The crowd cheers even louder, and the music rises to a climactic crescendo. I smile across at Tomeu. Whether or not we win this competition, I know we have done what we set out to do. Our team has worked together. With faith in each other and with focus on the task, we have built our castle. Today, I am a casteller! 

AUTHOR'S NOTE The Catalan tradition of building human towers, or castles, dates back centuries. It possibly began as part of a rural folk dance. In Catalonia, a region of northeastern Spain along the Mediterranean Sea, and on Spain's Mediterranean island of Majorca, where Jordi lives in my story, most towns have a casteller group with as many as a couple of hundred members. Larger cities like Barcelona might have two groups. Anyone is allowed to join, and families often participate together. An official organization keeps track of the points awarded at each competition and then ranks the groups. Points are given based on the difficulty of the tower formation and the height of the tower. For a long time, seven tiers was the tallest tower that had been achieved, but lately towers have been built as high as ten tiers.



Scarving the Gargoyle

by Rosemary Laughlin



Flames shot up from Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris in April 2019. Its elegant spire toppled and fell. Viewers around the world watched horrified at the replays on television

One lady in a retirement residence in the United States felt very sad. As a girl she and her brother had walked near Notre Dame every day during the year they lived in Paris with their French grandmother. Her apartment was on the small island behind Notre Dame called the Île Saint-Louis.

One afternoon on the way home from school, something unusual happened.

“That was quite a story Monsieur Jacques told us about putting his hat on a gargoyle when he was our age,” said Louis. Monsieur Jacques was what the French call a concierge, the doorkeeper and manager of their grandmother’s building. “It reminded me of those old tales about belling the cat.”

“Do you think he really did that?” scoffed Sophie.

“Oh, yeah. He said he did it on a dare. You know how guys are. And he gave details, too. Remember how he described following a tourist group up the tower stairs of Notre Dame, squeezing out onto a little balcony, then leaning wa-a-ay out and flipping a beret onto the nearest gargoyle beneath him—the waterspout kind?”

Sophie giggled. “Let’s find out if it’s possible.”

Louis grinned. “Let’s see if we can find Leander.”

“Lee-what? Lee-who?”

“Leander. Monsieur said gargoyles have names. ‘Leander’ just occurred to me, so that must be it.”

“Perfect,” agreed Sophie.

It wasn’t much of a detour to get to Notre Dame. The day was gray and windy, not good weather for a bird’s-eye view of Paris. It was four-thirty in the afternoon.

Illustrated by Daniel Krall

text © 2021 by Rosemary Laughlin, art © 2021 by Daniel Krall

THE NAVE IS WHERE THE CONGREGATION
OF A CHURCH GATHERS FOR WORSHIP.



THE NARTHEX IS THE ENTRANCEWAY
OR LOBBY LEADING TO THE NAVE.

The nave was gently echoing with voices as tour guides recited the history of the cathedral in several different languages.

From the narthex the two children spiraled up, up, up the tight stairs till they came to a small balcony at the top. A few feet below its railing stretched an angry gargoyle, aimed to spew the gutter's rainwater from his leering open mouth.

Sophie slipped off her rucksack and took off her scarf. It was a silky, multicolored gift from her godmother, who worked in a Chanel fashion boutique.

She said to Louis, "I'm going to see if my scarf can reach him. It's long. If it can, we can believe Monsieur was not making up a tale."

She leaned out and whipped her scarf in an attempt to touch Leander. No. She was too far away.

Suddenly a gust of wind ripped the scarf from her and, as if guided by an invisible mischievous hand, it snagged on Leander's head.

"Oh, great!" she groaned. "That gargoyle has got my scarf! Now I'll have to lean out really far to get it back!"

She frowned. "Louis, take your rucksack off and hold on to my leg. I'm really going to have to stretch, but I think I can get it."

It was in that position that a tourist came upon them.

"Well, what have we here? Is it practicing to kiss the Blarney Stone that you're doing?" He repeated his question in French.

Louis and Sophie turned and stared. "We speak English."

Louis felt bold. "So, what's the Blarney Stone, and who are you?"

"Jack Kelly from Cork, Ireland. The Blarney Stone is at a castle of the same name. If you kiss it, you get the blessing of Irish speech, 'the gift of the gab' it's called." He grinned. "The thing is, you have to lean back from a higher opening and kiss it upside down. So, somebody holds your feet while you try to do it. You can see why your odd position rather reminded me of that."

Louis explained their predicament. "We're trying to get back my sister's scarf. It accidentally caught on that gargoyle's head." He continued, "You see, we were trying to test whether our concierge's story was true about putting a hat on a gargoyle like that one when he was a boy." He grinned. "Allow me to introduce you to Leander the Gargoyle."

Jack Kelly laughed aloud. "Allow me to help!" He bowed. "I think you two already have the gift of Blarney. No need to kiss the stone if you're ever in Ireland."

Charmed by the Irishman's whimsy, Sophie and Louis accepted his help. He was tall, so he made the stretch from the railing with ease. The fickle breeze floated a free corner of the scarf toward his hand.

He grabbed it and returned the scarf to Sophie with a flourish.

"Oh, thank you so much!" Then she remembered what their grandmother had told them about French manners. "In return, my brother and I would like to treat you to a citronnade at the sidewalk cafe down there on the street across the square."

CHANEL IS
A FANCY
FRENCH
FASHION
DESIGN
HOUSE.



MEWY OOOO
LA LA!



MWAH!

WHIMSY IS PLAYFUL
GOOD HUMOR.



FICKLE MEANS CHANGEABLE
AND UNPREDICTABLE.
RIGHT, LADYBUG?

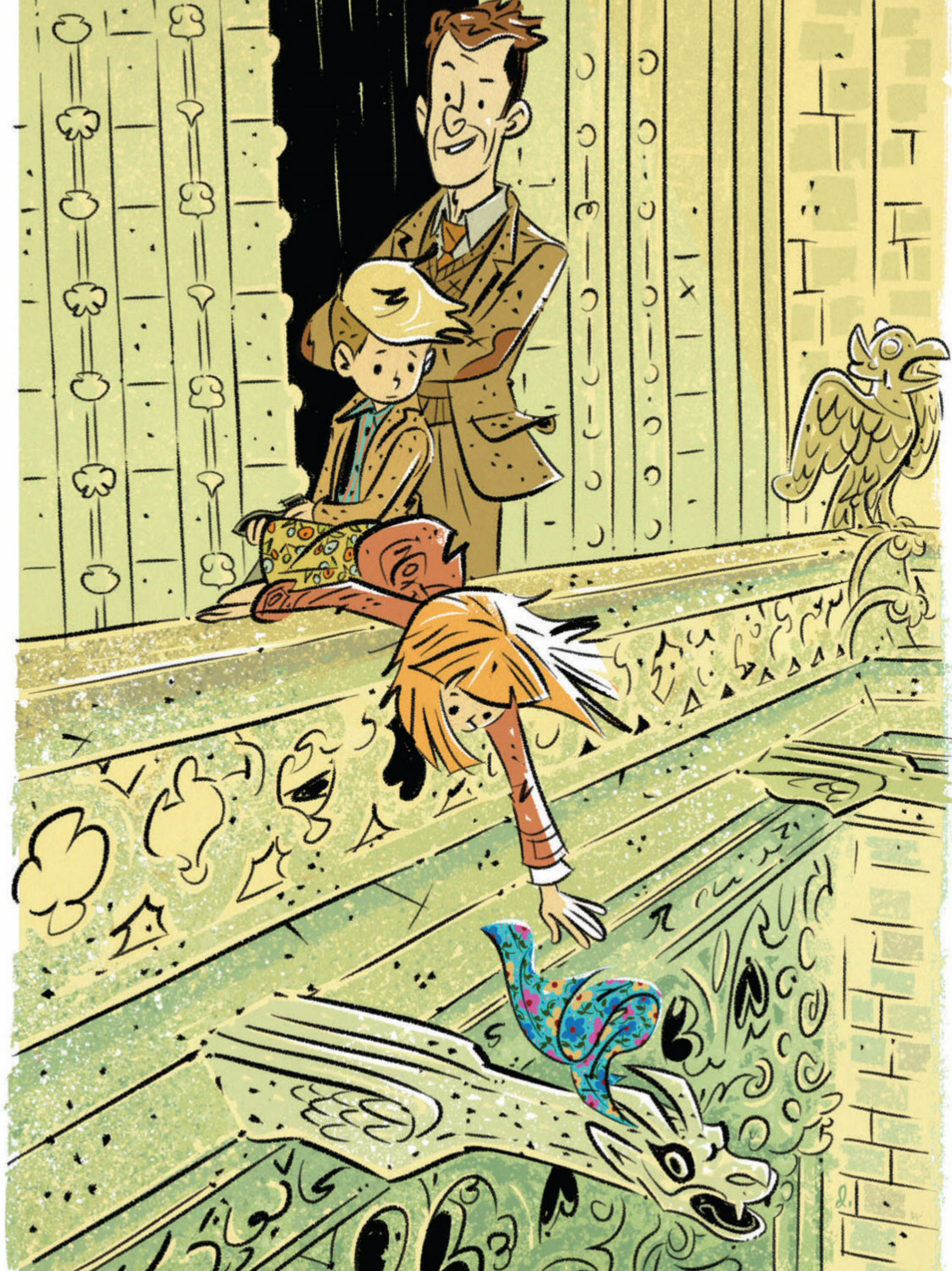
WHAT'S THAT
SUPPOSED TO
MEAN?



MEWY
SNORT.



IN OTHER NEWS:
CITRONNADE IS FRENCH
FOR LEMONADE.






VIVE LEANDER MEANS LONG LIVE
LEANDER, OR HURRAY FOR LEANDER.

“Indeed yes,” replied Jack from Ireland, “as long as you don’t mind including my wife and her mother, who are waiting for me below. They weren’t quite up to the stair climbing. And, of course, we will pay our share.”

So it was that two American grade-school children and three Irish tourists celebrated a lemonade toast to Leander the Gothic Gargoyle high above Notre Dame of Paris.

Back in the apartment on the Île Saint-Louis, Grandmère scolded them for talking to a stranger and being late. But Monsieur Jacques the concierge cried, “*Vive Leander!*” and laughed a great laugh. 

AUTHOR’S NOTE Two years have passed since fire ravaged Notre Dame Cathedral in the heart of Paris. Since then, a unique collaboration of architects, engineers, scientists, art historians, and craftspeople have been working diligently to rebuild and restore the historic 850-year-old structure.

Much of the cathedral’s original limestone came from quarries beneath Paris. To replace stonework damaged in the fire, stone conservation geologists closely examine layers of rock in old quarries to identify microfossil deposits that exactly match those of the cathedral’s stones.

In the cathedral’s attic, where the fire started, a maze of wooden beams, nicknamed “the forest,” once supported the cathedral’s lead roof. To rebuild this structure, timber scientists study the blackened jumble of burned and charred beams in order to locate oak trees that will supply exact replacements.

Using digital microscopes, glass conservationists assess minute cracks in the cathedral’s stained glass caused by the intense heat and delicately remove lead dust that has settled on Notre Dame’s exquisite, colorful windows.

The structure itself is yet very fragile, but the archbishop of Paris was able to say Easter Mass in the empty church one year after the fire. French President Macron has expressed hope for completing the restoration in five years, but it may take longer.

Meanwhile, the gargoyles look out over Paris, and spout rainwater away from its ancient walls.



Off to France! Crossbird Puzzle

Ugly Bird's

1	2	3	4			5	6	7
8					9			
10						11		
			12	13	14			
15			16					
17	18	19					20	
21					22	23		24
25					26			
27				28				

Solution on page 47

Across

- Capital city of France
- Central standard time (abbreviation)
- Not closed
- Notre _____ is a famous French cathedral
- Marries
- The Mediterranean _____ borders France on the southeast
- “La Marseillaise” is the national song, or _____, of France
- Either, or; neither, _____
- Place for an arm in a shirt
- Roman numeral for 104
- French for *blue*
- The _____ of France is 213,009 square miles
- “His wife could eat no _____”
- “The clock struck one,
The mouse _____ down”
- Large river in France

Down

- Prisoner of war (abbreviation)
- Gorillas, for example
- The French flag is _____, white, and blue
- Crazy
- To buy something, you can either charge it or pay with _____
- One of the pirates in *Peter Pan*
- France has many soccer _____
- Month following October (abbreviation)
- Highest pitch or range in music
- Academy Award statue
- Italian unit of money before the euro
- Opposite of *odd*
- French for *John*
- Hawaiian wreath worn around the neck
- French for one

HEY!
COME
BACK HERE
WITH MY
CROISSANT! I
WAS SAVING
THAT!

AND
MEWY
EAT MEWY
DESSERT
FIRST!

By Oo-la-la Harris
& Mais Oui Conahan

C'EST LA VIE! A GOOD REMINDER— DON'T
EXPECT GOOD MANNERS OR PROPER
BEHAVIOR FROM UGLY BIRD.

Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile

by
J. Patrick
Lewis



Triumphal Roman arcs
Were magic doors
For ancient soldiers who,
Surviving wars,
Resumed their lives
As ordinary men
By merely passing through
Them once again.



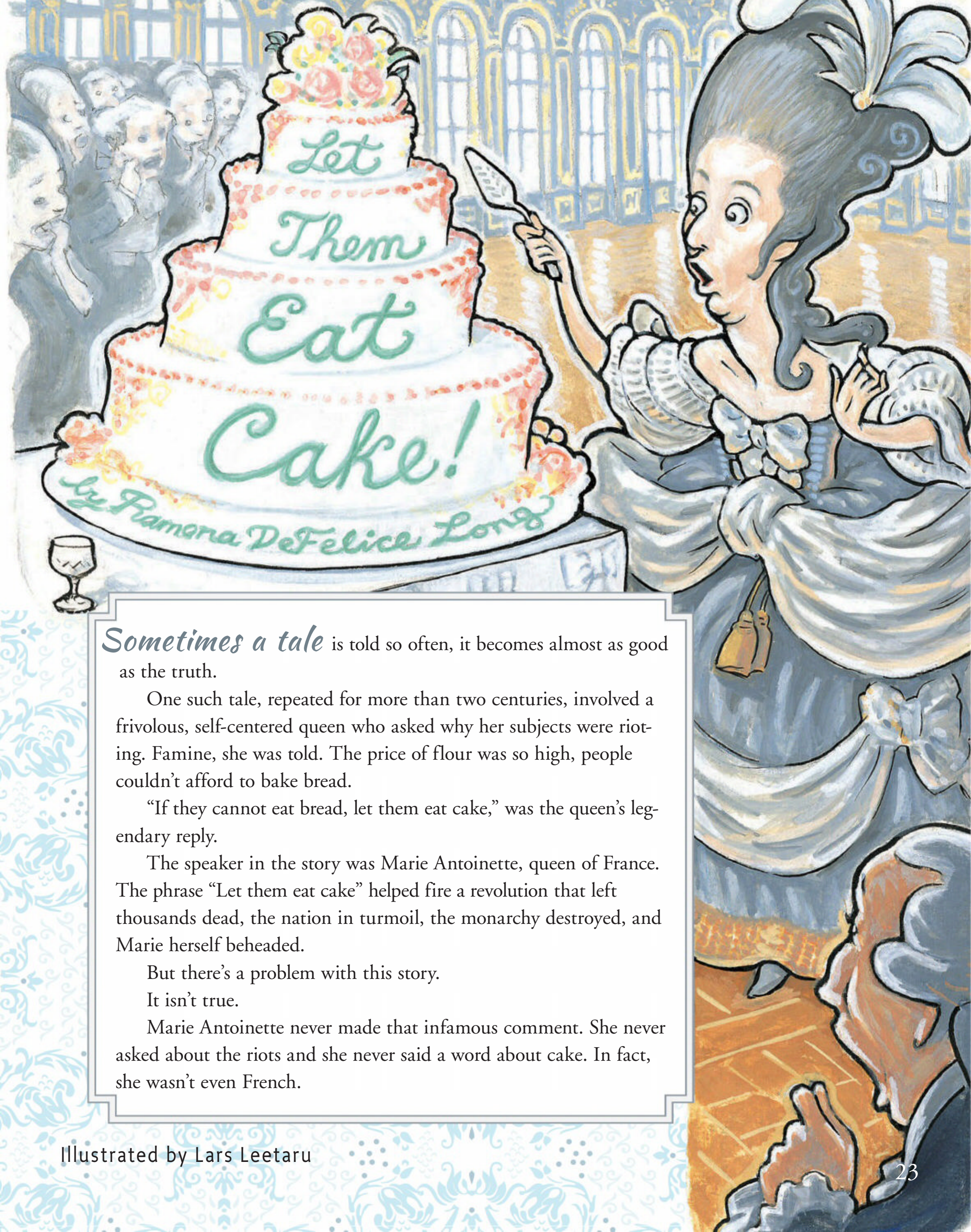
And now where these
Twelve avenues converge,
Napolean, de Gaulle
And history merge
Into the Arc of what
We know as France—
Tradition, culture,
Paris and romance.



BUILT 1806 ~ 1836 IN PARIS, FRANCE

ART BY JAN ADKINS

ARCHITECTS: JEAN-FRANCOIS-THERESE CHALGRIN & JEAN-ARMAND RAYMOND



Sometimes a tale is told so often, it becomes almost as good as the truth.

One such tale, repeated for more than two centuries, involved a frivolous, self-centered queen who asked why her subjects were rioting. Famine, she was told. The price of flour was so high, people couldn't afford to bake bread.

"If they cannot eat bread, let them eat cake," was the queen's legendary reply.

The speaker in the story was Marie Antoinette, queen of France. The phrase "Let them eat cake" helped fire a revolution that left thousands dead, the nation in turmoil, the monarchy destroyed, and Marie herself beheaded.

But there's a problem with this story.

It isn't true.

Marie Antoinette never made that infamous comment. She never asked about the riots and she never said a word about cake. In fact, she wasn't even French.

WHY WOULD A HUMAN
GIRL GET ENGAGED TO A
FRENCH DOLPHIN?



NOT DOLPHIN, HA HA.
DAUPHIN. SAY IT:
DAW-FAN.

TWO HUNDRED
SERVANTS? I COULD
GET USED TO THAT.



Maria Antonia Josepha Johanna was an Austrian princess born in 1755. Antonia's mother was Empress Maria Theresa, a powerful ruler and skillful matchmaker who arranged marriages for her children with other thrones in Europe. She taught them always to remain loyal to Austria.

For her youngest daughter Antonia, the empress chose an alliance with France. In 1769, Antonia became engaged to Louis Auguste, the French dauphin, or crown prince. She was thirteen. He was nearly fifteen. They had never met, seen, or spoken to one another.

Antonia now needed a crash course on how to be the dauphin's wife, the dauphine. Antonia not only had to speak and write French fluently, she also had to learn about French history, food, and fashion and be taught the proper way to walk, dance, and play cards in the French court. Most difficult, however, was learning French royal etiquette.

In Austria, the empress did not like a lot of formality. Even at the Austrian palace, parades and pageantry were kept to a minimum.

The extravagant French court at Versailles was totally different. There, ceremonies were elaborate, and the etiquette was rigid. A complicated set of rules guided almost all royal behavior. The dauphine was not allowed to buckle her own shoes, bathe herself, or walk or ride alone. She was required to wear rouge but could not apply it herself. Her hairdos and clothing had to be tasteful but elaborate.

There was no privacy at all. Even meals and preparing for bed were public events! In Austria, Antonia had six attendants. As dauphine, she had nearly two hundred. In addition, Versailles was always filled with nobles willing to plot, bribe, spy, and deceive to get favors from the king. She would always be watched.

Antonia only had a year to learn everything before her marriage. She was sweet and lively, but she was no scholar. Still, on April 19, 1770, Antonia of Austria became Marie Antoinette, dauphine of France.

No one in her family accompanied her to Paris. She was not allowed any personal servants or possessions. Even her clothing had to be changed at the border!

The biggest shock, however, was the dauphin.

Louis Auguste was a timid, overweight, awkward boy who'd never been trained to be king. His older brother, who had been groomed for the throne, had died unexpectedly.

Marie Antoinette



LET THEM EAT CAKE? IT SOUNDS
LIKE A BIRTHDAY PARTY!



VERSAILLES IS
PRONOUNCED:
VER-SI.

But Louis's unfortunate looks hid some admirable qualities. He was no good at small talk but was well-read. His fingers were thick, but he was a master locksmith. He bumbled on the dance floor but was a skilled hunter. Louis was kindhearted and genuinely loyal to France, but he was not cut out to be a king.

At first, Marie was horrified by the awkward stranger she had married. To her credit, she was able, in time, to look past his appearance. Though it may never have been a love match, fondness developed between them.

A fondness grew among the people for the new dauphine as well. Louis's bride charmed France. Though she made many mistakes in etiquette, King Louis XV, the dauphin's grandfather, admired her stylishness and high spirits. She was flighty but compassionate. She helped Louis overcome his shyness and carelessness about his appearance. For a while, the young couple was a success.

But in 1774 the king died. At age twenty, Louis Auguste became King Louis XVI. Tough times had descended upon France. And now Marie had a duty more vital than etiquette or loyalty to Austria. She was expected to give France an heir.

Unfortunately, Louis XVI had an ailment that made it difficult for him to father a child. Marie did not become pregnant until eight years into their marriage.

When an heir finally was born, two hundred people watched Marie Antoinette in labor, for even childbirth was not private. A healthy daughter was delivered, and Marie was overjoyed. But France was not pleased, at least not with her. They wanted a boy, an heir to the throne. Louis's ailment had been kept secret, and the country blamed their foreign queen for failing in her duty.

Other problems began to affect the public's view of the once popular dauphine. It was partly her own fault. Marie was bored by court life and despised the required etiquette. She didn't care for serious affairs of state, so she sought expensive amusements to occupy her time.

Louis gave her a château called the Petit Trianon. There, Marie kept a small, favored circle of friends. Fancy balls, gambling parties, and theatrical performances were common at the château. But nobles excluded from the circle grew jealous and vengeful. Gossip about Marie began to circulate. She didn't like French music. Her manner was haughty. There were scandals over her relationships



King Louis XVI





A CORSET IS A TIGHT-FITTING UNDERGARMENT WORN AROUND YOUR MIDDLE.



The Hameau (or village) on the grounds of the Petit Trianon, a collection of rustic buildings where Marie and her attendants would pretend to be commoners

with other men and because she would not wear a corset. Some stories were clearly made up, but it was true that she spent lavishly while food prices for the average person skyrocketed.

As Marie spent extravagantly, the problems in France worsened. Laborers and peasants lived in crush-

ing poverty but had to pay heavy taxes to rich landlords. A large middle class, the bourgeoisie, made up of merchants and businessmen, was more prosperous but still had no political voice. The church and the aristocrats lived off the peasants and the bourgeois and paid no taxes at all.

To make things worse, a severe financial crisis hit France during Louis XVI's reign. A few forward-thinking advisers said the time had come to levy taxes more fairly. Unsure what to do, Louis did what French kings had always done: he raised taxes on commoners and left the nobility and church alone.

In addition, he gave financial aid to the American Colonies in their war for independence. It was an economic mistake that nearly bankrupted France. Ironically, many Frenchmen admired the Americans' concepts of equality and freedom. They would no longer tolerate the injustices they saw in France.

Rumors about a revolution to end the monarchy mixed with vicious stories about the queen. The birth of her children had ended Marie Antoinette's wild ways, but the rumors didn't end.





The cake story was one of these rumors. Where did this story come from? Historians say that it probably originated at least a century before and was first attributed to the Spanish princess Marie Thérèse. French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote about the phrase in the 1760s—before Marie Antoinette had even come to France. In his story, Rousseau names no names. He only refers to a “princess.” But it sounded like something the spoiled, selfish Marie Antoinette *would* say. And so the public believed it.

The people of France had had enough. On July 14, 1789, angry Parisians stormed the Bastille prison. The French Revolution had begun, and Louis XVI was too weak-willed to stop it. When the royal family was imprisoned in the palace, Marie begged her brother Leopold II of Austria to help them escape.

The escape failed. Marie and Louis were put in jail. For plotting against the revolution, they were found guilty of treason and sentenced to death.

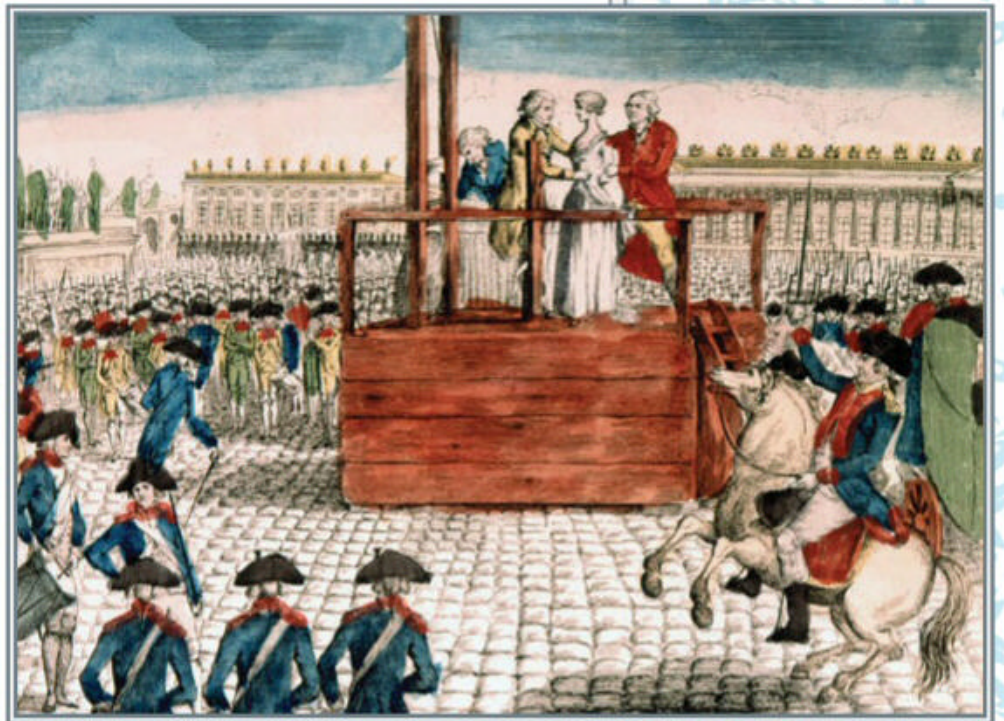
Louis XVI’s reign came to an ugly end. He died on the guillotine on January 21, 1793. In October, Marie Antoinette was driven in an open cart through the streets of Paris and then beheaded.

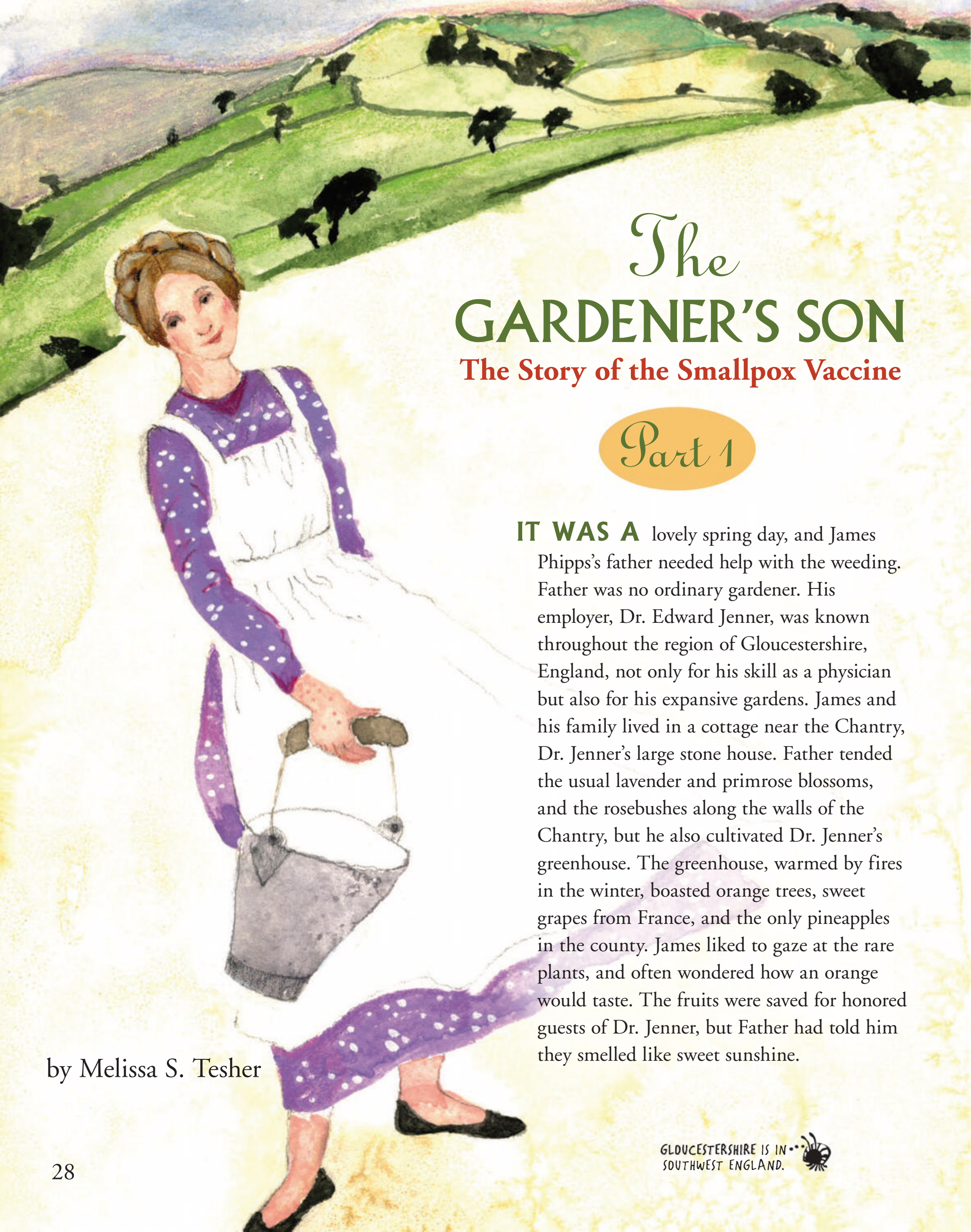
There is a story about that, too. On her way to the guillotine, the queen stepped on the foot of Sanson, the executioner, and apologized.

“Monsieur, I ask your pardon. I did not do it on purpose,” were Marie Antoinette’s final words.

Or so people say. 

The execution of
Marie Antoinette
on October 16, 1793





The GARDENER'S SON

The Story of the Smallpox Vaccine

Part 1

IT WAS A lovely spring day, and James Phipps's father needed help with the weeding. Father was no ordinary gardener. His employer, Dr. Edward Jenner, was known throughout the region of Gloucestershire, England, not only for his skill as a physician but also for his expansive gardens. James and his family lived in a cottage near the Chantry, Dr. Jenner's large stone house. Father tended the usual lavender and primrose blossoms, and the rosebushes along the walls of the Chantry, but he also cultivated Dr. Jenner's greenhouse. The greenhouse, warmed by fires in the winter, boasted orange trees, sweet grapes from France, and the only pineapples in the county. James liked to gaze at the rare plants, and often wondered how an orange would taste. The fruits were saved for honored guests of Dr. Jenner, but Father had told him they smelled like sweet sunshine.

by Melissa S. Teshler



Now that James was nearly nine years old, Father expected more help with the work. On this particular morning, however, James was not tending the cabbages in the kitchen garden as he had been instructed. Nor was he daydreaming in the greenhouse, as he often did when he wished to escape his chores. Today, James was sitting cross-legged on the stone floor of the summerhouse, a primitive-looking hut built on a far corner of the estate. The summerhouse had a tall thatched roof with bark-lined walls. James often enjoyed the cool, peaceful little room, but today he had another reason to remain out of sight. The day before, while working in the flower beds, he had overheard Dr. Jenner telling Father that smallpox was running through the town, and it was time James was variolated.

Variolation was a long and foreign-sounding word, yet one James knew well. Every few years, smallpox swept through the town; many died, and those who survived were left with the ugly reminders on their skin. Most of the men and women James knew had faces marked by smallpox scars. The only defense was variolation, which involved scraping open one person's smallpox pustule, or sore, and scratching the pus into a shallow cut in another person's arm. Although variolation infected that person with the smallpox virus, it was less likely to kill, compared to catching

smallpox naturally. And after recovering, variolated patients were immune to smallpox—their bodies had learned to fight off the disease. Still, variolation was unpleasant and dangerous. James's older brothers had been variolated the previous year, and he had seen them moaning with fevers, their skin covered with smallpox blisters. James knew that Dr. Jenner said variolation had saved many lives, but still, it seemed more frightening than merely waiting and praying, as most people did.



As James peered out of the summerhouse window, hoping not to be spotted, he heard the cheerful voice of a young woman. Sarah Nelmes, who worked milking cows on a neighbor's farm, was walking briskly across the grass. James watched her swinging her tin bucket as she called out for Dr. Jenner. James liked Sarah. She often gave him a cup of fresh milk when she delivered her wares to Dr. Jenner's cook. Sarah was pretty, too. Like most milkmaids, she had smooth skin untouched by smallpox. Sarah wore a bright flower-print dress, and her hair was braided into a crown around her head. The two stopped not far from James's lookout point, and he could clearly hear the conversation.

"You'll be very pleased with me today, Dr. Jenner!" Sarah said.

"Yes, Sarah? Do tell!" replied the tall doctor.

“My cow Blossom’s got the cowpox, and I’ve got a few myself,” Sarah said, holding out her hands. The large pink blisters on her fingers looked painful, but Sarah did not seem bothered.

“Ah, this is excellent! Excellent! Come right into the summerhouse!” replied Dr. Jenner.

Alarmed, James quickly scrambled to his feet, nearly running into the doctor and Sarah as they passed through the arched doorway.

“Why, James!” Dr. Jenner said in surprise.

“G-good day, Dr. Jenner,” James replied nervously.

“James, you’d best run along to the garden. Your father will be wanting your help with the weeding,” said Dr. Jenner, holding open the slab of bark that served as the summerhouse door and propping it ajar with a bit of brick to let in the noon sunshine.

Embarrassed to be caught shirking, James scurried onto the sunny lawn. Yet, he was not even halfway to the garden when he paused and glanced back at the summerhouse. What could Dr. Jenner possibly be doing? Curious, he crept back and crouched among the prickly bushes against the back wall of the small hut.

He heard Dr. Jenner’s voice. “Now, what I need is inside those cowpox blisters. I am certain that milkmaids are protected from the smallpox because of the cowpox. The cowpox blisters look just like smallpox, but cowpox does

not kill; it barely even sickens. It seems to me that in fighting off the cowpox, the body learns to defend itself from the smallpox as well.

“This might sting . . . right then, just a scratch, and there it is!” said Dr. Jenner.

“Aye, that hardly hurt a bit,” Sarah replied.

James scrambled behind an ivy-covered wall as Dr. Jenner strode confidently out of the summerhouse, holding a round glass vial with a drop of liquid in the bottom. Sarah followed behind with her milk pail, heading toward the kitchens.

What could be in that vial? James wondered.

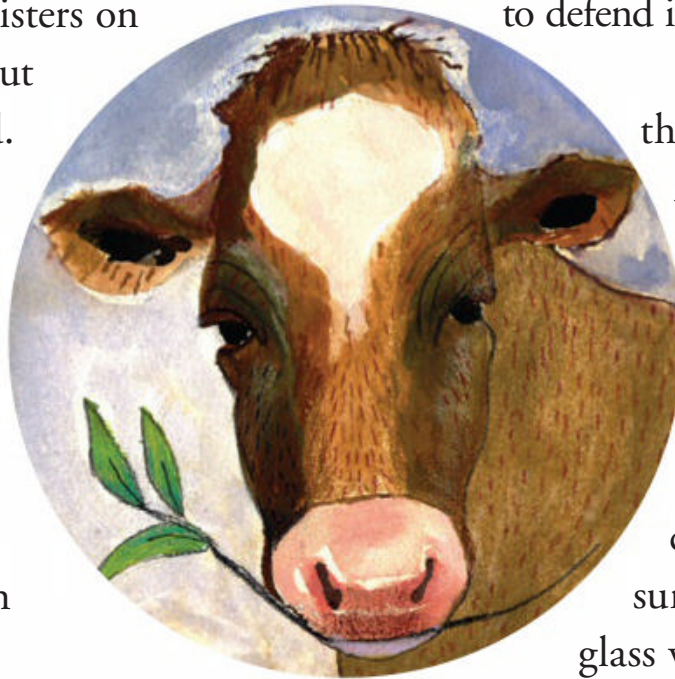
Suddenly, someone firmly grasped his right elbow.

“Come along!” said Dr. Jenner, pulling James to his feet. “Eavesdropping, were you, young man? Well, you may be just who I need—a brave, healthy lad untouched by the smallpox.”

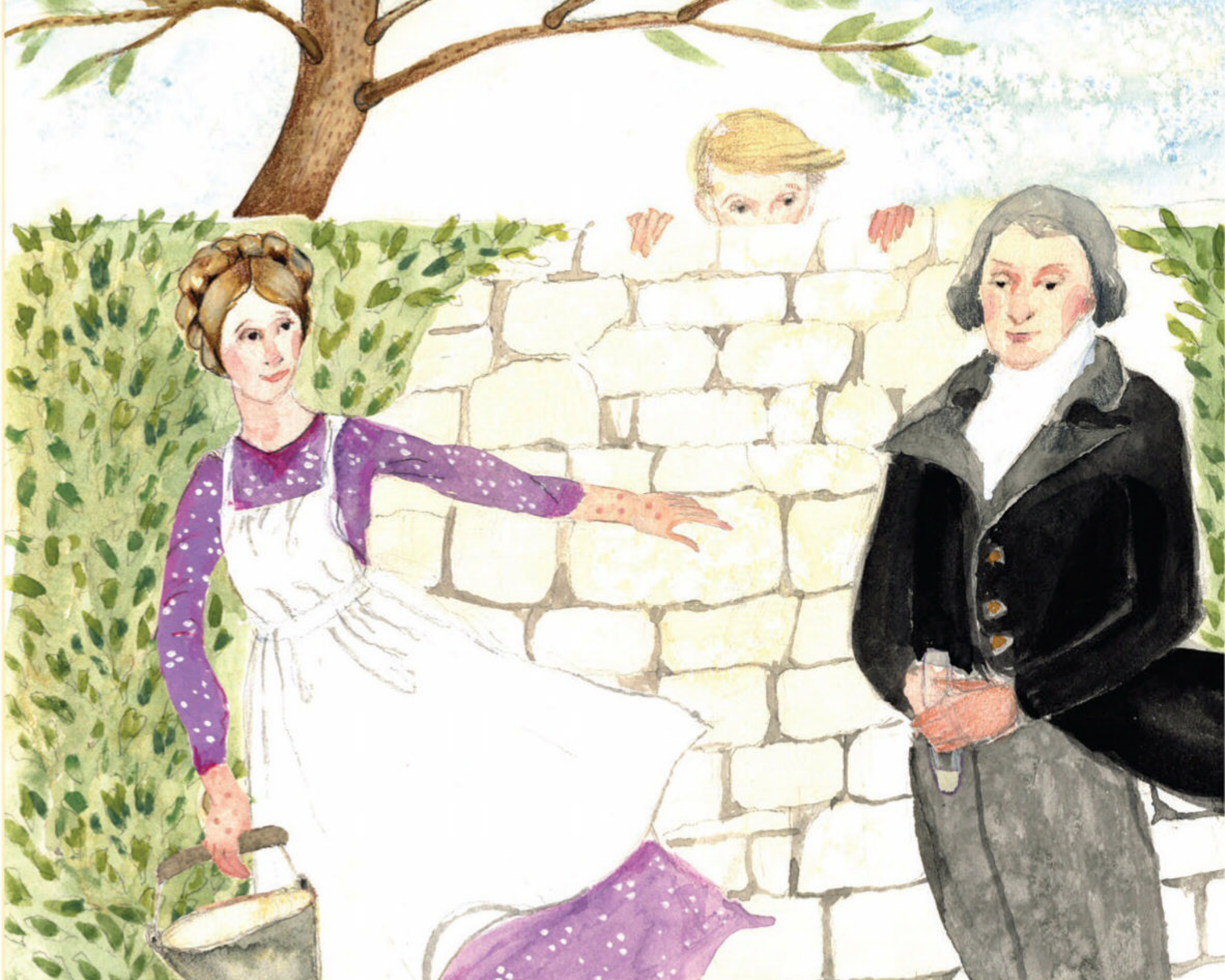
James had no choice but to follow Dr. Jenner across the lawn. As they approached the kitchen door, Father stood up from the vegetable patch, wearing his creased old broad-brimmed hat.

“James Phipps!” he said sternly. “Your work undone all morning. You’ll be pulling weeds till sundown today, with no dinner, either!”

“I’m sorry, sir,” said James meekly, then walked toward the vegetable rows. Suddenly, Dr. Jenner spoke again, and James stopped.



A VIAL IS A SMALL CONTAINER, SUCH AS FOR HOLDING MEDICINE.



“Phipps, James shall do his weeding tomorrow—and do it well, mind,” Dr. Jenner said, with a sideways glance at James. “Now, though, I’ve a more important task for him. How’d you like your son to help rid England of the pox?”

“First, he’ll rid this row of cabbages of the chickweed,” said Father, looking doubtful.

“Mr. Phipps, this is no jest. I am in earnest. The people of Gloucestershire have long known that milkmaids are spared the smallpox, and I believe I know why. You saw

Sarah’s hands. The blisters of cowpox are like a drop of the smallpox, so that once a body fights off the milder infection, it is forever protected against the more terrible disease. Variolation—the old way—gives the body a taste of the true smallpox, but my new plan—*vaccination*—uses only the harmless cowpox.”

“You mean you intend to put a bit of cow in my son? Shall he be eating the weeds then, rather than pulling them?” Father remained skeptical.

VACCINATION COMES FROM THE LATIN WORD “VACCA,” MEANING COW.



I’VE HAD LOTS OF VACCINATIONS. SO HAS PUSSYWILLOW!

MEWY MOOOOO!





Dr. Jenner persisted. “There’s no time to lose. The minister has just lost his infant son to smallpox, and I hear the baker’s wife is at death’s door. If you will not allow me to vaccinate James, he should at the least be variolated.”

James shivered. He looked at Father’s tired, sun-browned face and at the undone rows of weeding. Might he, James, be able to do something truly important? James would ordinarily never dare to speak to an adult before being spoken to, but he cleared his throat. Dr. Jenner and his father stopped talking and looked at him in surprise.

“Excuse me, sir,” James said shakily. “I’d like to do it—to try the cowpox.”

“James, are you certain?” Father asked.

“Yes, Father,” James replied, his voice steadier. “I’d like to help. I’m ready.”

Father looked searchingly at James, his eyebrows raised, then back to Dr. Jenner. He nodded. “Very well, Dr. Jenner, you may give my son the cowpox. I only ask that he also be variolated in a few weeks’ time, in case your vial of cowpox fails to protect him.”

“James, Mr. Phipps, I thank you,” said Dr. Jenner. “Someday, all of England will thank you! Now, I need some strong light.”

Father took James firmly by the arm. James had to trot to keep up with him as they crossed the lawn. For the second time that day, James entered the summerhouse. Dr. Jenner pulled out a three-legged stool and motioned for James to sit, then took another stool for himself. He rolled up one of James’s sleeves and wiped his arm with a bit of damp

cloth, examining it carefully. James noted the dirt under his own fingernails. James’s shirt could use a wash as well. He glanced up at Dr. Jenner with trepidation.

“All right, James,” he said, “This small knife is called a scalpel. I’m going to make a shallow cut in your arm. It shouldn’t be worse than a deep scratch from the rosebush thorns.”

The doctor asked Father to place one hand on his son’s shoulder, the other under his elbow, and hold him fast. James’s heart was racing, and his mouth went dry, but he managed to conceal his fear. He yelped as Dr. Jenner cut his arm, but more from surprise than pain. A single drop of blood dripped onto the dirt floor. Dr. Jenner then removed the stopper on the glass vial containing the liquid which he had earlier taken from Sarah’s cowpox sore. Using a narrow glass tube, he drew up the drop of liquid. James felt a sting as Dr. Jenner rubbed the liquid into the cut on his arm. James squirmed, but the worst was over. Dr. Jenner wrapped his arm in a clean gauze bandage.

“In a week or so, I expect you will show the symptoms of the cowpox. You may have just the sores, or a bit of fever and chills as well. Do tell me when the sores come out,” said Dr. Jenner as he held open the bark door.

As James walked alongside his father, back toward the cabbages, Father placed his hand gently on James’s shoulder.

“You did well, James,” he said with a nod.

to be continued



What the Angels Call Me

BY STEPH KWIATKOWSKI

The year is 1911, and three Chinese boys—Gan, Feng, and Thomas—are on their way to America to join their fathers. To enter the country, they must first pass through the immigration station on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. There, they face intense questioning by immigration officers, nicknamed “angels” by the Chinese, who are eager to find any reason to keep Chinese immigrants from entering America. The most-feared angel is Officer Patterson.

In the mid-1800s, many Chinese came to America in the wake of the California Gold Rush and building of the Transcontinental Railroad. Although they faced discrimination—Gan remembers how his grandfather returned to China after his store in America was burned—many stayed, only occasionally returning to China to visit their families. But in 1882, the harsh Chinese Exclusion Act banned all new Chinese immigrants from entering America, except for a small group of privileged people, such as merchants, diplomats, teachers, and students.

Gan’s father is a farm laborer and not in the privileged class of people whose families are allowed to join them in America. Feng is traveling with his little sister, Shee Han, and his widowed mother, Auntie Low, who is mar-

rying a man who owns a small grocery, but this means that Feng’s new stepfather is not in the privileged class either. Only Thomas Kwan’s father, a merchant with offices in Hong Kong and San Francisco, is in the privileged class. But Thomas—who went to school with British boys in Hong Kong and speaks perfect English—is treated no better than the rest.

Upon landing on Angel Island, men and women are separated, and the boys are sent to the men’s dormitory. Feng only sees his mother and sister through the bars of his window. One day Feng spots an opening in the fence around the recreation yard and speculates that he could crawl through it and swim to the mainland shore. But Thomas warns it is too far, and he would need gills like a fish.

In order to fool the immigration officers, Gan and Feng travel under false names. They study coaching books with family trees, maps, and many other details, hoping to pass as sons of people in the privileged class—their so-called “paper fathers.” Several weeks have now passed since the boys landed on Angel Island, and Gan and Feng have begun to forget the notes they memorized. But in the dining hall, they notice that coaching notes to help answer the angels’ questions are being smuggled in the food.



ONE SUNNY AFTERNOON, Feng climbed to the window at three o'clock sharp, the usual time that the women detainees passed by on their walk, but his mother and sister were nowhere to be seen among the crowd.

"Mama?" he shouted from between the bars. "Has anyone seen my mother?" A few women looked up at Feng, but no one answered.

Feng waited at the window for the next hour, hoping that his mother had simply gotten lost and would soon come hurrying into sight. Just as he began to nod off, a violent shriek ripped through the air.

Thomas and I rushed to the window to see Auntie Low being dragged across the recreation yard by two guards and a man I recognized from Feng's coaching book as his paper father.

"Mama!" Feng screamed, reaching frantically through the bars of the window. "What's happening? Mama, *wait!*"

Auntie Low clawed and kicked and dug her heels into the ground, but it was no use. The guards pulled her through the gate of the detention center and toward the ferry bound for San Francisco.

Feng's eyes were wide with shock as two officers pulled him from the window

and droned something in formal-sounding English.

“No, that’s not possible!” Thomas exclaimed. “They’re saying his mother and sister have been admitted into America, but Feng’s paper father denied that he’s his son. Feng will be sent back to China tomorrow morning.”

ONE TIME, BACK in my village in China, I watched a bird as it was closed into a cage. The bird fluttered wildly, banging against its wire prison, until suddenly it just stopped, eerily still.

At his last supper in the dining hall, Feng reminded me of that caged bird. I tried talking to him about any relatives he still had in

China, and Thomas repeated over and over his family’s address in Hong Kong where Feng could stay. But our friend only sat frozen, like all the life had drained from his body.

That night, as we got ready to climb into our bunks, Feng laid a skinny arm around the both of us.

“I’m tired of paper and lies. People telling me what I am and am not,” he said with a strange voice. “I’ve decided to call you my brothers, and so that is what we’ll be.”

The next morning I found Feng’s bed empty, save for a note and a gold watch he’d won at *pai gow*, labeled with my name. “I may not be a fish,” the note read, “but I have to try.”



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I raced for the door, bare feet pounding the floorboards of the silent barracks. “Help! Please, my friend—he’s going to try to swim across the bay! He’ll drown!”

Thomas ran up beside me, echoing my frantic pleas in English. When a guard finally appeared, Thomas stepped away from the door like it had stung him.

“Please,” I started to say again, but with one glare from Officer Patterson the words died in my mouth. The angel put his face up close to the bars and said something to Thomas. Then he sauntered away, whistling.

“Thomas,” I urged him to translate.

“He said . . .” My friend looked at me in shock. “He said that my interview is scheduled for tomorrow. And *he’s* going to be the one making the decision.”

I FOUND THOMAS sitting by the fence that overlooked the bay, absently ripping up a single blade of grass. Without a word, I sat down next to him. The look on his face told me exactly how his interview had gone.

“You know,” he said abruptly, squinting at the view. “In Hong Kong the British boys never liked me. They made fun of me when I spoke Cantonese, so I only spoke English. And then they made fun of my accent. My name’s not even Thomas. It’s Sai Ho. I made it up so I could sound more like them.”

Sai began to cry, wiping his face with his shirt. “I speak four languages, did you know that? I can recite ancient philosophy and paint portraits. I don’t know what I can do to make these people like me. To them, I’m nothing.”



Seeing him like this made me want to cry, too. “I’ll tell you who you are.” I sniffed back the tears, mimicking my friend’s haughty introduction. “You’re *Kwan Sai Ho*. Of Kwan Exports. Haven’t you ever heard of it?”

He smiled, accidentally blowing a bubble from his runny nose, and soon the both of us were doubled over in the grass, laughing in a way that felt more like crying.

Sai packed his things and left for Hong Kong the next day. I tried to keep a brave face, assuring him that everything would be OK. Maybe his rich father could find another way. But deep down, I was sick with worry.

During my last lonely week at Angel Island, all I could think about were the horrible things that had happened to my friends.

The look on Auntie Low's face as she was dragged away. My proud friend Sai, broken down in tears. Little Feng, gone. And soon I would have to face an interrogation I couldn't possibly win.

On the eve of my interview, I was staring into my dinner of gray mush when someone pulled on my elbow.

"You're lucky," the cook whispered, and shoved a hot bread roll into my hand. I waited until the guards weren't looking, then tore open the steaming dough. My heart leapt.

The paper was folded as small as my pinkie, but I knew what it contained. And right near the opening, in messy handwriting I recognized from our many hours of study on the ship bound for America, was a note from Feng.

522 Grant Avenue is one nice house. Your paper father says hello. He's letting me stay awhile, so now we'll be brothers for real. P.S. Thomas was right about the swimming. But don't ever tell him that!

THE SUN IS rising as the ferry approaches San Francisco, the sky painted in impossible strokes of orange and deep purple. I smile, leaning over the railing, and remember with joy the look on Officer Patterson's face as I answered his questions, one after the other, Feng's coaching note tucked neatly in my pocket.

Suddenly, a boy in a fur hat bangs against the railing next to me. He spreads his arms wide and hoots into the wind, then says

something to me in a language I don't recognize.


"Sorry," I say in Cantonese with a laugh.

The boy pauses ceremoniously, holding up his finger, then speaks English with a strong accent. "Hello. My name . . . Alexei. What is . . . your name?"

I frown for a moment, looking out onto the bay. My father said I have to keep my false identity, even after I make it into California. The Americans could still check up on me, for years, to make sure I'm really Samuel Choi.

I try to convince myself that I'm still Gan deep down, that it doesn't matter what name the angels put on my identity card. But it does matter what the angels call us. They are the ones who have the power to say who stays and who goes; who has it easy, and who has it hard. They can even force us to live a lie.

Still, I've learned there is something they can't take. It's the warmth that grows between brothers who are not brothers; in my father wanting more for his children; in my grandfather who watched his whole life burn to the ground, and built it all up again. It makes me sad, but at the same time, it makes me proud.

"It's beautiful," I tell Alexei in Cantonese, watching San Francisco grow big and close before my eyes. "Don't you think?" 





AUTHOR'S NOTE Many of our families crossed the ocean seeking a new life in America, but not all immigrants have been welcomed equally to our shores.

Like the thousands who traveled West during the Gold Rush, Chinese people came to America in search of a better life for their families. They became miners and blacksmiths, built businesses, and played a major role in important projects like the Transcontinental Railroad. And yet, the Chinese were treated with racism. People accused them of stealing jobs and blamed them for problems they didn't cause.

In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act banned all Chinese people from entering America, except for

a very small group of privileged people. This meant that the majority of immigrants, like Gan, could only come to America if they used false identities. Even if they passed the border test, "paper sons" had to live under their new identity for life. The Chinese were forced to immigrate this way until the Exclusion Act was lifted in 1943. However, the government continued to limit many different immigrant groups based on race, including the Chinese, until 1965.

Although Gan is fictional, his tale is based on the real experiences of people who were detained at the Angel Island Immigration Station. This story is dedicated to those paper sons and daughters who fought so hard to call America home.

Katerina and the Bright Falcon

A Folk Tale from Russia
Retold by Deborah Gee Zigenis

Part 5



Katerina, a Russian landowner's daughter, falls in love with Phenist the Bright Falcon, a man cursed to roam the world by day as a falcon, returning to his manly form only after dark, until he finds a maiden willing to love him despite his accursed state. Betrayed by her sisters' jealousy, Katerina loses Phenist and must endure a long and dangerous journey to reclaim her lost love. Through the wise advice of three Baba Yagas, Katerina finds Phenist, only to be thwarted in her plans by the cunning daughter of the evil czar, who has drugged the prince with a sleeping potion. Will Katerina ever be able to overcome the barriers set against her by her betrayers?

THE NEXT MORNING, Katerina took her silver dish and golden egg from her pack as the second Baba Yaga had instructed and sat again by the shore. She rolled the egg around and around the silver saucer until a glistening pile of golden eggs rose up from the sand beside her and a crowd of spectators surrounded her. And, as she had done the previous day, the daughter of the czar came out walking.

"You, again!" she exclaimed when she saw Katerina.

Katerina forced a smile. "Indeed, it is I."

The czarevna stared at Katerina's silver saucer and the growing pile of golden eggs. Her brows drew taut. At last she pointed. "How much do you want for this delightful toy? Speak quickly, now. Name your price."

"Oh, Czarevna." Katerina swallowed down her anger and pride, knowing that yesterday,



A BABA YAGA IS A WITCH
FROM RUSSIAN FOLKLORE.

the czarevna had tricked her. "These were given to me as gifts. They are far too precious to sell. However, I will give them to you gladly if only I might again see Phenist the Bright Falcon."

"But you saw him yesterday!" The czarevna stamped her foot.

Katerina shrugged and continued rolling the egg around the saucer.

The czarevna exhaled sharply. "So be it. Come to the palace after my lord Phenist has taken his midday meal and you shall see him." Then, taking the saucer and egg, she whirled upon her heel and strode up the winding cliff path.

Again at noon, Katerina climbed to the palace, and again a servant escorted her to Phenist's chamber.

Katerina followed the servant down the winding corridors, her confidence slipping with every step she took across the polished floors. I do not belong here, she thought, gazing at new wonders around every corner. Surely this is truly a home befitting the daughter of a czar.

But then she remembered the czarevna's imperious manner and greedy gaze. She gave herself a little shake. Phenist had no wish to wed this czarevna. It was because he fled from her that he was cursed to wander the world alone. Fueled by that thought, she stepped briskly after the servant.

Katerina waited on Phenist's threshold until her escort departed, then raised a hand to rap upon the door.

The knock echoed into silence.

Not again! A lump formed in her throat.

Katerina closed her eyes and pushed the door open. Phenist's chamber was dark, quiet. In the few moments it took for her eyes to adjust to the shadows, she feared it might be empty as well. She stepped inside.

"Phenist?" she whispered into the smothering darkness. "Phenist, it is I, Katerina. I have come to you, my love!" But there her voice broke, for as she reached the couch, she saw that, again, Phenist lay sleeping, his face as pale as winter's snow and his breathing shallow. A drained goblet lay toppled on the couch side table. But as before, Katerina could not rouse him.

After an hour, Katerina was shooed away again. With a heavy heart, she left the white-walled palace.

One more day, she thought. I have but one more day!

The next morning, Katerina took her golden embroidery frame and silver needle from her pack and went to sit by the shore as she had been instructed. Heaven help me, she thought as she glanced toward the palace. A sick fear lurked within her. Should I fail to win Phenist's freedom today, he will wed that cold-hearted czarevna upon the morrow.

I must not despair. Katerina willed her soul to stillness.

Squaring her shoulders, she picked up the hoop and held it as the Baba Yaga had shown her.

Glinting and flashing in the morning light, the needle worked beautiful whorls and swirls and intricate patterns across the surface of the fine linen.

Katerina watched out of the corner of her eye as, again, a crowd gathered. Soon, the daughter of the czar joined them.

“You, maiden!” the daughter of the czar sneered. “What must I pay you today for your delightful toy? Speak quickly, now. Name your price.”

“Oh, Czarevna . . .” Katerina felt her cheeks flush with fury. Be wise, she told herself. You must do as the Baba Yagas instructed. Thus, the words she spoke were simple and meek, for she knew that her final chance to win back her beloved depended upon them. “These were given to me as gifts,” she said. “They are far too precious to sell. However, I will give them to you gladly if only I might see Phenist the Bright Falcon one last time.”

The daughter of the czar glared down her long, aristocratic nose. Her nostrils flared as she nodded in agreement.

“Granted. Come to the castle after my lord Phenist has taken his midday meal and you shall see him.” Then, snatching the golden hoop and silver needle from Katerina’s hands, she whirled upon her heel and strode up the winding path.

Promptly at noon, Katerina presented herself at the palace gates and was led by a servant along the winding corridors to Phenist’s chamber, and again she waited until she was quite alone before she knocked upon his door.

The knock echoed hollowly. There followed a long silence.

Katerina drew a shaky breath. Tears prickled behind her eyelids. Softly, she pushed open the door. His chamber was dark; just a



sliver of sunlight slanted between the drawn curtains. Katerina bit her lip to keep from sobbing.

Across the rich carpet she stepped, the firm hope that had been fed by the unfolding of all the Baba Yagas’ predictions extinguished by the utter silence that greeted her.

’Tis too cruel. Katerina shook her head. Have the Baba Yagas led me false after all?

When at last she reached his couch, Katerina found a drained goblet on the table and her beloved sleeping, unable to rouse to either her voice or her touch.

“Oh, Phenist . . .” She dropped to her knees. “Sweet Phenist, my love. It is I, your own Katerina, who has come for you. I have worn through three pairs of iron-soled shoes, broken three cast-iron staffs, and eaten bread as dry and hard as stone. Dear Phenist . . .” Her voice broke in a sob. “Can it all have been for naught? Please, I beg of you, my beloved, awaken!” And as Katerina leaned over his





pillow, head bowed upon her hands, a tear dropped down onto the sleeping lord's face.

"What! What is it?" The startled prince sat bolt upright, his hand flying to his cheek as though he had been stung.

"Phenist!" Katerina cried. "Oh, my love, it is I." She clutched at his shirt, her tears falling unchecked. "Do you not know me?"

Phenist stared, his eyes wide, his brow furrowed in confusion.

Katerina sat back upon her heels, hands held pleading before her. "I have done all, all you bade me to win my way to your side. And now, three times, I have wept and prayed here at your pillow. My beloved, now you have awakened, please say that you remember me!"

"Katerina?" Phenist whispered. "Katerina!" A smile lit his face, and he pulled her to him. His voice speaking her name sounded like a blessing upon her ears.

Then setting her firmly away from him, he traced with trembling fingers the scratches

on her hands and wrists. "What has happened to you? How came you here?"

"Oh, Phenist," Katerina cried. "I have been so foolish!"

"Nay." Phenist shook his head. "But you must tell me why you are here."

And so Katerina told him the strange tale of her quest. She confessed the prideful manner in which she had used his magic feather, recounted her sisters' malice, her long journey, and the Baba Yagas' kindness in the forest. Then she concluded with the tale of how, thrice, she had bargained with the czar's greedy daughter.

"Oh, Phenist . . ." Katerina touched his hand, affirming for herself once more that he was hale and whole and here.

"What is it?" Phenist's voice was gentle, the voice that had won her heart that first evening he flew in through her window.

"That night . . ." Katerina swallowed hard. Dare I say this? she thought. Dare I speak these words after all the hardships he has endured because of my cowardice? "That night upon which my sisters deceived me and drove you from my side, I . . ." Katerina bit her lip. She looked away.

"Yes?" Phenist's voice was soft.

"I had intended to tell you that, yes, I would marry you. Gladly . . . would I be your bride."

A knock sounded, and the door was pushed open by one of the servants of the czar's daughter.

Phenist whirled upon the intruder, his eyes dark with rage.





Katerina trembled. I should not have spoken, she thought. She pressed a hand to her lips.

“M-m-my lord,” the servant stammered. “M-my lady bade me summon you to the hall.”

“Bid your lady wait upon my pleasure,” Phenist snapped. Then he called for his own servants as the czarevna’s man scampered away.

Phenist ordered all the bells in the city to be rung, summoning his nobles, warriors, merchants, and artisans to attend upon him posthaste.

Within the hour, all gathered in the gilded and painted hall, including the still-

frightened Katerina and the wary daughter of the czar.

Finally, after raising his hand for silence, Phenist spoke. Drawing Katerina to stand before him, he told of the hardships she had endured to win her way to his side. Then he told of the greedy tricks played by the daughter of the czar.

“Now, what would you have me do this day?” His voice rang clearly over the crowd. “Would you have me marry the maiden who risked her life to ransom me?”

Katerina gasped.

“Or she who held me against my will, only to barter away a peek at me for the sake of a few toys?”

The crowd answered in a shout that echoed from the rafters. “She who ransomed thee! She who ransomed thee!”


Smiling, Phenist drew Katerina to him and kissed her before the cheering throng.

“You still want me?” Katerina was filled with wonder.

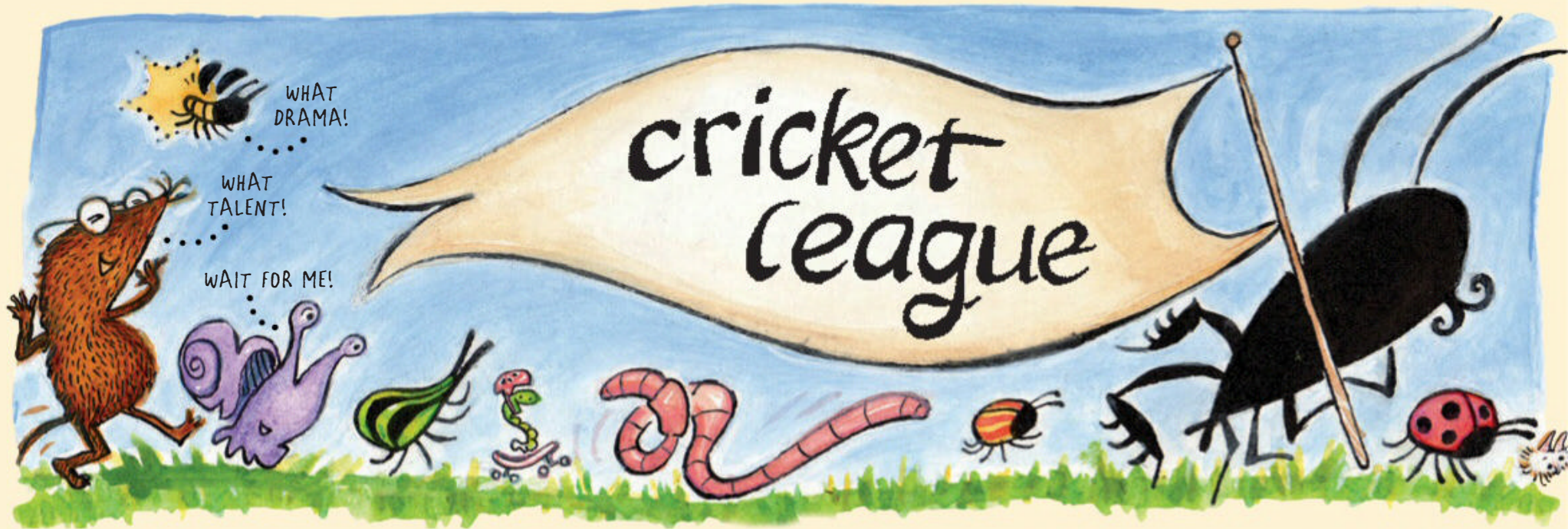
“Aye.” Phenist nodded. “No one else.”

And so, Phenist the Bright Falcon married the fair Katerina, his own true love, while the czarevna packed her precious toys to return in shame to the evil czar’s realm.

Phenist and Katerina sent for her father, whom they settled on a rich piece of land. Her sisters, Phenist married off to his most distant nobles.

And as far as anyone has heard, Katerina and her Phenist lived happily ever after, in his shining white palace, by the dancing blue sea. 





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FEBRUARY 2021 POETRY CONTEST
 Silly Poem

First Prize 10 and under

Ruby Sowder, age 9
 Bainbridge Island, WA

The Great Shnosburry

I know of a silly town,
 Where all the cars drive upside down.
 The dogs all dance, and flowers walk about,
 And all the cats can talk and shout.
 The skies are orange, the grass is blue,
 And everyone wears only one shoe.
 Instead of boats, pirates ride in carriages,
 And hippos attend all the people's marriages.
 The apples have parties, the dogs walk their people,
 And a chicken perches atop the church steeple.
 This town, it's called the great Shnosburry.
 The mascot is a Shnod, they're very furry.
 This town, it grew into a city.
 You can't visit Shnosburry, but it's very pretty.

First prize 11 and up

Lilyana Swann, age 13
 Marina, CA

Love Song to a Banana

Thou shan't despair,
 O fair banana,
 For I've come to gobble thee!
 Thy yellow peel
 Like my best bandana
 Your destiny's with me!

Your taste so sweet I can't resist,
 Dear fruit, I won't deny,
 The sight of you
 Made my heart twist.
 You're meant to be with I!

Despite my guilt, banana,
 I now must take a bite.
 Do not doubt that I shall grieve you
 Every following night.

My dearest fruit, oh where art thee?
 My heart is full of woe,
 Now that you're gone
 I'm not the same
 Nor shall I be, I know.

If I could have you once more today,
 I'd stroke you tenderly.
 I've missed you since you went away,
 For we were meant to be.

Second prize 10 and under

Nathan Thomas, age 8
 Westlake, OH

The Fourth of Opposite Day

The fourth of opposite day,
 my least favorite day,
 the school bus flies and
 my house floats in the sea,
 and if you say "I'm all ears . . .
 you turn into ears . . .
 LITERALLY?!?!
 Roses smell horrible,
 and you're bad at everything you
 were good at before.
 You say yes to say no,
 and no to say yes.
 And wolves are in sheep's clothing. . .
 ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!?!
 Volcanoes erupt water
 and geysers erupt lava.
 The grass is blue and
 the sky is green
 and it rains cats and dogs.
 Pigs fly over the sky . . . WHAT?!?!
 Cars float and planes don't fly.
 The fourth of opposite day in July
 has to end.
 Wait . . . should I say it has to start?

Second prize 11 and up

Eleanor Burton, age 12
Mapleton, UT

Sparky the Whale

I walk into school one morning,
and my teacher greets me with a scowl,
“David,” she growls, “have you brought your essay
on the feeding habits of the old barn owl?”
Panic overwhelms me, that was due today?
I must think of a cover story, there must be another way.
I think up a tale and spin it, creating a stronger thread.
“Well, Mrs. White, on the way to school I fell into a
manhole, gosh, I was sure that I’d be dead.
So I was walking along, when I tripped and fell, you see.
And down the manhole I plunged,
until Sparky the whale caught me!
Sparky is his name, and I know that to be true,
because whales ought to have names, too!
This whale had a dream, you see, Mrs. White,
to become the world’s best podiatrist!”
She waved me to my seat, but I could not stop.
The thread of my tale had become a strong cloth!
“I only thought it right to help him pursue this dream,
Only thought it right, for he had saved my life!
So I rode him down the plumbing
to the local school of podiatry.

They refused to admit him, and the situation was tight.
It was unfair they wouldn’t admit him,
so I started a riot for whales’ rights!
The manager broke up the riot
and still refused to admit poor Sparky.
Then he said, ‘Now I must do some research
on the feeding habits of a barn owl.’
So I made him a deal, it was only fair, so I said,
‘I will give this paper if you let Sparky in there.’
So he agreed, and Sparky’s dream came true.
And it is also why I don’t have a paper to hand in to you.”
I went to my desk and started to work. And I was excited
when I got my weekly report,
And this is because, in the storytelling segment,
I got an A-plus!

Second prize 11 and up

Rebecca E. Craft, age 13
Callands, VA

As I Walk

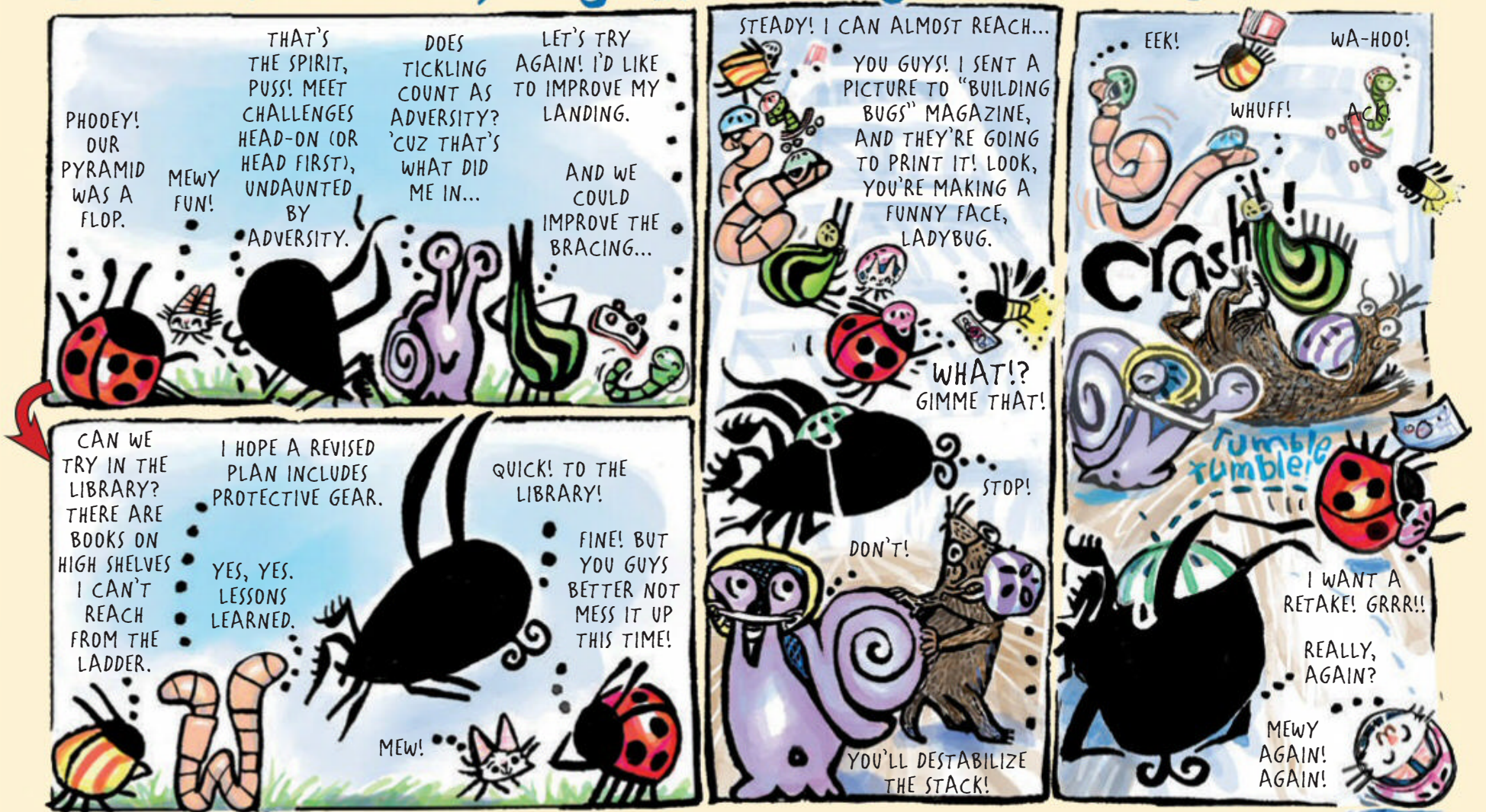
As I walk
Down the lane,
The trees start to talk
And the squirrels form a train,
Along with the moose,
Who is their caboose.

As I walk,
The polar bears don their mittens,
And I gape and gawk
As I spy some pretty kittens
With rainbow-colored fur
Fishing with a lure.

As I walk,
The deer play in the treetops
And the fish start to squawk,
While the skunks clean with their mops.
Falcons play hide-and-seek with the moon,
And a hawk eats the clouds with a spoon.

Now I walk
back to my house.
I glance at the clock,
Say hi to my mouse,
But I always will remember
That silly stroll in September.

Cricket & Ladybug: If first you don't succeed...



Third prize 10 and under

Malcolm Wood, age 10
Reston, VA

I Like Salmon-Flavored Ice Cream

I like salmon-flavored ice cream,
Broccoli brownies, too,
And even better yet—
Any food that's blue!

They say it's not a food color
But I still disagree,
'Cause all that bluegill yogurt
Has done no harm to me!

Sauerkraut with sugar
Is my favorite thing to eat,
And even more with peas galore—
The ones that taste like feet!

I like salmon-flavored ice cream,
And maybe that explains
How I got used to all these foods—
My tongue never complains!

Third prize 11 and up

Tracy Anne Schrader, age 12
San Antonio, TX

Silly Fun Stew!

The cauldron is awaiting—
But I am not a witch.
I am going to make
A different kind of mix.

A whole cup full of silly,
Another full of fun,
A tablespoon of crazy,
And this potion's just begun.

A jumble of ideas
A bizarre face or two,
Just a pinch of sugar,
An "oink," a "neigh," a "moo"!

You can't forget the sunshine.
You gotta love the laughs.
A risk and bit of adventure
Makes for a fine craft.

The most important element
Goes in right at the end.
Yes, to have all this silly fun,
You just need a good friend.

Honorable Mention

Margaret Covington, age 10, Santa Barbara, CA
Clara Findel, age 8, Westlake, OH
Lindsay Gaines, age 13, Tucson, AZ
Abigail Geffken, age 14, Roslindale, MA
Elena Graves, age 14, Fortson, GA
Benjamin Ticak, age 8, Westlake, OH

To see more winning Cricket League entries, visit our website:
cricketmagkids.com/contests

Solution to Crossbird Puzzle

E	N	I	E	S ²⁸		N	A	R ²⁷
N	V	E	L ²⁶		V	E	R	A ²⁵
U ²⁴	E	L ²³	B ²²			V	I	C ²¹
	J ²⁰		E	V	E	E ¹⁹	L ¹⁸	S ¹⁷
S			R	O	N ¹⁶			O ¹⁵
M	E	H	T ¹⁴	N ¹³	A ¹²		S	
A	E	S ¹¹			S	D	E	W ¹⁰
E	M	A	D ⁹		N	E	P	O ⁸
T ⁷	S ⁶	C ⁵		S	I ⁴	R ³	A ²	P ¹

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NEW ART CONTEST: TRAVEL ADVENTURE

This *Cricket* takes you on adventures all over the world—to meet a gargoyle at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, to a festival of human towers in Spain, even under the sea on a dive to a coral reef. For this month's contest, everybuggy would like to see your best drawing of something you would love to see or do if you traveled around the world.

What new customs and traditions might you experience when you visit other lands? Will you enjoy a springtime cherry blossom festival in Japan? Visit a Buddhist temple in China? Kiss the Blarney Stone in Ireland? Cross the moat of an English castle? Perhaps your travel itinerary will include spectacular new landscapes as you explore icy polar regions, fly over the African savanna in a hot-air balloon, hike the mountains of Tibet, or enjoy the scenic wonders of America's national parks. Maybe you'll explore important historical and archaeological sites, or go on an ecological adventure to observe rare rain-forest species or deep-sea creatures.

Whether your idea of adventure is climbing the pyramids in Egypt, hopping with the kangaroos in Australia, or sipping hot chocolate at a French café, everybuggy in Cricket Country will be putting on their hiking boots, swim flippers, and cross-country skis as they prepare to be inspired by your best drawing of a travel adventure. *All aboard!*

Contest Rules

1. Your contest entry must be your very own original work. Ideas and words should not be copied.
2. Your entry *must* be signed by your parent or guardian, stating that it is your own work, that no help was given, and that *Cricket* has permission to publish it in the magazine and on our website.
3. Be sure to include your name, age, and full address on your entry.
4. Only one entry per person, please.
5. If you want your work returned, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for each entry.
6. Your entry must be *received* by May 25, 2021..
7. Send entries to **Cricket League**, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354. (No faxes or email submissions, please!)
8. We will publish winning entries in the October 2021 issue and on the *Cricket* website.



MARIANNE CARUS, WHO started *Cricket* magazine with her husband, Blouke, in 1973 and served as Editor-in-Chief until her retirement in 2012, died on March 3 at the age of 92.

Marianne believed that “only the best of the best is good enough for the young.” In *Cricket*, children would find wonderful stories illustrated with beautiful art, and be inspired by ideas and accomplishments in the humanities and sciences. Marianne sought out stories from around the world to awaken admiration for different peoples and cultures. Most important, *Cricket* would always respect the intelligence of children and never talk down to them.

Marianne knew that children were filled with fun and nonsense, and she wanted *Cricket* to be, too—“humor from the heart that makes you laugh out loud.” And so, her literary magazine became home to a hilarious group of bugs, as would the other “bug” magazines she would create, such as *Ladybug* and *Spider*.

Over the years, *Cricket* has been read by millions of children and given many aspiring authors and artists their start. Marianne kept a special file of what she called her “love letters” to the magazine and the bugs. She treasured these letters from *Cricket* readers, including long-ago readers telling her that their interest in reading had begun with *Cricket*.

Why name a magazine after a cricket? Marianne considered other names, such as *Troubadour* or *Taliesin*, the wandering minstrels and storytellers of old who traveled from court to court to share their songs and stories.

Then, one night, she was reading Isaac Bashevis Singer’s memoir *A Day of Pleasure*, about his childhood in Warsaw. In it he wrote: “There was a tile stove in Shosha’s apartment behind which there lived a cricket. It chirped the nights through all winter long. I imagined the cricket was telling a story that would never end.”

That’s exactly what Marianne wanted her children’s magazine to do—to tell stories that would never end! So *Cricket* was born. Thank you for everything, Marianne. May the stories, and the laughter, never end!

Old Cricket

*In Memory of
Marianne
Carus
1928–2021*

Family & Friends

Share your curiosity and your favorite magazines with someone you love!



Who will you share with?

