

Cricket



the realm of imagination



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January 2013 Volume 40 Number 4



COVER AND BORDER

by Alison Jay
oil with crackle glaze medium

Alison Jay was born in Hertfordshire, England, and grew up in Derbyshire. She then studied graphic design in London, where she now lives. She has illustrated many children's books including *Picture This*, *If Kisses Were Colors*, and *I Took the Moon for a Walk*. She also works in other areas of illustration such as advertising and packaging. She hopes one day to write and illustrate her own book.

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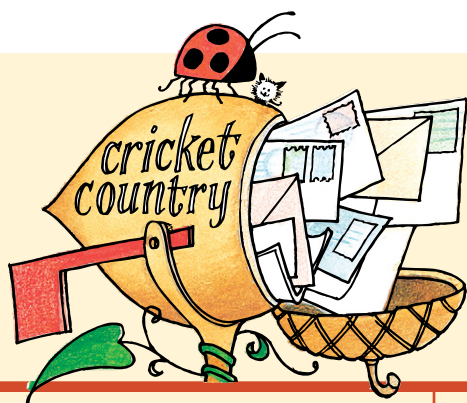


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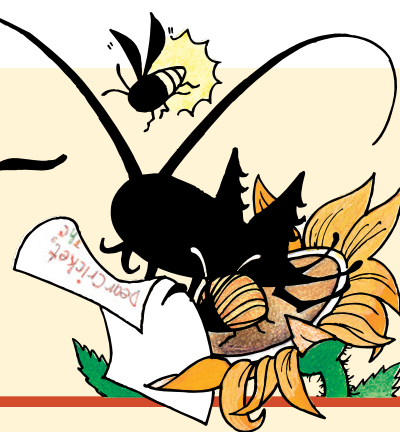
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the Letterbox



Dear Cricket and Buggies,

You are awesome! You buggies rock!
I am a Star Wars freak. I also love the Clone Wars. To Sarah Appel (October 2011): I do not think it is weird for a girl to play football. I dance ballet and I love it. I am studying geometry and Chinese. I have been to China, France, England, Canada, and Scotland. I am Irish. We are going to China again to adopt a brother. I have a seven-year-old sister also from China and an awesome mother.

I really like the How to Train Your Dragon series and *Shadow Spinner* by Susan Fletcher.

I loved your issue with all the riddles in it (April 2011). Please have more. George and Tail, you guys are sooo cool! Ladybug, more humility, please! You remind me somewhat of Princess Leia.

Virginia Mooney, age 11
Riverdale, Maryland

Dear Cricket and All the Rest of You,

Happy New Year! My new year is going well. I have a cat who is fat and strong! We found him in the garden, so we adopted him. It's really hard to remember how skinny he used to be. Ugly, beware!

Anastasia M. O. Curtis, age 9
Worden, Illinois

Dear Everybuggy,

I am the biggest Harry Potter geek in the universe, plus I love Broadway musicals! Hannah (October 2011), I love *Les Misérables* and *Wicked*. Pussywillow and Pudding, you guys are my all-time favorites. Sheesh, Ladybug, take a break from the bossiness.

I also love Star Wars and capital letters. John Williams is da bomb.

Maria K., age 10
Lake St. Louis, Missouri

Dear Muffin,

I love to read and to try to write books. My best one was about wolves, one of my favorite animals, but the computer that I wrote it on crashed, and it needs a new hard drive. My story is gone! I would try to rewrite it, but it would never be the same. It was the longest I've ever written. My dad writes

books based on history or other nonfiction. My stories have a lot of fantasy like magic worlds, animals that talk and think like humans, etc.

Myrddin B., age 11
Malaysia

Dear Myrddin,

We're so sorry you lost your story! You should rewrite it. We advise you to back up your work as you go. You might email it to a friend. Even printing out a copy would help.

You can find writing tips from other readers on our Chatterbox: www.cricketmagkids.com/chat-letterbox. Look for the Inkwell section.

Love,
Muffin

Dear Everybuggy,

Cricket rocks! I've been getting it since October 2007. Before *Cricket*, I got *Spider*, *Ladybug*, and *Babybug*. They're all awesome!

I just came back from a CTY (Center for Talented Youth) camp at the Franklin and Marshall campus. It was so fun! I took a writing course on fiction and poetry.

I love magical realism because it's a mix of my two other favorite genres, realistic fiction and fantasy. I just finished reading *Eldest*, the second book in the Inheritance cycle. It's so good!

I recommend it to anyone who likes fantasy. Christopher Paolini started writing *Eragon* (the first book in the series) when he was fifteen.

I love your mag!
Erin Paglione, age 13
New York, New York

Dear Cricket,

I play the piano. I've been playing for about one and a half years. Ada Schenck (March 2012), I have chickens, too, but not as many as you. We have one dog, five cats, four cockatiels, two goats, and nineteen chickens. I've written a book called *Beyond the Backyard*. When I grow up, I want to donate my goat

HE MIGHT NOT
SEEM SO UGLY
IF HE WASN'T
ALWAYS TRYING
TO EAT US!



milk, soap, yogurt, ice cream, and chicken eggs to Africa, homeless shelters, and St. Mary's Food Bank.

I know this will sound weird, but I don't think Ugly Bird is that ugly.

Gabby P., age 11
Phoenix, Arizona

Dear Everybody,

I really like *Cricket* magazine.

My favorite parts are the fiction and the "Letterbox." I also like the poetry. I like reading, playing guitar, dancing ballet, making collages, flowers, hearts, and cats. I am homeschooled.

Rosie Greiff (January 2012), I think it's cool that you're ambidextrous. Christine C. (January 2012), I also do not have a pet. We used to have two cats and a dog, but the dog was naughty, so we gave him to someone else, and the cats got sick, and we had to put them down. One got cancer and one was really old. She was twenty-one in human years, which is more than one hundred in cat years.

Pussywillow is cute. Ladybug, you are cute and beautiful on the outside, but extremely rude on the inside. My favorite bugs are Marty, because she's so cool; Muffin, because she loves to read; Zoot, because he wears glasses like me; and Sluggo, because he loves art. And, of course, I like Cricket and Old Cricket.

Magdalene Scheidel, age 11
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dear Cricket,

This is my first time getting your magazine, and I already love it. One of my favorite parts is the contest. Another favorite is the "Letterbox." I like to see what other people think of your magazine. I don't know my favorite buggy yet, but I will soon.

I love to draw and I play clarinet in the school band. I look forward to getting more of your magazines!

Megan Healey, age 10
Keene, New Hampshire

SOMEBUGGY
NEEDS TO BE
THE BOSS!



Dear Cricket,

I have been getting *Cricket* for less than a year, but I love it! *Cricket* mag is really cool. I like Pudding or Pussywillow the best. I am actually a lot like Pudding, except not so full of myself. I play piano and cello and I love to draw, read, swim, and act. My favorite books are the Inheritance series, *Flygirl*, and the Maximum Ride books. I am from Ukraine, so I can speak Russian, but I moved to America when I was little.

Cricket is one of the best mags I have ever read. All of the stories are really cool and inspirational, and they bring a lot of us together! Thanks for being such epic buggies.

Is anybuggy else out there a fan of dragons? I think they are awesome, and it would be really amazing if they were real.

Anna S., age 11
via email

Hello, Everybuggy,

For my tenth birthday, my aunt gave me a subscription to *Cricket*, and I sure don't regret it. This will probably be the quadrillionth time you have heard this, but you have to admit, you guys are awesome! Sluggo and Cricket, you're my favorites of all! C'mon, Ladybug. You don't have to be so stuck up and snobby.

I like reading, writing, and listening to music, so this mag is the perfect match for me. My favorite book is probably *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Stevie Wonder is my favorite singer of all time. I play the piano, double bass, guitar, recorder, and drums. My favorite color is green, and I love pasta with feta cheese. I have one cat named Bumblebee. I am part Norwegian/Russian/Israeli/American, although I can only speak English and Hebrew.

You guys should totally win an award! You are definitely the best, and I hope everyone agrees with me.

Misha B., age 11
Ithaca, New York

Dear Everybuggy,

I love Ladybug, and Pussywillow is so darn cute! I love to read, and maybe that's the reason why I'm so good at spelling and writing. I have a younger sister and brother, and they are a couple of bugs in my hair! (Sorry if I offended anybuggy.) I am a girl scout and I am also on a swim team. I love sports! I also love, love, love your magazine!

Ahmi Johnston-Powell, age 10
Newbury Park, California

WHO ELSE
WOULD I BE
FULL OF?



Dear *Cricket* magazine,

I love your magazines. I love the stories. My favorites are the stories about different cultures. I also enjoy your crossword puzzles. I like how you make them challenging for us even though we are just kids. One thing I think you could do for us (all the kind *Cricket* lover kids) is include more cookie, cake, tart, bread, and other recipes.

Emily Donaldson, age 10
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Dear Wondrous *Cricket*,

I think that you are the best magazine in the entire universe! *Cricket* rocks! *Cricket* is awesome, amazing, remarkable, funny, cool, wondrous, interesting, fun, artistic, wonderful, bizarre, different, and splendorific!

My favorite characters (in order) are: Marty, George and Tail, Zoot, Sluggo, Cricket, Pussywillow, Muffin, Pudding, Tater, Ugly Bird, and Ladybug. Zoot, I'm nearsighted, too. Marty, inchworms are so cool. George and Tail, you're amazing. I would never be able to stand being connected to someone. Hey, Sluggo, slow and steady wins the race! Muffin, I've always wanted to go to England. Cricket, you're the smartest. Pudding, you're the spotlight. Pussywillow, you're awesome. Hey, Ladybug, you're the prettiest. Ugly Bird, your persistence will pay off. Tater, I love potato bugs.

My mom used to get *Cricket* when she was my age, and we still have some her old *Cricket* magazines.

The Splendorific Kathleen, age 10
Georgia

AWESOME!



NICE LETTERS
ARE AS GOOD
AS AN AWARD!



Dear Cricket,

I am learning to play the piano, I am a vegetarian, and I homeschool.

My great-grandma died. I feel sad and lonely, but I feel better when I talk to other people about it.

Tessa Lynn, age 9
via email

Dear Tessa,

We're so sorry about your great-grandma. It is sad to lose a loved one.

You're right that it helps to talk to others. As time goes on you won't feel so sad and will be able to remember the good times you had together and smile about them.

Love,
Old Cricket

LINES FROM CRICKET'S LETTERBOX

Have you ever tried bird-watching? I'm starting to get interested in it.

Jackson Smith
via email

Jackson, we watch out for Ugly Bird every day of our lives!

Love,
Cricket

I like your mag because I love to read and write and I like looking at the letters written by readers. I really want to teach when I grow up. I also want to write books and I am working on one right now.

Junia P.
Seattle, Washington

Is anyone out there a ventriloquist? I entertain my family with shows. Usually my puppet and I have a fistfight, knock each other out, then resume talking.

Raphael Platte, age 10
Churchville, New York

I love you, Ugly Bird! I don't know why. . . . My cat is missing. I was wondering if you had any advice about missing cats, Old Cricket.

Lucy Fernandes
Roanoke, Indiana

We're sorry about your cat, Lucy. Stay on the lookout. You might keep dishes of food and water outside your house and advertise in your neighborhood and the newspaper. Cats are very independent and have great survival skills.

Love,
Old Cricket

In summer 2011 I climbed Mount Katahdin, the tallest mountain in Maine at 5,267 feet (1606 meters). It took us a total of eleven hours and forty-five minutes to get to the very top and back down. My legs were so sore by the time we finished!

Jada Lawrence, age 11
Troutman, North Carolina

Send letters to **Cricket's Letterbox**, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354, or email us at cricket@cricketmagkids.com. Please include your complete name, age, and address.

Letters may be edited for length.

Visit the Chatterbox at:
www.cricketmagkids.com/chatterbox

Cricket Country

WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE READING ABOUT, TATER? "ANIMAL WHISPERERS"?

IT'S ABOUT INTERSPECIES COMMUNICATION, FOR TRAINING, MOSTLY. IT SAYS YOU CAN TALK YOUR SUBJECT OUT OF BAD OR OBNOXIOUS BEHAVIORS.

SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING FOR UGLY BIRD.

WHAT AN IDEA! LET'S TEST THE "WHISPERING" THEORY ON UGLY!

THAT'S CRAZY—UGLY DOESN'T EVEN SPEAK A REAL LANGUAGE.

SO WE'LL STUDY HIS LANGUAGE! GRAB A NOTEBOOK, EVERYBUGGY. TIME FOR A FIELD TRIP!

THIS IS THE DUMBEST IDEA EVER.

HA! I'D LIKE TO SEE SOMEBUGGY TALK UGLY OUT OF HIS UGLY WAYS.

DID YOU HEAR THAT? HE SAID "ORKEE SNORKEE SNURK" WHEN HE ATE A MOLDY TOAST END. (BLEH)

I THOUGHT HE SAID "AWKIE SNORKIE SNUFF."

NO, NO, THAT WAS WHEN HE FOUND THE ROTTEN EGG. (EW.)

SHHH! WHAT DID HE JUST SAY ABOUT THE FISHBONE? WAS IT "NOMMEE FISHEE SNIP-SNAP-SNAK"?

HOW IS THIS WHISPERING SUPPOSED TO HELP UGLY? HE DOESN'T KNOW WE'RE HERE.

WE AREN'T WHISPERING YET.

WELL, WE ARE... BUT WE HAVE TO WHISPER TO UGLY TO MAKE IT WORK.

EEEK! SCARY... WHO'S GOING TO DO THAT PART?

IT WAS CRICKET'S FOOL IDEA. LET HIM GO INTO THE TOXIC BREATH ZONE.

Grawkie
SNURK
SNUFF
Slobber
SNURK!

Later...

WHAT'S GOING ON?

THEY SEEM TO BE TALKING. I WISH I COULD HEAR! I HOPE CRICKET'S TAKING NOTES.

IT'S WORKING! UGLY LOOKS HAPPY, AND HE HASN'T EATEN CRICKET.

NOT YET. JUST WAIT.

Awkie
Ookie!
Koo Koo!

DOO?
ACK?
ICK?

SNORP
SQU-AWK!

HA! I TOLD CRICKET HIS PLAN WAS DUMB, AND DOOMED. NOW I SUPPOSE HE'LL EXPECT US TO RESCUE HIM. (SIGH) COME ON...

The Penguin Whisperer

by Guy Stewart

WHEN CANDACE MOONEY

walked into the space station *Courage* Penguin Research Lab, Dejarío Reynas had a penguin in his lap and two at his knees.

"What are you doing?" she exclaimed.

Dejarío stood up quickly, sliding the penguin to the floor. "I'm not playing with them," he said, a guilty look on his face. "I'm collecting data."

The PRL was an inner ring lab of *Courage*. Emperors were adapted to extreme temperatures and pressures, and scientists studied how they could go from deep ocean water to the surface like little submarines. Finding out how emperors stored oxygen in muscle tissue and survived sudden pressure drops might keep people alive longer during loss-of-pressure emergencies.

Candace rolled her eyes. "What kind of data?"

"Um, how wing length can be used to predict diving speed . . ."

Candace shook her head. "You were trying to be a penguin whisperer again." She tugged on her gloves, grabbed a squeegee, and started pushing frigidly cold salt water across the floor to the recycle vents. "Grow up, Dejarío. Penguins stopped being our pets when we were ten and a half. They're just lab animals now."



A PENGUIN WHISPERER
IS SOMEBUGGY WHO
CAN COMMUNICATE
WITH PENGUINS.

PENGUINS ARE
ADORABLE!
(WHISPER,
WHISPER)



Dejario herded the emperors up a ramp to the Antarctic habitat and shooed them inside. "The birds listen to me!" he insisted, his breath making a cloud in the frosty air. "They do!"

Candace stared at him. "You're wasting your time. Besides, your dad said to stop it. It bothers the penguins."

"Dad doesn't understand the emperors like I do!"

"Yeah, sure. He's only the Lead Veterinary Researcher." Candace went back to cleaning the floor, vents, walls, and tables. Her Intensive Training Team was currently in charge of keeping the PRL clean and the penguins fed. She glanced into the penguin habitat through an immense transpaluminum window. The birds seemed so playful and happy—waddling, diving, swimming—chasing their live food for sport before eating it. Candace sighed. When she was ten, she'd loved penguins. She used to watch them for hours. But that seemed so long ago, well before she'd been accepted by the ITT and begun her science rotation. The PRL's research was much too important for fooling around with the animals.

"Playing with penguins, like a kid," Candace muttered. She shoved her squeegee around Dejario's boots, making him jump out of the way. "What a big fat waste of lab time."

"I'm not that fat!" Dejario exclaimed. "No need to be mean."

"I didn't say you were!"

"I'm well insulated. That's why the penguins like me. I'm an anthropomorphic penguinoid."

Candace couldn't help laughing.

Dejario flushed and snapped, "And unlike some people, I don't need to bundle up like it's winter in here, either!" He rammed the lock closed on the habitat, startling some fledglings inside. "You wouldn't understand."

"Maybe because my best friends aren't penguins!"

"Yeah? Well, at least my penguins don't snap at me for every little thing!"

"We're thirteen, Dejario! It's time to grow up and—"

Courage shuddered. They looked up at a flashing red light above the door to the ring hallway. Silently, the heavy, submarine-type hatch of the PRL swung shut and sealed automatically.

Candace heard her mother's voice over the public address. "This is not a drill. Micrometeoroid impact and penetration of Inner Ring, Life Science Quadrant, Section Two. All quadrants have been sealed and are on independent life support. Please remain calm and stay in your section. Rescue or maintenance staff will contact you when your area has been secured."

"That's across the hallway," Dejario said. His breath came out as a puff of fog.

The intercom lit up again. "Candace, are you there?"

In two steps, she was across the lab. Her own breath made a cloud as she answered, "I'm here with Dejario Reynas, Mom. We're fine."

Dejario said, "Have you heard from my dad?"

"We're still contacting all the sections. Stay there. Station Control, out." The intercom clicked off.

TRANSPALUMINUM?
IS THAT A SCI-FI
THING?



YES,
TRANSPARENT
ALUMINUM.
WE SHOULD
INVENT IT!



"Mom? *Mom!*" Candace said, but the intercom stayed silent. She banged it with her fist in frustration, then backed away as sparks flew out and sizzled.

"You and your temper!" Dejario said. "Talk about growing up. Now you've broken it!"

"I didn't break it! It's probably fine."

"Then why'd it spark?"

They glared at each other. Sometimes Candace wondered why they were friends at all. But she had to admit that sparring with Dejario could lead to unusually interesting ideas.

"It's colder in here than it was before." He turned his head toward the tank. "There's a skin of ice on the water."

It was always cold in the PRL, but Candace had never seen ice on the pool before. Usually, silverfish with antifreeze for blood flicked freely through the water. They were food for the penguins, but scientists also studied how the sleek fish were able to stay flexible at sub-zero temperatures. She checked the habitat monitor. "Water and air temperatures have already dropped a lot," Candace confirmed.

"Let me see," Dejario said, elbowing her out of the way. "The temperature is dropping almost a degree a minute! At that rate, the water will be frozen solid in an hour. In less than two hours the carbon dioxide in the air will start to freeze."

"Won't we be back on the sunny side of Earth soon? That should give us some time."

Dejario thought. "We're in geosynchronous orbit over Auckland, New Zealand, this month. Night just fell, so we'll be in Earth's shadow



for twelve hours. If someone doesn't fix the heaters, we'll be corpsicles."

"Don't say that!"

"Why not? It's true."

"We are not going to die here!"

"When it gets cold enough to make Antarctica seem like Miami Beach, we'll die."

Candace had lived on *Courage* long enough to know that the possibility of dying was real. Researchers on this and other stations were occasionally lost in tragic accidents. The risk went with the assignment.

Dejario slumped against the habitat window. Candace shook him. "We can't just give up, Dejario! Can't you think of anything with



your big bird brain?" She gazed into the penguin habitat. "How do the emperors survive?"

"During the worst storms, they huddle."

"Just huddle? That's all?"

"Well, the whole flock bunches together as tightly as it can. That way the birds in the middle keep warm enough not to freeze."

"Then the ones on the edge just die?"

He looked up at her in alarm. "Oh, no! They wiggle their way in toward the center, then migrate back out to the edge, then squeeze back in again. It's a behavior called colloidal jamming. Scientists in the early twenty-first century recorded it."

"What kind of jam?"

"Jamming! The massing penguins modulate metabolic heat loss by dispersing through the huddle in coordinated periodic waves . . ."

"English, Dejario! English!"

He took a deep breath, letting it out slowly in a gelid cloud. After a thoughtful moment he said, "You ever make dough?"

"Yeah. With Mom."

"Kneading dough forces the dry flour into contact with the milk and eggs until the mixture is evenly wet and dry. Right?" He glanced into the habitat. The penguins were beginning to crowd together, each squeezing and jamming the others while slowly migrating through the huddle, keeping the flock evenly warm. "Like that."

Candace shivered as she studied the undulating wave of penguins. The ice on the pool was now four centimeters thick. "Could we join their colloidal jamming—it sounds like the name of a band—until we get help?"

"Maybe. But Dad's right, penguins don't like people around them."

"No problem," Candace said, forcing a smile. "You're the Penguin Whisperer. They like you."

A booming, moaning sound vibrated through the PRL's walls—ice forming and expanding in the confined space. The intercom by the door sparked again.

"They have no idea what's going on in here," Candace said. "They think we're safe and sound. Whispering to your penguins to let us huddle with them is the only way we'll get out of this . . . alive." She took a final reading on the monitor station as the ice cried out again. "Air temp is -27°C ."

Dejario took her hand. "Come on. Slowly." He slipped on the icy floor as he turned, and Candace helped him to his feet. Together they walked clumsily up the frozen ramp and unlocked the habitat door.

Peering inside, Dejario took off his gloves and threw them onto the ice, then he knelt down, shoving his hands into his pockets. Candace followed his lead, and together they skidded on their knees to the edge of the waddle of penguins.

A large emperor nipped his jacket as Dejario sidled near. Dejario didn't flinch. He whispered calmly and soothingly, until the penguins seemed to recognize him and allow him into their huddle.

Candace wasn't so lucky. After she received two warning nips from skittish penguins, an especially large bird bit her hard. Though tears sprang to her eyes, Candace

IN CHEMISTRY,
A COLLOIDAL
MIXTURE IS WHERE
ONE SUBSTANCE IS
MICROSCOPICALLY
DISPERSED THROUGH
ANOTHER.



GELID
MEANS
ICY.



didn't make a sound. Without thinking, she reached over and pinched the emperor back. It squawked and made room for her.


She was not nipped again as she and Dejario were carried on a kind of wave to the warm center of jostling penguins. Continually moving, they flowed out again to the edge of the huddle, then turned and were folded back into the scrum.

They'd gone through the waddle four times when the rescue crew, looking like shiny abominable snow monsters, arrived in their white hazmat suits. They picked up Candace and Dejario and rushed them out

of the PRL to a warm physics lab. A rescuer popped her helmet off and exclaimed, "It was sixty-eight below zero in there! We thought for sure you'd be dead!"

Candace looked at Dejario and said through chattering teeth, "What's the w-worry? The Penguin Whisperer and I were just doing the colloidal penguin jam."

"The what?"

Candace and Dejario burst out laughing. Finally Dejario managed to say, "I predict it will be a dance craze that will sweep the station." 



SNOW TRILOGY

BY JULIA TAYLOR EBEL

Rhododendron leaves
curl
with cold
and fold their green
to keep out
snow.

A junco
with ruffled feathers
nestles
with toes curled over
a cold
rhododendron branch.

Leaden clouds
sift
powdered snow
on folded
rhododendron leaves
and a ruffled junco.

ILLUSTRATED BY KRISTINA SWARNER

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LONG AGO THERE was a king in Ireland whose name was Lir. He had four children who were the light of his heart, each more beautiful than the other: twin boys with hair that flamed the red-gold of a summer sunset, and twin girls with black hair shining like a secret pool at midnight. Only one thing marred the children's happiness. Their mother, Queen Aobh, had given her own life when the girls were born.

To ease their loneliness King Lir wed Aobh's sister, whose name was Aiofe. Aiofe was fair to look at, but her beauty hid an evil heart. As time wore on and she bore no child, Aiofe grew jealous of her sister's children and plotted against them, for hers was the power of darkness.

When the king was away from home, she called the children to her. "Come," she said, "let us picnic in the woods and take our ease away from prying eyes, for today the day will be as long as the night, and light and darkness have equal claim upon the earth."

She led them into the forest where she spread a feast on white linen and bade them eat. No sooner had they raised the golden cups to their lips than they felt themselves change. No longer were they youths and maidens, but four swans who gazed at each other with wild fear and disbelief.

The Children of Lir

by Sheila MacGill-Callahan



Aiofe's voice rose in a triumphant, gloating shout. "Swans you are and swans you shall remain for three times three hundred years, or until the Man from the North shall be joined to the Woman from the South."



The words fell on the hearts of Lir's children like stone, for they knew such a joining could never happen. The Man from the North and Woman from the South were the names of twin mountain peaks that stood at the ocean boundaries of their father's kingdom. Unless the very earth should move, the peaks could never join.

Aiofe gave a satisfied nod. Then she continued, "I grant that on this day every year, when light and darkness are equal, you will regain human form and speech. But on that day your feet may not touch the earth, or you will surely die."

She laughed, "I will give you one gift: You shall have voices so lovely that you will be hunted as treasures for the sweetness of your song."

The four swans took to the air, keening a wild lament. Men in the fields ceased their plowing to gaze in wonder. Women at the hearth or rocking the cradle felt their hearts touched with a sorrow too great to be borne.

WORD OF THE swans spread far and wide across the land, and people came from all over Ireland to listen to their sweet music.

The country people built them a snug house on the shore of Inniskeel Island, provided with all they needed to live. They would sing on the warm summer nights, as men and women, nobles and peasants gathered to listen.

But Aiofe's jealousy and hatred burned stronger than ever, for the king could speak of nothing but his lost children.

KEENING MEANS WAILING OR CRYING
SORROWFULLY. GUESS THEY DON'T
WANT TO BE SWANS...



IT'S BETTER THAN BEING
TURNED INTO UGLY BIRDS!

In time his grief drove him mad, and he took to wandering far from the castle. Finally he came to the island



of the swans and listened to their song, his face alight with happiness. Lir's children took loving care of him from that day forward, though he did not know them.

With King Lir gone from the castle, Aiofe took control of the kingdom and bided her time until the day when dark and light would be equal. Then, she knew, the swans would die.

When the change back to human forms came upon them, the four were flying far out over the sea, for they, too, knew they must die and had chosen a clean end beneath the waves. They sang together one final song. Then down, down they fell into the sightless depths, hand clasping hand, their hair streaming in a red-black cloud.

Suddenly they felt something solid beneath their feet and were lifted above the waves as swiftly as they had fallen.

They were riding on the back of a great whale. His head turned and his small eyes looked at them. There was a twinkle in its depth. "I am the whale Jasconius," he announced in a whistling voice. "Are you the ones who sing so beautifully?"

"Yes, and you have our thanks, brave Jasconius," answered Cormac, the elder twin. Then he introduced Fionn, Uban, and Maeve in a voice rusty with disuse.

Jasconius slapped the water with the flat of his tail, and a rush of birds came from the

shore bearing fruit in their beaks. These they placed in a pile on Jasconius's back so the four children

could satisfy their hunger for human food.

When they had eaten, seals and dolphins gathered in a circle in the water to hear their story, while the birds perched wherever there was room on Jasconius's broad back.

After the tale was told, Jasconius called for song. The deep voices of the seals hummed in the background while the dolphins and Jasconius whistled along with the





birds. The four royal children joined hands and danced the night away in merry jigs and reels.

As the sun rose, they fell to rest. Liban wiped the sweat from her face as she said, "We have survived the first change. Now we must plan what may break Aiofe's curse before we turn into swans again."

They talked with Jasconius as the day wore on, but the riddle remained unsolved. How could the Woman from the South ever be joined to the Man from the North?

Just as the sun was about to sink, Jasconius spoke. "My heart is with you. I and all the other beasts will think long and hard but," his eye closed in a wink, "if you do not find your answer this year, do not fear. As surely as the sun now sets, I will always be there to catch you."

FOR SEVEN YEARS the riddle stood. Every year Jasconius was there to receive the swans. Now when their feathers fell away they were taller and older. And every year Aiofe's spies reported the return of the swans. In the seventh year she acted.

When the four returned from their visit to Jasconius, they found their home in ruins. King Lir did not come forth to greet them. Gulls, kestrels, larks, and wrens twittered around them in warning, but they paid no heed. So anxious were they for their father's safety that they did not see the men with nets waiting behind the tall stones.

All four swans were together when the weighted mesh flashed out. They fought with their sharp beaks and strong, webbed

feet but to no avail. They were carried back to the castle and the malice of the queen.

"I have you now, and I have your father who dared to prefer you to me," she gloated. And for a year she held them captive. Their only comfort came from the badgers and the foxes who secretly tunneled into the cave where they were held. "Be of good cheer," whispered a gray old badger as the day of change drew near. "We have a plan." But then a guard came, and the badger slipped away.

The day came. Aiofe declared a holiday for her followers. A feast was prepared on the beach at the foot of the twin mountains, the Man from the North and the Woman from the South. As the sun moved west, a cooking fire was lit, and many made rude jests about roasted swan.

Maeve and Liban, Fionn and Cormac thought that nothing worse could happen. Then their father was led forth and made to sit where he would see the death of the swans he loved. He gave a great cry and covered his face with his hands.

Farther and farther to the west slipped the sun until it trembled on the brink of the western ocean. Queen Aiofe's face was wreathed in a gloating smile. "Sing, sing," she jeered, "for it will be the last time." Still, nothing happened. The heads of the four swans sank upon their breasts.

Then a huge spout of water arose in the bay as an enormous shape erupted from the depths. It was Jasconius! His tail slapped the water with a crack like thunder. On that signal a





flight of eagles cut the air, grasped the net, and lifted it clear of the ground.

Still the change did not come. The sun seemed poised to see what would happen next. Aiofe urged her men to capture or kill the rising birds. They hurled spears and stones, but scored no hit. In the bay Jasconius was whistling shrilly and gazing at the twin peaks as if directing a dance. One by one the people on the beach turned, and their jaws dropped open in amazement. Between the peaks was a bridge of wild swans joined beak to tail, their wings beating as they held themselves in a proud arch. The sun slipped down as the last swan flew into place. The Man from the North was joined to the Woman from the South.

As Queen Aiofe shrieked and called her men to her, the eagles gently lowered the net. It now contained two warriors with red-gold hair and two tall princesses with hair as dark as a midnight pool.

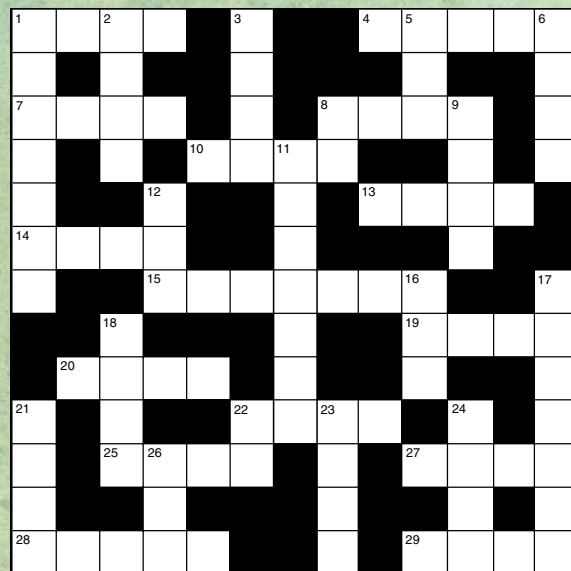
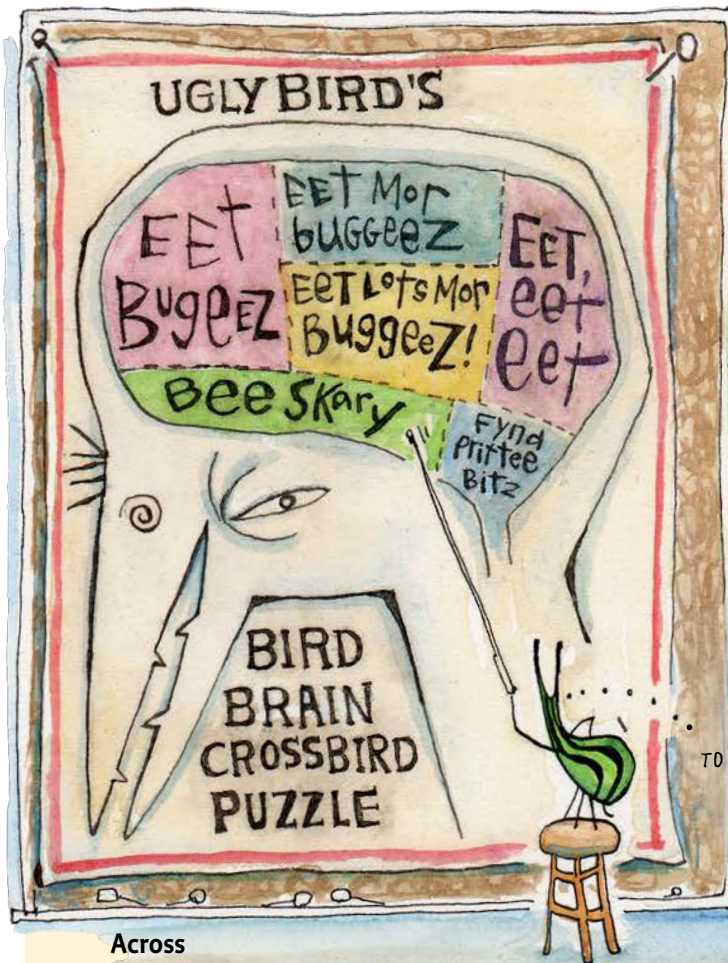
Cormac stood forward, his sword red in the firelight. "Begone, Aiofe!

May the back of every hand be against you, may the fire refuse to burn for you, may the water refuse you refreshment, may wood and stone refuse to shelter you, and so may you come to the end of your days." He stood aside and Aiofe rushed forth, to be heard from no more.

The four embraced their father, who shed tears of joy as the light of reason returned to his eyes. Jasconius became the kingdom's trusted counselor, and they had many a happy journey on his back during the warm summer nights.

King Lir's children lived long and happy lives, and they never lost the gift of song. 🐛





Solution on page 47

TO DEFEND OURSELVES WE NEED TO KNOW
OUR ENEMY, GET INSIDE HIS HEAD.

Across

1. "As the _____ flies"
4. North American thrush with a chestnut-red breast
7. Scratch an _____
8. Sodium for seasoning food
10. Bird home
13. What ducks and swans do on water
14. Large, flightless Australian birds that resemble ostriches
15. This large bird is said to hide its head in the sand
19. A ruler is sometimes called a straight _____
20. Daffy or Donald
22. Small branch used by a bird to build its nest
25. Food: bird _____
27. Baby bird's first flight
28. What a bird uses to fly
29. The bill of a bird

Down

1. Farm egg-layer
2. Exclamation of pain
3. _____ jay
5. Barn hooter
6. Not far
8. Street (abbreviation)
9. "Shake your _____ feathers"
11. A gray-brown songbird
12. Orbiting Solar Observatory (abbreviation)
16. A female domestic fowl
17. Bird with tail feathers that spread like a fan
18. Short for *pussycat*
21. Sharp, curved nail of a bird
22. Short for *touchdown*
23. Large heronlike wading bird
24. Bird known as a symbol of peace
26. What a bird will lay

ARE YOU
TRYING
TO GIVE US
NIGHTMARES?

WE KNOW
WHAT HE HAS
IN MIND.

ALL I WANT TO KNOW
IS HOW TO STAY OUT OF
HIS STOMACH!

BY FLIGHTY CASTELLÓN AND
FEATHER-HEAD CONAHAN

HENRY WAS A worrisome child.

He never said a word until he was four. His parents fretted over him and had him checked by all the best specialists in Boston. The doctors determined that Henry was normal—well, at least his intelligence, hearing, and vocal apparatus appeared to be. They said, “Be patient. Some children just take longer.” So his parents waited, but still worried.

When he was four, Henry finally decided to speak. His parents, however, got little relief when he reached this long awaited milestone. For when Henry spoke, it was only in brief rhymes, albeit rather precocious ones. If, for instance, he perceived his mother fretting over anything, he’d look into her eyes and solemnly declare, “Drama Mama.” This never failed to bring a hug and a smile.

When the rhyming started, Henry’s parents had him checked again by several more doctors who shook their heads in puzzlement, saying, “He seems fine. He’ll probably just grow out of it.” So with that unsatisfactory pronouncement, Henry’s parents just had to learn to accept that he was different. But they still worried; for Henry was theirs, puzzle that he was, and they loved him completely.

Henry’s family lived in the small town of Cohasset, on Massachusetts Bay. Their luxurious yard sloped down to the edge of a tidal pond that was a stopping place for migrating birds. When Henry lived there—in that long ago time between the world wars—there were still deep woods flanking their house on both sides. Coyotes and turkeys lived in those woods, and owls, skunks, foxes, deer, possums, and raccoons.

Henry read everything he could get from the library about all the creatures that lived around the pond, but especially the birds. His intense reading habit both annoyed and reassured his parents, who wondered why anyone who read so much would speak so little. Henry displayed other remarkable gifts, too—drawing, for one. With his colored pencils and sketchbooks, he would render remarkably accurate and lively pictures of the various water birds that visited the pond throughout the year.

And there was something else wonderful about Henry that not even his mother knew. He could talk to, and understand, the swans. The same nesting pair returned to the pond every spring. Henry’s mother told him they were mute swans and that they were so-called because, unlike most other birds, they never made a sound. Henry knew this was wrong, because when he sat at the edge of the water and listened, he could hear their guttural barks and snorts and hisses. He understood what they were saying to each other and, eventually, was able to converse with them in their rather ugly-sounding language. But the most wonderful thing Henry learned about the swans was not what they actually talked about—which tended, like human conversations, to be quite mundane—but rather something he read in one of his books. An ancient legend claimed that mute swans remain silent all their lives until their deaths, when they sing one song of exquisite beauty, their swan song. Just imagining their dying song would bring tears to Henry’s eyes.

A CYGNET
IS A YOUNG
SWAN. AND
PRECOCIOUS
MEANS
ADVANCED
FOR HIS AGE



MUNDANE MEANS ORDINARY
AND UNINTERESTING. (YAWN)



THE CYGNET

BY SUSAN DICKINSON



TANNINS ARE REDDISH COMPOUNDS FOUND IN PLANTS
AND USED FOR TANNING LEATHER AND DYEING.



In high summer he'd sometimes go down to the pond in the morning, and there would be, not just the nesting pair, but a dozen swans gliding along together. Sighting this stately procession was a fleeting gift for any who noticed. As the summer drew on, he'd watch eagerly to see how many babies would emerge from the nest in the rushes. He loved the gray, fuzzy look of the little cygnets. But in no time at all they transformed from "ugly ducklings" to a dazzling and majestic maturity. And when October blew in, the entire family would disappear. Henry could not figure out where they went, for all his books said the swans did not migrate; yet they were always gone from his pond for the entire winter.

One late October morning, however, several days after the swan family had left, Henry was surprised to discover a single swan floating on the misty pond. This swan was almost as large as an adult, but still gray and fuzzy like a cygnet. Most remarkable of all, however, was the red-orange blaze that ringed his elegant neck. It was probably just a stain from iron and tannins in the water, Henry thought, but it was nonetheless distinctive. Henry figured it must still be an adolescent, but for some reason it had been abandoned by its parents. It was all alone. When Henry asked where its parents were, the cygnet wistfully replied, "Long . . . gone."

Henry felt sorry for the cygnet who seemed so sad and lost. He urged the swan



to fly away and find the others, for the winter would be very cold, and the pond would likely freeze for weeks at a time. But all the cygnet would say was, “Need . . . to . . . feed.”

So Henry took to feeding it, even though he knew this was probably not a good idea and would just encourage the swan’s dependency. Still, he couldn’t just let the cygnet starve to death. So he’d collect leftovers from the kitchen and each morning would bring these offerings to the pond. The cygnet was always there waiting and would gobble down the food that Henry offered. Despite having rather uncouth eating habits, the young swan was always very polite. When finished, it would turn to Henry to solemnly say, “Thank you . . . adieu” before paddling regally away.

The days grew colder, windier, and snowier, yet Henry insisted on bundling up to go down to the pond every day, no matter what the weather. If his mother hesitated to let him out, he’d only look pleadingly at her and say, “Pond bond,” and she’d relent. Sometimes on stormy days, Henry could not spot the swan, for all the driving sleet and snow. But he’d still leave the food on the shore, and it would usually disappear overnight. Days might go by with no sightings at all, and just when Henry might begin to think that the young swan had finally migrated, it would turn up again during a thaw. The cygnet looked increasingly hungry and tired, but Henry also noticed that, over the winter months, its gray fluff had given way to sleek, white feathers. Yet the distinguishing orange blaze on its neck remained.

Finally, spring arrived again, and the pond’s usual pair of swans returned to their

old familiar nest in the rushes. From that day forward, the young swan did not appear. It seemed to have finally moved on.

The season progressed according to Mother Nature’s calendar, and Henry’s fascination with all the other creatures in his domain kept him very busy and happy. On those rare days when a whole flotilla of swans would show up on the pond, Henry would try to spot the one with an orange blaze on its neck. He never saw his winter cygnet, but he never forgot it either.

ONE BRILLIANT SUMMER

day Henry got the idea to take his father’s skiff out onto the pond. His mother would say he was too young, so he didn’t tell her. He desperately wanted to row over to the dense rushes on the opposite shore to investigate the swans’ nest and see how it was constructed. The eggs had hatched a few weeks ago, and the swan family was now gone from the nest, so he wouldn’t be disturbing them.

He had clumsily maneuvered the skiff to the middle of the pond when, out of the blue, a startling *whoosh, whoosh, whoosh* exploded right over his head. When he looked up, he faced the five-foot wing span of a swan in flight, just inches from his nose. Astonished, he fell backward, struck his head on the gunwale, and tumbled overboard. It all happened in the blink of an eye, and he never had a chance to make a sound.

His first thought upon hitting the water was how nice and refreshing it felt. Then he was frightened as he quickly realized he was sinking deeper and deeper. He struggled to dog-paddle, for that was the only swimming stroke

HENRY BIRD
NERD. . .



WORD! KIND
MIND



ARE WE DOING THE RHYMING
THING? UMMMMM. OH, NO! I
CAN’T THINK OF A RHYME!




he had mastered. With every bit of strength he possessed, he strained upward, toward the bright light at the surface, for he could see the blue sky beckoning just overhead. He didn't want to inhale the water, so he held his breath; but the longer he did so, the dimmer and dimmer everything became. He grew tired and stopped struggling. No longer afraid, he felt his body relaxing as he stared up at the ripples of light dancing on the surface, just beyond his reach. And then he heard it—an achingly beautiful song, unlike any he had ever heard. Henry figured he was in heaven.

But in the next instant, he was rudely jolted from his reverie. It felt as though strong arms had suddenly scooped him up from the pond's depths and were lifting him to the surface. He then sensed that he was being carried across the water. When he opened his eyes to look around, all he could see were white feathers. He slowly realized he was being carried on the backs of four swans, swimming shoulder to shoulder across the pond. And when he tipped his head sideways to better see the swan on which his head rested, he recognized the familiar orange blaze on his winter cygnet's neck. He whispered, "Beaut mute!" as the four swans lifted him onto the shore, placed him gently on the grass, and silently paddled away.

Moments later, when his mother found him lying on the shore, soaked to the skin, gray and unresponsive, she nearly fainted. But in a heartbeat she pulled herself together, and with a strength she didn't know she had, took him in her arms and ran up the long slope of the hill to the house. She laid him on the kitchen floor and peeled off his wet clothing,

covering him with towels to warm and dry him. She tipped him onto his side and pounded his back. He sputtered and moaned, but gradually pinked up and opened his eyes. A nasty gash at the back of his scalp started to bleed, making a frightening mess on the kitchen floor. She staunched it easily enough with another towel. And she cried and laughed, in grateful relief, at seeing him thus returned to her.

But that happiness was nothing compared to her astonished joy at what happened next. For the first time in his life, Henry spoke a complete, and perfect, sentence. "I heard the swan song, Mama!"

HENRY SPOKE IN complete sentences from that day forward. His parents thought it was truly a miracle and made a big donation to their church. The doctors said the near-drowning must have triggered something in Henry's brain. No one ever really knew, and soon no one really cared. Henry became an outstanding student, and when he was twelve, he went away to boarding school. Every Sunday he would call home and have a brief, reassuring chat with his mother, who sorely missed him, but who never failed to glory in his faultless elocution. He grew up to become a scholar, an expert in ornithology, and gained fame for his stunning explications of many of the mysteries of avian communication. In particular, he elucidated the communication methods and meanings of so-called mute swans. And in his wake, he left many admiring students and envious colleagues, who swore he could actually talk to the swans. 

ELOCUTION
IS THE ART
OF SPEAKING
CAREFULLY
AND CLEARLY.



ORNITHOLOGY
IS THE
SCIENTIFIC
STUDY
OF BIRDS.



AVIAN MEANS
HAVING TO DO
WITH BIRDS.

ISTANBUL
IN TURKEY,
ONE OF THE
LARGEST
CITIES IN THE
WORLD,
LIES PARTLY
IN EUROPE
AND PARTLY
IN ASIA.



MY SILENT FEET pad over the
cobblestones as I dodge the puddles littering
Istanbul's streets.

Rain.

It's the worst thing about having no home.
There's never any escape from its prying fin-
gers. Seeking my skin. Chilling me to ice.

A rest in a dimly lit doorway offers some
relief, but these tiny cracks of space and time
hold no real warmth.

Not like a home.

Still, I'm strong enough to handle a little
bad weather. Rainy nights like this worry me
for another reason.

It was on a night like this—wet and
windy—that I lost my home. And as I huddle

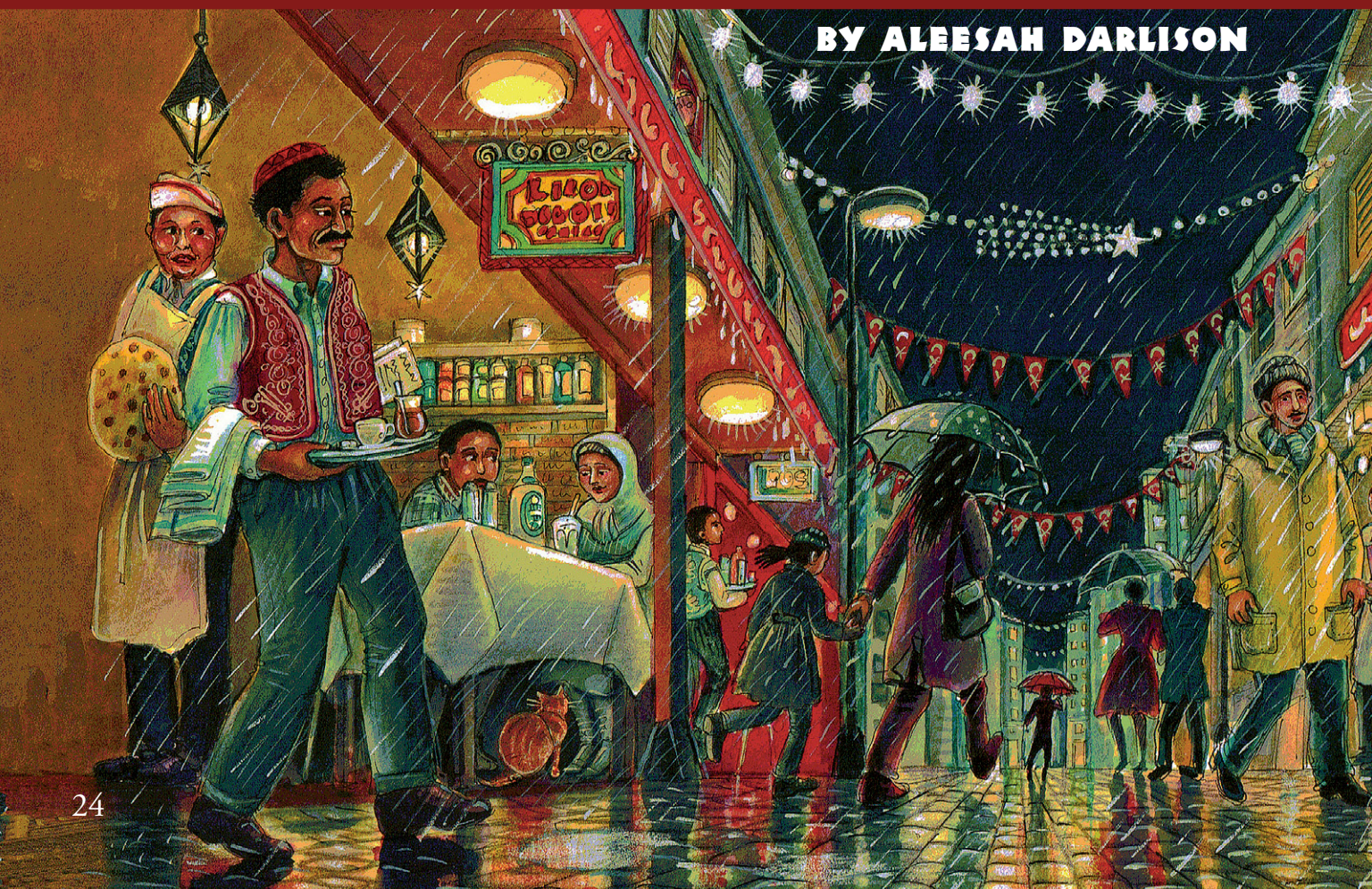
in the shadows struggling to warm my bones,
the memories come flickering back. . . .

I'M A SUCKER for a warm spot. This
morning, it's an armchair beside the kitchen
fire watching Gelana, the cook. Gelana's an
expert at swamping the house with delicious
smells, like ginger, mint, and garlic. She's an
expert at swamping plates with delicious food,
like stewed lamb, fish kebab, and syrupy
baklava. She's also an expert at slipping me
a nibble of her delicious food now and then.
My stomach and I love her for it.

My eyelids droop as the morning sounds
drift through the house. Soft, rapid patter-
ing upstairs tells me the children are awake.

MAGALI OF ISTANBUL

BY ALEESAH DARLISON



Patient footsteps, then the clunk of hard boots, tell me the mistress and master are also awake. Their laughter washes downstairs, swirling around me.

Suddenly, Mama is at the door.

“Good morning, Mama.” I spring to my feet.

“Lazy One.” She stalks over to me. “You should have been up hours ago. There’s work to do.”

I study the floor. “Yes, Mama.”

My brother, Babar, slinks in. Younger than me, he’s already taller and stronger. “Overslept again, Magali?”

“Don’t see you at work yet,” I mumble.

“Silly Magali.” He shoulders past me, not caring that Mama sees.

The clattering of plates and cutlery makes me turn. Gelana is banging out breakfast for the family. I lick my lips.

Boiled eggs, feta cheese, tomato, cucumber, olives, and fresh *pide*. Butter, honey, fig jam, and an urn of hot tea. The perfect Turkish breakfast!

But not for me. Mama’s right. There’s work to be done.

We live in a large villa, a *yali*, on the Bosphorus waterfront in Istanbul. At the front of this centuries-old house, beneath the carved timber balcony, lies an opening where the master’s boat is moored. At the back, a garden grows thick with roses and climbing jasmine. A tall iron fence surrounds it.

When I step onto the pebble driveway this morning, I spy Akar, the chauffeur, waiting beneath the hazelnut tree. No doubt, since the dawn prayer session ended he has been polishing the car, ready to take the master to work and the children to school.

I jog over to him. “Good morning.”

He flicks me a smile, then buries his nose in his newspaper.

BIN LIDS CLATTER near where I crouch. It’s dark. It’s late. It’s the time when the men from the restaurant bring out the garbage. The tingling aroma of *hamsi pilavi*—anchovies and rice—and lamb kebab march toward me, making my nose twitch.

The men from the restaurant don’t mind me begging. Except one. Tall and lean with a knife-sharp moustache, his hard eyes shine like rain-slicked pebbles. The other men call him Boss.

**PIDE IS A
TURKISH
FLATBREAD.
SAY IT:
PEE-DAY.**



**THE BOSPORUS
IS A STRAIT
LEADING TO
THE BLACK SEA
AND CENTRAL
ASIA.**



Illustrated by Emma Shaw Smith

art © 2012 by Emma Shaw Smith

"Those kids are hanging around again."
Boss chokes a bin with a fat garbage bag.
"Pesky beggars! What will the tourists think?"

"That stray was here, too." This piece of news comes from a younger man, Zeki. He is short and always crimson faced from the oven he tends.

"Between the kids and the cats this place will get a bad name." Boss snorts. "But what can I do? The council won't clean up either of them."

Zeki nods.

Boss's pebble eyes find me in the darkness. "Out, you! Scram!"

WE'RE THE ONLY ones on the street with an apple tree. In spring, I curl up in its fork and daydream. The scent of apple blossom hangs like an angel's halo around my head.

This morning, on the day everything goes wrong, I'm in the tree again, enjoying the apple-scented breeze wafting over me.

Until Babar stalks into the yard. "Hey, Magali! Come and help me, lazybones."

"I've already checked the yard. It's clear."

"Bet you haven't checked the boathouse."

Babar knows me too well. I hate the boathouse. Dark, wet, full of fat rats. Need I say more?

"Come on, girl, or I'll tell Mama."

Scowling, I climb down from the tree. We jog down the steps to the boathouse. Babar stays well clear of the water. He hates it; he's never learned to swim. We poke about for a while. Find nothing.

"Told you it was empty." I smile. "How about we go down to the pier?"

Many fishing vessels travel the Bosphorus. Always, there are boats entering and leaving the port near our house. Trawlers returning from the Black Sea. Tiny rowing boats with one line dangling. I watch them all bring in their catch.

It's Babar's turn to scowl. "Not when there's work to be done, thanks." He struts away with his nose in the air.

IT'S LATE AFTERNOON when I tiptoe toward the Blue Mosque. One daylight prayer session, *Ikindi*, remains. Hundreds of feet tramp past me as the call to prayer throbs across the city.

I thread through the shadows of the courtyard while the worshippers wash themselves before shuffling inside to pray. When I hear the imam's voice echo within the dome, I flit from arch to arch. Tourists flock to the Blue Mosque to gaze at the *Iznik* tiles decorating its interior. Often, they throw food in the bins around the place. That's what I search for now.

The tang of something salty and oily floats on the wind. It is a *simit*, a crisp savory bread covered with sesame seeds. My stomach howls.

I'm about to pounce on the bin when a voice stops me. "What are you doing?"

I gulp, swallowing the flood of anticipation from my taste buds.

So close.

There are three of them. Dirty, furious, with eyes bulging from hollow skulls.

"Get out of here!" their leader snarls.
"This is our place."



I flee down the path, past the gardens and the fountain to the street. The gang chases me. I dash across the road. Car horns beep. My heart thumps in my ears. I leap onto the pavement.

Safe.

The tangerine dome of the Aya Sofia above me eclipses the setting sun. Jogging behind the tourists lined up to buy tickets, a dog leaps out from the shade where he was napping. He barks. I run.

NOT CARING WHAT Babar says, I wander down to the port. I find the fishermen and watch them all day.

By the time I think of heading home, it's almost dark. I've lost track of time and will be in trouble. Again.

"Where have you been?" a voice demands. I glare at my brother. "Here and there."
"Silly Magali."

I pounce. Babar and I tumble in the dirt and the rubbish. The fishermen laugh, not bothering to separate us. Bigger and stronger, Babar quickly overpowers me. I go limp. He thinks he's won.

As he stands, I spring up, surprising him and knocking him backward. Over ropes and crates he tumbles. I drive him further back.

Suddenly, the pier ends. Babar plops into the water. I watch as he's washed away. I call out, but he doesn't answer.

In the dusk, lights swivel toward me. An engine grumbles into life over the water. Too afraid and ashamed to go home, I leap onto the boat and hide in a dark corner. The boat slides out onto the Bosphorus.

Thunder moans overhead. Rain seeps from the sky.

I don't know where I'm going—all I know is that I must leave.

WHEN THE BOAT stops, I leap onto land. Through the rain and the wind, I run.

Strange voices drive me on. "Clear out! This is our place."



Sharp teeth flash in the dark. Bursts of fiery breath burn my neck. I run blind, my eyes streaming in the rain. When I can run no further, I slip to the ground.

I sleep.

TWO DAYS AFTER I run away, I realize my mistake. Homesick, fretting, I ask everyone I see if they'll take me home. If they know my master, my mistress, my yali by the water. They bustle past without a glance.

Nearby, a woman cradling a baby wanders between the cars stopped at the traffic lights.

"Alms! Alms!" she cries.

The drivers wind up their windows so they can't hear.

Soon I learn where I am. Sultanahmet, the old quarter of Istanbul. So, I know where I am and I know the home where I used to be. In between is a jigsaw with many missing pieces. No matter how far I roam, I'm always lost.

I'M BACK AT Boss's restaurant. A woman, a foreigner, sits on one of the padded benches. Sunlight crouches on the book in her lap.

She yawns and looks up. "Hello. Are you hungry?" She hands me a square of meat.

I take it greedily. Laughing, she crooks her finger at me. I inch closer. She rewards me with another morsel of food. "Poor thing."

I'm too busy eating to answer her. Suddenly, Boss yells, "Get out! Get away from my customers."



"It's O.K." The woman tries to shield me.

"It's *not* O.K. Scram!" Boss's boots stomp after me.

AT NIGHT, I return to the restaurant like a moth flapping at a candle.

Please, let her be here.

I wait for a handout, but the foreigner doesn't come.

The last customers wander home. The men cart the bags to the bin and stroll back into the restaurant.

But what's this? They've left the lid off! Eyes darting left and right, I plunge across the road under the splash of the streetlight.

Hurry!

I bury my head so deep in the bin. I don't hear the men approach. Hands grab me, thrust me into a bag reeking of onions. I cry for them to let me out. I hear laughter as they shake the bag.



“GET RID OF IT,” I hear Boss say.

“How?”

Zeki.

“Who cares? Just make sure it doesn’t come back.”

A car engine starts. I feel movement. The night roars past. Finally the car stops. I’m lifted out. Through the bag, I smell a familiar scent.

Bosporus.

I hear its tongue licking at the banks.

Split . . . splat.

The bag opens. Buttery light from the street lamp oozes out the darkness. A sweaty face peers in at me.

“Out you get,” Zeki says. “Can’t imagine you’d walk all the way back to Sultanahmet. This is a nice area. You’ll like it.”

He slips into his car and drives off. I walk.

Fresh scents of apple blossom and jasmine tumble in the air, teasing memories from my brain.

Once more, I run. The scent of apple grows stronger. Suddenly, it’s there.

The iron fence is no barrier for me. I know its secret hole. Months ago, I would have struggled to fit my lazy belly through it. Now, I slide in easily.

I skip over the pebble driveway to the kitchen door. Then, I stop.

Will they remember? Will they forgive? Will they still want me?

I bang and scratch at the door, meowing, “Mama! Mama!”


Footsteps. The chain is drawn back. Gelana squints into the darkness. “Who’s there?”

“Magali!” Mother is at Gelana’s feet. She bounds forward. We roll in the grass, purring and laughing.

Gelana calls into the house. “Look what the cat dragged in!”

Babar steps out from the light

I’ve never been so happy to see him. “Babar! I thought . . .”

He grins as he winds his body around mine. “Silly Magali, haven’t you learned yet that we cats have nine lives?” 

WAIT—
MAGALI IS
A CAT!?



MEOW OF
COURSE!



NASREDDIN HOCA and THE THIRD SHOT



Retold by Barbara K. Walker

ONE DAY AS Nasreddin Hoca was chatting with the Emperor Tamerlane, he chanced to see archers practicing in a nearby field. “Ha! So *those* are your archers!” he exclaimed. And a reminiscent gleam came into his eye. “Not an archer in that whole field can shoot as well as I,” he boasted. “In my youth, I was champion archer of this whole area of Turkey.”

“H’m,” murmured Tamerlane. “Champion, eh? Well, if you were champion, you can certainly teach my men something. Come along. I was just about to ride out and inspect the practice.”

At this, the Hoca began to tremble. In truth, he was no archer at all and never

had been. But to boast before the great Tamerlane and then fail to make good on one’s boast could be a very expensive mistake. Deeply regretting his rash statement, the Hoca mounted his little gray donkey and trotted out after the emperor to the field.

Calling his men to him, Tamerlane bade them attend closely, for they were to receive an archery lesson from a real champion. The Hoca was then given a bow and three arrows and motioned to position.

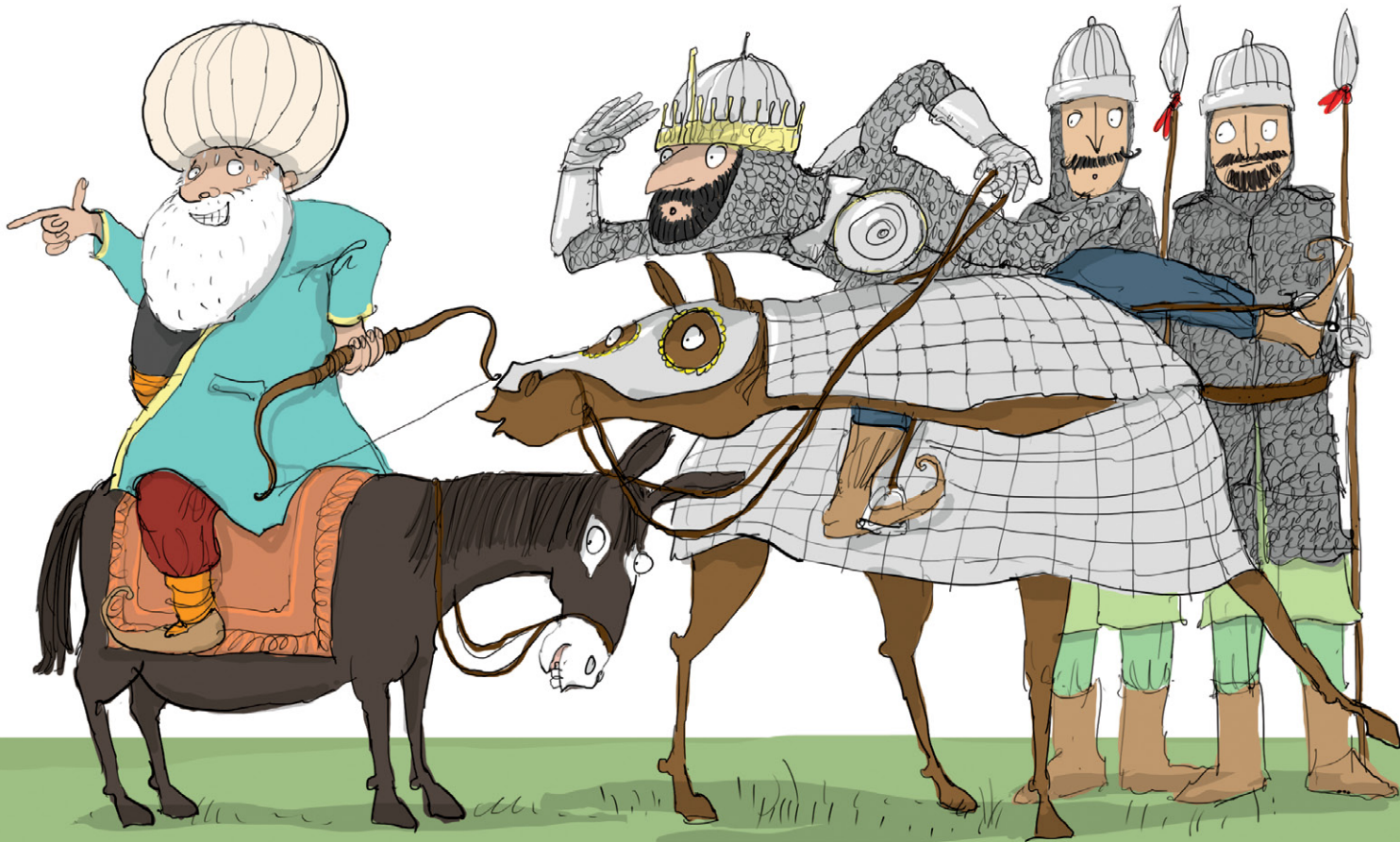
In an effort to gain time, the Hoca gravely studied the target. By Allah, he could barely see it! He shook his head thoughtfully. “If I had only remembered to practice what I so often preach to my students: ‘Listen

NASREDDIN HOCA
IS A STOUT
LITTLE MUSLIM
PREACHER WHO
APPEARS IN
MANY TURKISH
FOLK TALES.



Illustrated by Rupert van Wyk

art © 2012 by Rupert van Wyk




a hundred times; ponder a thousand times; speak once!” he mourned.

But Tamerlane was becoming impatient, and well the Hoca knew the cost of further delay. He could do no more than try. Taking careful aim, the Hoca released the first arrow. It wavered and fell just a short distance ahead of him. The Hoca smiled confidently. “*That*, sire, is the way your captains shoot.”

With even greater care, the Hoca placed and aimed the second arrow. Alas, it traveled very little farther than the first one. Here and there among the archers a chuckle was heard, speedily silenced by the baleful glance of Tamerlane. But the Hoca beamed, and

proclaimed, “*That*, sire, is how your generals shoot.”

With infinite care, the Hoca fitted the third arrow to the string. Calmly he spat to ward off the evil eye. Then he aimed the arrow. Allah help him, the bow slipped in his trembling hand, and the arrow, released with surprising force, flew straight to its goal, lodging itself neatly in the center of the target.

The Hoca, much cleverer with his wits than with his hands, looked about him proudly. “And *that*, sire, is how your humble servant Nasreddin Hoca used to shoot when he was archery champion!” 

In 1910 Pnina Genzel's large family lives in one of the Jewish quarters of Jerusalem. One evening, while getting bread for her mother, Zehava, Pnina looks down a side street and sees a golden window "that seemed to have in it everything beautiful that was in the world." Pnina falls in love with a family of wooden dolls in the window, and decides they would be a perfect birthday present for her younger sister Miriam. When Pnina steps inside to ask the price of the dolls, she is terrified by a gnarled old woman with crooked teeth like a witch who owns the shop with her sister. Pnina hurries out, promising to bring the money for the dolls, twenty-five piasters, the following week. On the way home Pnina thinks how it would soon be the Sabbath and candles would be lit and fill every window in the city. But she also thinks about how much she'd rather keep the dolls than give them to Miriam.

by Adèle Geras



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Adèle Geras, text © 1993 by Adèle Geras

PNINA LOVED FRIDAY

DON'T YOU
THINK THAT
SHARING
THE DOLLS
COULD BE
JUST AS FUN
AS KEEPING
THEM FOR
YOURSELF?



HA-HA-HA!
(YOU'RE
JOKING,
RIGHT?)

evenings, with everyone freshly bathed and wearing their best clothes to greet the day of rest, and the smell of especially delicious food filling the house. She began to feel a little more cheerful. Perhaps, she thought, stepping into the courtyard of her building and glancing up toward the kitchen window, perhaps if Miriam has the dolls, it will be almost the same as having them myself. Maybe she will let me play with them. Climbing the stairs, she felt her heart heavy inside her like a small rock, and she knew it wouldn't be the same at all. Pnina wanted those dolls all to herself. She wanted to keep them on the shelf above her bed. She wanted no one else to touch them without her permission. She wanted to give them their names—special, magic names that only she, Pnina, would use. She knew that if she named them, they would come alive for her, they would become real people. If they were Miriam's, however

often she was allowed to play with them, they would always be small wooden dolls, and nothing more.

"Wherever have you been, child?" Zehava cried, wiping her hands on her apron as she ran out of the kitchen. She'd been frying fish, Pnina knew, because her hands were still white from the flour and a sharp, golden brown fragrance hung in the air.

"I'm sorry, Mother," Pnina said. "I would have come sooner, but I found such a shop! I've never seen such a shop. In the window there are so many things, you think the glass is going to break."

Illustrated by Ingrid Kallick
art © 2012 by Ingrid Kallick

Golden Windows

Part 2



Zehava laughed. "It can only be the shop belonging to the Arlozoroff sisters! Did you see them? Olga and Natalya? They must be ancient now, poor creatures."

"Yes," said Pnina. "They are. The one called Olga looks like a witch. But they were very nice to me and they have a present that's just right for Miriam. I'm going to buy it next week."

"You can tell me all about it later. Now it's time to get ready, and you're not even bathed yet. . . . Run, child, or the sun will set in the sky, and the Sabbath will be here before you've finished."

Pnina ran. As she waited for her mother to fill the tin bathtub with warm water, a thought came into her mind. She looked at her mother. "Why did you call them 'poor creatures'?" she asked. "If I had a shop filled with all those treasures, I'd think I was the luckiest person in the world."

"They're all alone," said Zehava. "Just the two of them, in that poky little room behind the shop. That's what I meant. Really, I should invite them one Friday evening. It's always a blessed thing to have guests to share your Friday meal."

"Then come with me next week, and I'll show you Miriam's present and you can invite them."

"Maybe," said Zehava. "We'll see what's happening next week. Maybe I'll come with you. Now will you kindly get into this water and leave gossiping about the Arlozoroffs for another time?"

Pnina stepped into the bath. She was trying to calculate how long it would take her to save another twenty-five piasters—and then what if the dolls she had seen were the only ones? She tried to remember if there were any others in the shop at all. I can't remember seeing any, she thought, but in that crowded place they might have been hidden under something. Sitting as still as she could while Zehava scrubbed her back, Pnina thought: Only six more days and then I'll see them again, pouring their colors out of the golden window of that little shop. I wish the time would go quickly. I wish it would.

PNINA HAD NEVER lived through such a slow week in her life before. The days stretched and stretched through more hours than seemed bearable, and the nights were filled with dreams, but at last Friday came and it was time for Pnina to buy the bread again.

"And will you come with me, Mother," she asked for the thousandth time that week, "and invite the Arlozoroffs? You promised."

Zehava laughed. "You forced me! You nagged me into it. Never have I seen such a persistent child. But you're right. I said I would invite them, so you can ask them if they'd like to come next week."

"Oh, no!" Pnina cried. "I can't ask them. You said you would. I'd never dare to ask them. I'd be frightened. "

"Frightened of what, silly goose? They'll be delighted. Who asks them, after all, to go anywhere? You'll be doing them a favor."

"No," said Pnina. "I can't ask them. If you're not coming with me, then you must send a letter. A real invitation."

"Who's got time to write letters with four rooms to clean before lunch?"

"I'll get you the paper," said Pnina. "I know exactly where it is."

Zehava sat down at the table. "Very well," she said. "To put a stop to your ceaseless nagging, I will do anything. Bring me the paper, and also a pen and ink. Anyone would think I was inviting the Queen of Sheba and her sister!"

AS SHE APPROACHED the shop, Pnina began to run. There was the alley, and yes, there at the top on the right-hand side, with the sun shining on it, turning it into a sheet of gold, was the window of the Arlozoroffs' shop. Pnina walked up to it and looked in, and suddenly the whole world turned dark. The dolls were gone. Pnina felt tears filling her eyes and spilling over to run down her cheeks. This was something she had never imagined, not even for one second. Someone else had come and bought them, the dolls that should have been hers, and couldn't be, but which at least would have been in her house where she could look at them. She very nearly turned and ran away, but then she remembered her mother's invitation and how



she had promised to deliver it. She had to go into the shop.

Olga, the witchlike sister, was sitting in her armchair almost as though she hadn't moved at all since the previous week.

"Good day, child," she said. She stood up and began to walk toward Pnina. "Oh, it's you . . . the little girl who asked the price of the dolls."

Hearing the old lady mention them made Pnina hurt all over. She sank down onto a small wooden stool that happened to be positioned near the counter and started to howl and sob. The old lady put her hands to her head.

"Natalya! Natalya, come quickly! There's a child here crying. Natalya, what shall we do?"

Natalya bustled in from the back room.

"It's her," Olga said. "The child who wanted the dolls."

Natalya knelt down beside Pnina. "What's the matter, dear?" she said gently. "Have you perhaps lost your money?"

"Oh, no." Pnina sniffled and rummaged in her pocket to find the handkerchief in which her money was safely tied. "I've wrapped it up. Only now I need the handkerchief for my nose because I'm crying so much, and I don't need the money."

"Why not?" asked Natalya. "Have you changed your mind about the dolls?"

Pnina shook her head. "No," she said. "I haven't changed my mind . . . but they're gone! I've waited a whole week to buy them, and they're not here any longer. Some other child has them, and I'll never see them again."

"No, no," said Olga. "They're not in the window because we kept them for you. After you left last week, I said, 'We must put those



aside for that child. If someone else buys them, she will be most upset.' They're in the back room. Come now, dry your eyes and have a short rest in our room to recover."

"Perhaps," said Natalya, "you will have a drink while we wrap them up."

Pnina could feel her sadness disappearing as the sisters spoke. It was as though a thick woolen blanket of misery that had been covering her up were suddenly lifted off and thrown away. She flung her arms around Olga, who was standing right next to her.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you for keeping them! I love them so much! I'm so happy now. I feel as if I'll never cry again. Can we go and get them, please?"

"Certainly," said Natalya. "Follow me. Olga will wrap them up, and I will fetch you a drink and perhaps some sugared almonds."

POGROMS, ORGANIZED MASSACRES OF JEWS, HAVE OCCURRED MANY TIMES IN HISTORY, INCLUDING IN THE 19TH CENTURY IN RUSSIA AND EASTERN EUROPE.



The room at the back of the shop was the darkest place Pnina had ever seen. The tables and chairs were made of wood that looked almost black, and there was a black cupboard with carved doors towering in the corner. All over the walls were framed pictures of ladies in old-fashioned dresses and gentlemen in strange furry hats. There was one photograph of a baby in a lacy shawl.

"Is that your baby?" Pnina asked, pointing.

"No," Olga answered. "My youngest sister. Not Natalya. The youngest one."

"Does she live here too?"

"She died," Olga said. "When she was about your age."

"Was she ill?" Pnina wanted to know.

"No . . . she was . . . we were all in a pogrom. A very terrible thing is a pogrom."

Pnina shivered. The strange word frightened her. "What is it?" she whispered.

"It is when bad people attack Jews . . . burn their houses, kill them as they are running away . . . even little children they kill. Natalya and I were the only ones left in our family, so we ran away to here. To Jerusalem." Seeing the frightened look on Pnina's face, the old woman smiled. "These are not good things for you to hear. Let us wrap the dolls and forget those horrors from days long ago."

to be continued



WINTER WINDOW

by Laura Purdie Salas

frozen weather

frosty feathers

blow across the

glass divide

icy slivers

soft white shivers

try to creep their

way inside

© 2012 by Laura Purdie Salas





REN AND THE SHADOW IMPS

PART FOUR

BY FREDERIC S. DURBIN

Ren the woodcutter's son lives in the Dark Time, when all the land lies drab and gray. Most of Earth's light has gone to fuel the Ogre King's magic spells, and terrifying clawed creatures called Shadow Imps raid across the north country. They cast nets over people and snip off their shadows before releasing the shadowless people to wander aimlessly, like sleepwalkers.

The village priest, Father Cranach, tells Ren about the hero Brion, who long ago was friend to the Emperor of the Moon. If an Emperor still reigns there, he might send an army to help the people on Earth. Ren volunteers to hail the Emperor from the church tower as soon as the Moon passes close to Earth again. Because the Shadow Imps use the tower as a gathering place, Ren secretly climbs the bell rope in the inner shaft. As he nears the top, his father Oben and Father Cranach begin ringing the bell from below, creating a commotion to bring the Shadow Imps down from the tower.

Ren gains entry to the cold, ice-blue realm inside the Moon. Dragged before the Emperor in his hall, he offers him the broken sword of Brion. It is angrily refused, for the clanging of the bell has awakened the Ubacanth, the Great Serpent of the Sea of Moonlight. Quakes have begun to shake the ground, and soon the monster will venture forth to devour the Moon's inhabitants. Ren must defeat the Ubacanth if he is to win the Emperor's help.

OUTSIDE IN THE courtyard, two white horses waited, their manes, tails, and fetlocks of flowing gold. A guard hoisted Ren into the saddle of one and climbed up behind him. The second guard mounted the other horse. Ren clung to the pommel as the horses charged out the castle gate.

Watching the blur of rocky walls rush past, Ren thought of his family, of the people in his village on Earth below. Surely he'd failed them this time—how could he defeat a sea serpent?

The horses cantered down an uneven trail where rock piles lay against the cliffs and bridges sagged in ill repair. They followed a dry streambed between mounds of debris. The horses slowed, ears laid back, flinching as the ground surged beneath their hoofs.

For the first time since leaving the castle, the guard behind him muttered in Ren's ear. "Once we're gone, boy, you'd better come out of the canyon running, if you live that long. Don't be curious about the serpent. If he sees you, he'll swallow you whole."

The horses stopped at a jagged cleft where the trail fell away in a winding stone stair. "Get down," said Ren's guard. "This is where we turn back." He offered a steady hand as Ren slid to the ground.

The other warrior pointed into the steep canyon. "Down the stairs, now."

Ren tightened his belt and pulled the bundle from inside his shirt. It made him feel better to hold Brion's sword hilt, even wrapped in its cloth. Looking up at the guards a final time, he started down.

The steps were set at different angles, chopped from the canyon floor. Horrible reptilian cries bounced from the cliffs, which showered pebbles. Where the gorge bent ahead, another canyon seemed to rise to the left, away from the Serpent's Stairs. Ren hurried toward it. Passing a pool of ice, he stared at the flat, gray mirror. It gave him an idea. The Ubacanth must be gigantic. And what was gigantic was also very heavy. . . .

A hissing growl, closer than ever, rang through the ravine, and silvery birds burst upward in a frenzy of wings. Boulders toppled from the rim and splintered. Ren imagined the Ubacanth waiting just beyond the next turn, its coils filling the stairway.

Where the ravines met, he sped into the other defile. There were no stairs here, only loose stones. They wobbled, tripping him, but he was trying to make noise now. "Here I am!" he shouted over his shoulder. "Follow me!" He was sure he saw an enormous head swing in his direction as he sprinted up the last slope.

Below him the ground dropped suddenly into a wide crater with ice at the bottom. Faintly, far below the ice, firelight winked—perfect! This was one of the "windows" he had seen earlier, a frigid pane in the Moon's lower surface, looking down over the dark gulf of Earth's night. How the layer had frozen across thin air, he could not guess; perhaps, centuries ago, the Moon people had fashioned it. Holding his breath, he descended and stepped carefully onto the ice.

A bright glow shimmered on the ceiling's icicles. The light arose from the Moonlight Sea, its inlet just beyond a rise. No sooner had Ren turned toward it than the ground began to shake. Cracks shot along the stone ridge, and the high rim of the crater fell to rubble. A wave of shining water swept toward him. Ren hardly noticed, because he sensed behind him an immense presence.

The Ubacanth!

Its gigantic shadow fell across the translucent floor, and Ren squeezed the sword's handle. He did not dare turn to look into the monster's huge, hypnotic eyes. The ice shook as the wall of water, higher than his head, raced toward him. He wanted to run, but he could not—not yet. Holding his breath, he watched the serpent's monstrous shadow loom across the ice. When it began, swiftly, to shorten, he spun around, whisking the cloth from the jeweled hilt.

Sapphires and rubies caught the light. Gold leaf work on the hand guards flashed in the sea's glare. Ren glimpsed two fangs, each longer than a spear. He swung his arm, let go



A DEFILE IS A
NARROW PASSAGE.

of the handle, and dove aside. The wave hit him from behind, crushing air from his chest just as, with a deafening crack, the serpent's head smashed through the ice.

The Ubacanth, dazzled by reflected light, had narrowly missed Ren. Moving too quickly to stop, its platinum-hued body, thicker than the forest's thickest tree, shot down through the shattered floor.

But Ren's plan worked *too* well: the entire window collapsed into gleaming shards. The cavern tipped away, and he was falling. Wind screamed as he somersaulted through the black sky.

Fortunately, the Moon had continued its nightly journey westward; now it lolled above Earth's ocean. Hugging his knees, Ren plunged into salt water that had lain all day beneath the sun. Its warmth embraced him as if welcoming him back to Earth. He kicked, spread his arms, and bobbed up to the air of a summer night.

Overhead, the Moon teetered off center, the silvery jet of water still gushing down in a great column from the hole. In the sea below, the ring of light engulfed Ren and widened in all directions, casting its glow on the clouds.

The Ubacanth's horned head rose from the waves a half-mile distant, its jaws open in a colossal roar. Water sparkled on long whiskers as its amber eyes stared at the Moon. Then, with a snorting sigh, it arched its mighty neck and dove. It would seek the sea's deepest wells, Ren knew—for only the abyss was as cold as its frozen home.

Spilled moonlight continued to suffuse the sea, expanding toward the horizons. Treading water, Ren turned to watch the light's progress—and laughed aloud. Riding the swells, a fishing boat from one of the coastal towns drifted with the evening tide; the marvelous new sea light made its barnacles shine. The flickering he'd seen through the Moon's window had been lanterns on its deck. Crewmen pointed, gawking at the Moon and the waves.

Ren lowered his head and swam.

THE SHIP'S COOK, no more than a boy himself, brought Ren a dry set of clothes, and the captain was eager to hear his story. While Ren spoke, the Moon rose higher and higher; it had lost the weight of the Ubacanth and much of the Moonlight Sea besides. Slowly, the silver radiance faded from Earth's ocean.

Since the fishing boat's nets were full, and dawn was not far off, the captain ordered the crew to steer for land. Exhausted, Ren curled up on a comfortable hawser and watched the Moon. "Now," he whispered to the Moon Emperor, "please keep your promise."

He had just begun to drowse when clouds filled the sky. A lookout shouted from the mast.

"A black ship! Out of the north, a ship black as midnight!"

Scrambling free of the rope coils, Ren peered over the gunwale. Vapors swirled up from the sea itself, blotting out stars. At the cloud's base, a squat, ugly ship topped a

SUFFUSE MEANS TO SPREAD
THROUGH AND FILL.



A **HAWSER** IS A HEAVY ROPE USED TO TIE A SHIP TO THE DOCK. A **GUNWALE** IS THE UPPER EDGE OF A SHIP'S SIDE. SAY IT: GUN-UL.



wave's crest, sails bulging like the throat of a black frog. In its rigging clung a shrouded Shadow Imp. Though Ren was hidden behind the rail, its clawed finger pointed directly at him. He had escaped from the imps at the church tower. Now the Ogre King was angry, and with his sorcery, he had found Ren.

The captain himself took the wheel, shouting orders to raise more sails. But the wind slacked off, leaving the fishing boat to rock in the tide. Only the gale behind the black ship blew fiercely, driving it forward. The fishermen shook their heads; some fell to their knees.

Shadow Imps scuttled along the rails of the black ship, swinging four-pronged grappling hooks on ropes. Others measured the magic nets in their arms. Clouds closed off the sky, thick and low. Fishermen were silhouettes in the gloom.

The hilt of Brion's sword was lost in the sea. Ren gazed at the crew, armed only with a gaff here, a dagger there, and the young cook with a knife from the galley.

The galley . . . Ren tapped a finger against his lips, thinking of something Father Cranach had said back in the church. "Your father has his ax and knife, and I have pans and spoons. . . ." Ren glanced at the coil of rope he'd lain on, then up at the mainmast. He had another idea.

The Ogre King's breeze slackened, and the dark sails drooped. In wavering lantern light, the fishermen watched the black ship drift closer. Ren could see fear on their faces. Quickly, he told the captain of his plan.

The old man nodded. "Better than fighting Shadows with boat hooks."

While the captain gave instructions to his crew, Ren wrapped one end of the long rope around his wrist and scrambled up into the rigging. The lookout made way for him, holding the ropes steady. Not looking down, Ren seized the iron climbing pegs, grateful that the mast was easier to scale than the bell rope.

Reaching the crow's nest, he saw the shadow ship draw alongside the rail. Imps hurled their grappling hooks, snagging the gunwales. Fishermen struggled to cut the ropes, to fling the hooks overboard.

Ren fed his rope through a pulley. Then he hauled the line hand over hand, lowering the loose end back to the deck. The cook returned from the galley, dragging a bulky canvas bundle. Crewmen fastened it to Ren's rope and pulled together. The heavy parcel rose, bumping against the mast.

Below, the crew could not throw loose all the Shadow Imps' hooks. In a rustling wave, the Ogre's servants swept over the rails, casting their veils of darkness. Imps pinned floundering men to the deck and sheared off their shadows. And the shorn men lay still, searching the sky with glazed eyes.

Reaching for the bundle, Ren wrestled it onto the beam where he stood. With shaking fingers, he opened the top of the makeshift bag. Pale moonlight glinted through the clouds, showing him the first object: a scorched copper kettle. He pulled it free and looked down.

The captain brandished his knife, trying to keep two imps at bay. Spinning to his left, he ducked the first shadow net. Before the second could ensnare him, Ren hurled the kettle.



• A GAFF IS AN IRON HOOK ON A STURDY POLE USED TO HAUL IN FISH.



Crash! It struck the deck at the captain's feet. Both imps reeled in pain, claws to their ears. The captain rammed one imp with his shoulder, and the hooded figure tumbled from the platform. A fisherman's hobnailed boot sent the other into the sea.

Piece by piece, Ren unleashed the ship's cookware on the enemy. Brass pots bounced from spars, ringing all the way down. Imps cringed from the cymbal crashes of tin plates, the bashing of spoons and cups. Ren gave flat lids a spin, making them fly to the far ends of the deck. Ladles whistled in the air and clattered on the planks. Stewpots were the best, hammering down with their deep *clang, clong* like church bells.

The Ogre's servants cowered, fingers tearing at their hoods. Fishermen whooped and whistled, catching imps by the collars, tipping them into the waves.

When the attackers dropped their sacks, the shadows slipped out, flowing across the boards, rejoining their owners. The fallen crewmen sat up, greeted by their shipmates' cheers. Black-cloaked raiders fled as if the comets of heaven were dropping among them.

Ren watched the crew's victory, his bundle empty at last. The plan had succeeded beyond his expectations. Before a conjured wind, the black ship pulled away, imps clinging to its sides. Ren was still laughing when a blaze of

silver light pierced the clouds. Shielding his eyes, he squinted upward.

The mist parted, and there, its golden sails aglow, rode a dazzling ship, floating in the sky. High on the foredeck stood a figurehead of glittering ice. Crystal lamps hung from poles, and moonlight rippled like water around the gold-white keel. Ranks of the Moon Emperor's warriors raised bright swords in salute. The airy ship hovered, gently rocking, just beside Ren's mast.

A tall general faced Ren across the rail. "Hail, O Ren, Ever Noisy," said the warrior. "Hail, you who have delivered us from the Ubacanth. The Emperor of the Moon now keeps his word. What is your request?"

Slowly, Ren climbed to his feet, carefully choosing his words. "Warriors of the Moon," he said, "even as the Ubacanth preyed on your people, an evil sorcerer preys on mine. Will you free us from him and restore my people's stolen shadows?"

"We know of this sorcerer," the general said. "We have watched him from our windows. What you ask will be done."

AND SO IT was done.

No human saw the battle that took place the next night, though many watched the passage of wondrous ships in the sky, a fiery fleet that sailed into the northern wilderness. The empty wastes blazed with earthbound lightning, and for days afterward, thick haze cloaked the mountains.

In ones and twos, sometimes in long lines, stolen shadows trooped home. Farmers


in the fields leaned on their hoes, amazed, watching them go by. The shadows danced around scarecrows, stepped onto rivers and rode the currents, flowed under cottage doors and stretched out contentedly at their owners' heels. Life returned to dull faces. Some people burst into laughter or song.

After that night, not a single Shadow Imp was seen again, and the Ogre King vanished like a nightmare that melts in the dawn. In another year, explorers in the rocky north came upon an immense, blackened crater where no plants grew, where the daylight seemed dimmer—the Ogre's stronghold, they supposed.

The Moon now floated high under the stars. Rivers sparkled, leaves glowed green in sunlight, and gloom lifted from Earth.

Word of Ren's journey had spread rapidly, beginning at the port where the fishing boat had docked. The town master had arranged a carriage and a cavalry escort to take him home.

In his own village, women tossed flowers, pipers piped, and men waved hats. Father Cranach rang the church bell with all his might. Ren's parents threw their arms around him, and Grandmother's eyes shone. "No," she said, "the heroes are not all in their graves—not yet."

History books say the Dark Time ended the following summer, when good King Aleph took the throne. But the minstrels' songs tell the truth of it. They say that the darkness lifted forever on the night when Ren the woodcutter's son climbed up to the Moon, when he defeated the Ubacanth with a bladeless sword and the Shadow Imps with—well, you know the story. 

YAY! EVERYBUGGY GETS
THEIR SHADOWS BACK!



HEY, WATCH IT! YOUR SHADOW
IS CROWDING MY SHADOW.





WINNERS
SEPTEMBER 2012 POETRY CONTEST
 Striving Toward a Goal

First prize 10 and under

Sarah Ellis, age 9
 Woburn, MA

The Story

Anna wanted to publish a book,
 Because she liked to write,
 For that reason only,
 Not to be in the spotlight.

She tried to get it published,
 But only got rejected,
 And every time she did,
 She felt sad and neglected.

Soon Anna was fed up,
 So she wrote some more,
 She started something new,
 She wrote from her core.

She wrote from her soul,
 She always did her best,
 And she never ever
 Gave it a rest.

Then one morning,
 It came in the mail,
 It was her published story,
 "The Letter Trail."

She was so excited,
 To have finally reached her goal,
 She had done a fine job,
 When she had written from her soul.

First prize 11 and up

Edward Athaide, age 12
 Houston, TX

Antarctica

For many months I have longed to see
 The icy cliffs of home!
 Where we struggle to live in an empire
 Greater than that of Rome.
 The endless day of summer,
 The freezing winter night,
 The pink and green and purple
 Of the brilliant Southern Light.
 All these things I have mentioned
 Are things that I will see
 For, as I long for Antarctica,
 Antarctica longs for me!

Traditional Song of the Zoo-Kept Penguin

First prize 11 and up

Kyle Petrie, age 12
 San Diego, CA

9 Months

Imagine, after 3 months of distress,
 Being surrounded by support and love.
 Imagine being encircled by family,
 And not being able to hug.

Imagine 9 months of not going outside,
 1 month of terrible pain,
 8 months of being on medications,
 And 6 months of pure inner strength.

Imagine 9 months of chemo,
 1 month of physical strain,
 9 months of love, optimism, support,
 And 1 very very bad day.

Imagine losing your immune system,
 So that a tiny germ could kill,
 Imagine if you were told you have bone cancer,
 That for 9 months or more you'd be ill.

My grandma had this starting in January,
 When diagnosed with bone marrow cancer,
 It was shown through a lesion in her sternum on an x-ray,
 And a bone marrow test gave doctors the answer.

After 9 months she is much better off,
 And has gone home and now is all snug,
 But just for a second, imagine . . . what it
 Would be like for 9 months without a hug.

Second prize 10 and under

Ava Kaplan, age 10
Wilton, CT

The Book

There.
It's done.
What had caused so much of my
time to be gone
The sweat
The blisters
The sleepless nights
The characters had come alive
The princesses, the heroic knights
The bloody battles, the crushing fights
The relief of it finally being complete
My hardest challenge, my biggest feat
All wrapped up into one big story
Oh, the fame, the dazzling glory
Everyone said it couldn't be done
But I showed them, I'm the one
With the glossy cover and my name in script
When I see it, my heart flips
I wrote my book, it's at an end
It's all so amazing, I can't comprehend
I feel like my life has been fulfilled
And, oh boy, am I thrilled!

Second prize 11 and up

Holly Panetta, age 13
Peoria, IL

Traveler's Song

Path unwinding from my feet,
One step more for all I take.
Horizon calling me from rest,
To walk for only walking's sake.
Once this road led straight to home,
Once my home was real to me.
Wanderlust still in my blood,
The only thing I am is free.

Home is but a gentle dream,
Miles and miles and worlds away.
This road is horse and friend to me,
Beckon onward, one more day.
Nothing in pursuit for now.
Nothing waiting down this road.
Nothing drives me forward, so,
Nothing lighter than my load.

This path calls me ever on,
Wander I must, I must away.
Someday maybe I shall rest,
Someday, somewhere I shall stay.
But for now the sky's enough,
And birdsong is my only friend.
Wanderlust is in my blood,
And who knows where my road will end.

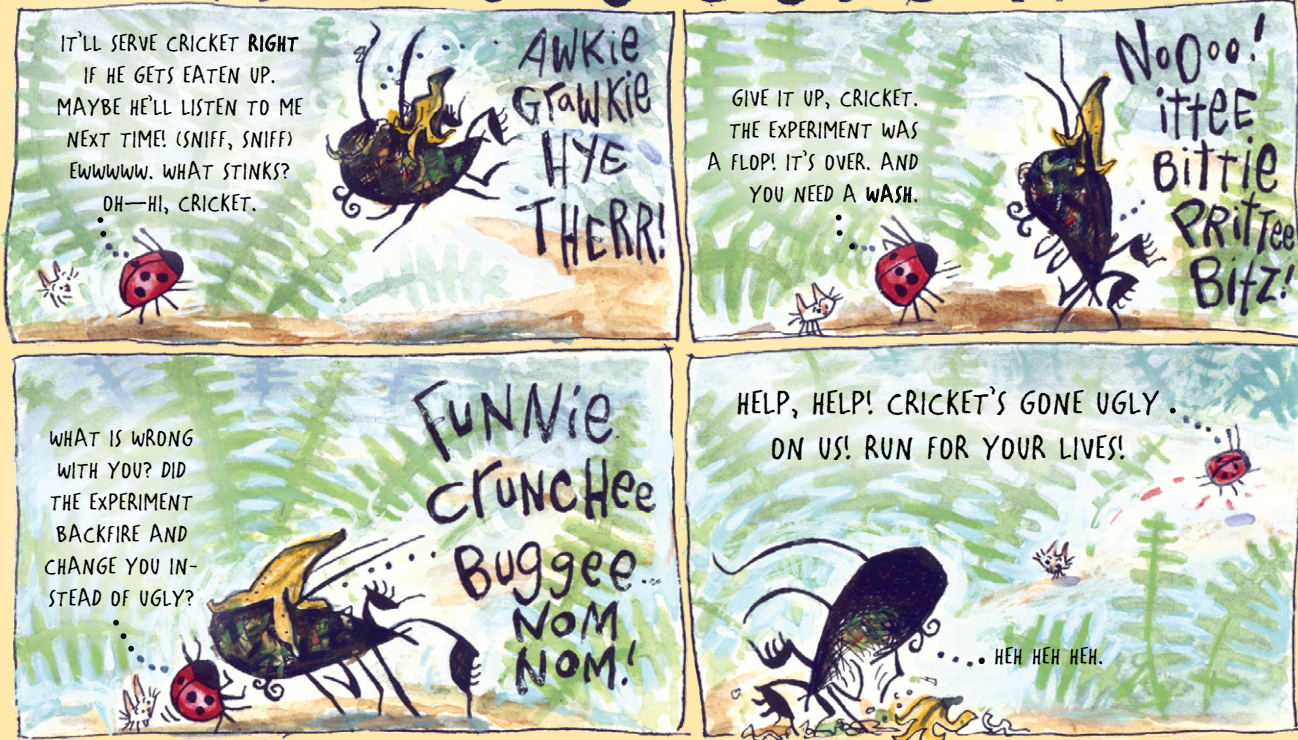
Second prize 11 and up

Grace Halloran, age 13
Pittsburgh, PA

Undertone

Tchaikovsky's Fifth
Schubert's Third
One not played
One conquered
A world of violinists,
I am just one.
Unthought of,
Unheard of,
Outshined.
Finally worked my way
Up to third chair—
In a middle school orchestra.
I'm on my path
To go pro,
But the competition of
This world is so huge.
Dvorak—New World Symphony
I'm in a new world
Where a Seitz concerto is
Only the beginning.

Cricket & Ladybug: Uglee TymeZ



Third prize 10 and under

Alexander Massier, age 10
Westlake, OH

Be an Architect

My work's not easy:
Think, plan, calculate, and draw.
Architects are smart.

Third prize 10 and under

Ella Robinett, age 8
Birmingham, AL

Being an Artist

I have gone from scribbling to coloring.
I have gone from coloring to painting.
I might go from painting to collages.
My art bag will weigh a ton.
On my lunch breaks my sandwiches are stamps.
If art were an Olympic sport, I would try to get in.
My brush would be leaping, prancing, and dancing
across the page.
When I grow up I want to be an artist.
But I know it will not be too easy.

Third prize 11 and up

Adia Madjaric, age 11
Freedom, PA

Cookie Jar

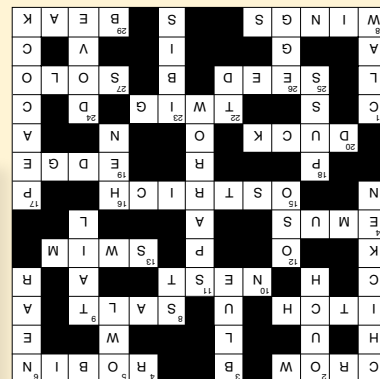
I'm reaching for the cookie jar,
so close, but then again, so far.
Up there on the highest shelf,
I would gladly help myself.
Peanut butter, chocolate chip,
mouth watering to take a nip.
The cookies soft and sweet and chewy,
all the chocolate chips so gooey.
Gazing up at all the splendor,
cookie jar, next to the blender.
With flowers pink and lid so yellow,
temptingly smelling of sweet marshmallow.
Almost got it, fingers brushing,
now my entire hand is touching.
Jar securely in my arms,
I listen and hear no alarms.
Blissfully I soar to the ground,
hoping I don't make a sound.
Now the cookie jar is mine!
Oh, what a wonderful time.

Honorable Mention

Jaya Alagar, age 12, Pittsburgh, PA. **Stacy Brock**, age 28, Fort Payne, AL. **Téa Freedman-Susskind**, age 11, Redmond, WA. **Eric Hollweg**, age 9, Cleveland, OH. **Isabella Issa**, age 9, Westlake, OH. **Julie Lee**, age 9, Rocky River, OH. **Brittany Meyer**, age 14, Canton, MI. **Ansley Skipper**, age 10, Memphis, TN. **Zoe Strothkamp**, age 10, Portland, OR.

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

Solution to Crossbird Puzzle



Aleesah Darlison for "Magali of Istanbul," from *Touchdown Magazine*, June 2010, Vol. 95, No. 5, text © 2010 by Aleesah Darlison.
Linnet Books/The Shoe String Press, Inc. for "Nasreddin Hoca and the Third Shot" from *A Treasury of Turkish Folktales* by Barbara K. Walker, text © 1988 by Barbara K. Walker.
"Ren and the Shadow Imps," text © 2003 by Fred Durbin, art © 2003 by Renato Alcarão.
Photograph accompanying "Winter Window" is courtesy Shutterstock.

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NEW POETRY CONTEST

Wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to communicate with animals, as Dejarío can in "The Penguin Whisperer" and Henry does in "The Cygnet"? Or even as Cricket learned to do with Ugly Bird? (Awkee Sqawkee Buggeez!) What would animals tell us, if they could? How would their perceptions of the world differ from a human's?

Tater was especially interested in the scientific possibility of interspecies communication. And Muffin really, really wanted to be able to "whisper" to horses. For this month's contest, they both want to read your best poetry about whispering to an animal.

Will you be a dog or cat whisperer? Or maybe write about a wild animal, or even an imaginary one? Will your poetry capture how your animal thinks and feels, like the story "Magali of Istanbul" capture's a cat's point of view? Will your poem be about the relationship between the animal and a human? Or will it be about some adventure in the animal's life?

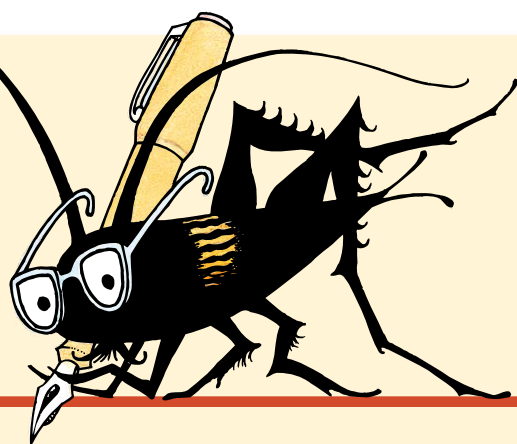
Just fill in the blank in the title "The _____ Whisperer" and start writing. Everybuggy will be whispering around the Cricket Country mailbox waiting to read your best poem of 24 lines or less about "The _____ Whisperer." *Shhh!*

Contest Rules

1. Your contest entry must be your very own original work. Ideas and words should not be copied.
2. If you're 14 years old or younger, your entry must be signed by your parent or guardian, saying it is your own original work, that no help was given, and granting *Cricket* permission to publish prizewinning entries in the April 2013 issue or on our website. If you're older than 14, you must sign your own work, verifying that it is original.
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. Incomplete entries cannot be considered. Your entry will be incomplete if you forget to include your age or a signature verifying that your work is original.
7. Your entry must be received by **January 25, 2013**.
8. Send entries to **Cricket League**, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354. (No faxes or email submissions, please!)



Old Cricket says



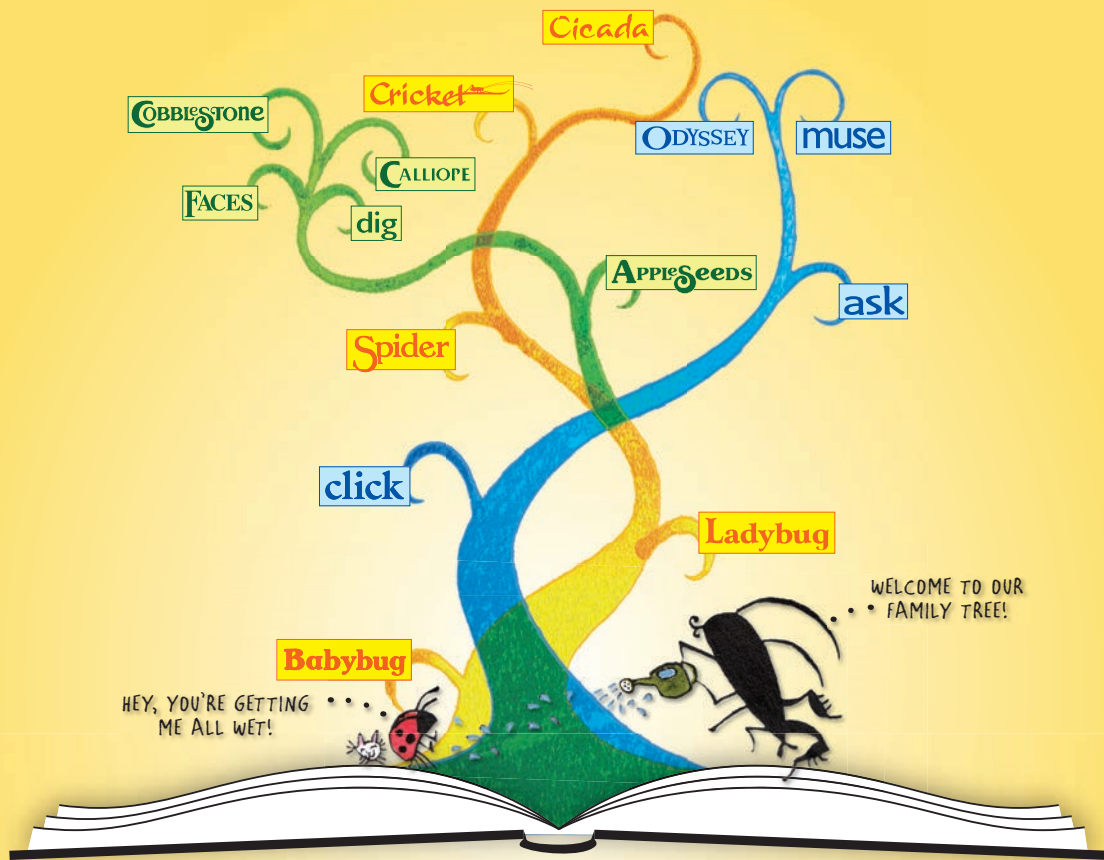
SOME OF MY dearest friends are crows. Yes, I know that farmers don't like crows and get mad at them for pulling up tender corn shoots. On the other hand, during one season on an average farm, crows gobble up some nineteen bushels of harmful insects. So, maybe it all sort of balances out. Of the same family as jays, ravens, magpies, rooks, and jackdaws, the common crow is uncommonly smart, bold, and sassy. Crows can learn to talk—if they want to and you're patient—and say a lot more than “Caw.” As I've heard from the clan of crows who perch in my backyard trees, they bark, squawk, gargle, and make clacking noises. If they see a cat in the bushes, they all set up an earsplitting chorus of what sounds like “Cat! Cat! Cat!” and keep yelling until the befuddled creature can't stand their indignant shouts and goes off to find a calmer spot.

Crows, it would seem, are even smarter than I thought. For a long time, I supposed that human beings were just about the only makers of tools and laborsaving gadgets. A little while ago, however, an ornithologist (that's a bird watcher with a scientific degree) rambling through the woods was amazed to see a crow carefully trimming a broken twig with its beak until only a sharp hook remained. It was a tool! The observer guessed it was an invention to pry out bugs from the tree bark. If so, it's an important observation. It could change many of our ideas about birds' intelligence and behavior.

Who knows what future discoveries can tell us about ourselves, as well as crows? We could have more hidden, unsuspected abilities than we ever imagined. It wouldn't surprise me.

Old Cricket

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