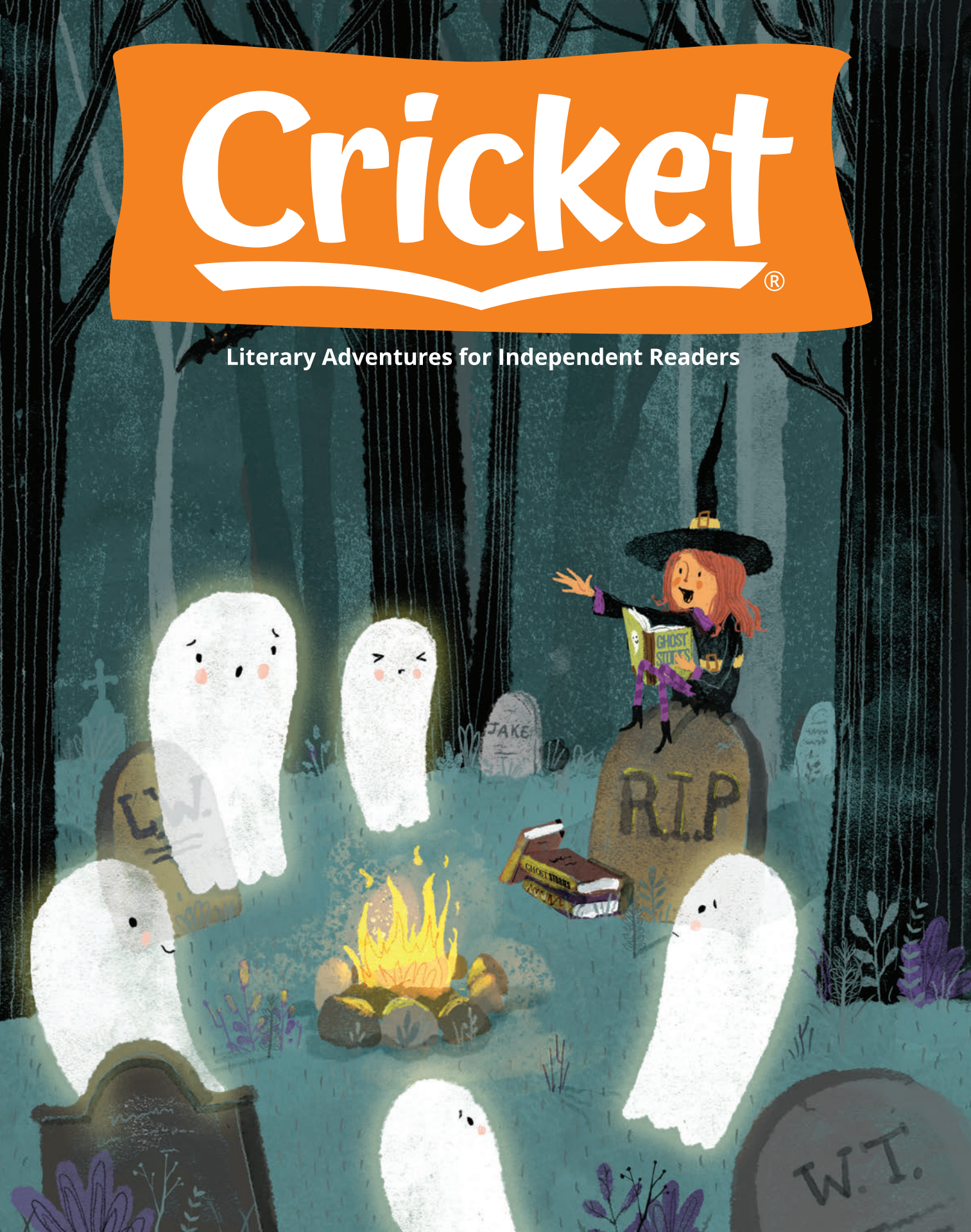


# Cricket®

Literary Adventures for Independent Readers



# Cricket

the realm of imagination

October 2020 Volume 48 Number 2



PHOTO BY LISA FAUGHT

## COVER AND BORDER

by Lee White

"Ghost Stories"

*watercolor, ink, and digital*

Lee spends his days breathing life into his imaginary world. He works primarily in watercolor but likes to include all sorts of media, such as ink, colored pencil, and collage.

Lee graduated with honors from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, and earned his Master of Fine Arts in illustration, also with honors, from the University of Hartford in Connecticut. He has illustrated a number of children's books, including *Emma and the Whale*; *Love, Santa*; and *Kate, Who Tamed the Wind*. He has also done commercial work for various clients, including Marks & Spencer, Amazon, Laika, United Airlines, Verizon, Disney, and National Geographic.

When he is not busy illustrating, Lee teaches all of his watercolor secrets through the Society of Visual Storytelling, an online art school for artists of all skill levels.

He lives with his wife, little boy, and a grumpy old cat in a 100-year-old house in Portland, Oregon.

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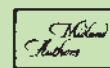


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Dear Everybuggy,

Our grandparents got my older sister Ana Jean a subscription to *Cricket* for Christmas 2019. After she reads it, I get to. I am terrible at spelling, math, and grammar. I've been homeschooled since second grade. I love to read, write, and draw. I also like to sew. I want to make a dress for myself or one of my siblings. I used to take ballet, but with six kids we had too much going on with school, sports, and music. So we quit all our sports and now do only one: climbing at a bouldering gym.

A few days ago we were looking in little free libraries, and I found in one of them a *Cricket* magazine from December 1977! It was ssssoooooo different from the ones now! I don't like to have favorites, so I'll just say that I think Ladybug is most like me. I don't have a favorite book because there are so many to choose from, but some that I like are: *Bud, Not Buddy*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Harry Potter*, *The Penderwicks*, *Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes*, and *The Young People's Book of Saints*. When I grow up I want to be a Catholic missionary.

Mag McD., age 11  
Homestead, Pennsylvania

Dear Cricket Family,

I love your mag. I have been getting it for four years! Spellbound (May/June 2020), I own a target and bow at home. Elison (May/June 2020), I ♥ D and D. My character's name is Zaria, and she is a half-giant, half-human ranger.

I would love to know if anyone loves chess. I have my own chess club.

Luna Lovegood, age 11  
Lake Oswego, Oregon

Hi!

I am a big fan of Harry Potter. I was wondering if you could do an article on pangolins. These animals are poached for their scales. I think it would be good to let people know that they need help.

Gwen, age 10  
Colchester, Vermont

INTERESTING TIMES!  
IT'S A GOOD TIME TO  
TRY NEW THINGS, BUT  
ALSO NICE TO TAKE  
COMFORT IN A GOOD  
BOOK.



Dear Cricket and Friends,

I love your mags! I am most alike in personality to Marty the inchworm. My two favorite stories are "The Girl in the Windmill" (January 2020) and "Good Samson" (March 2020). I love Ugly Bird's crossword puzzles. It must be tiring to have to be constantly dodging Ugly! Ha-ha!

Sylvia B., age 10  
Portland, Oregon

p.s. I also love the story "The Red Junglefowl in the Fairy Teacup" (April 2020). Can you do more stories like it? I love animals and helping them.

Dear Everybuggy,

I greatly enjoy reading your magazines. They have been one of the only bright points in my life recently, due to COVID-19. I greatly enjoy reading books by Tamora Pierce, Garth Nix, and Erin Hunter. I greatly recommend the *Warriors* books by Erin Hunter. Who are your favorite authors, Old Cricket?

Aislinn, age 10  
Los Alamos, New Mexico

p.s. I am lefthanded, and it is a pain, but it is also useful in wrestling, because I can switch stances.

Dear Aislinn,

Oh, I could fill the rest of this Letterbox with a list of my favorite authors! But I'll just take the space here to mention a few: Lloyd Alexander, Frederic S. Durbin, Lewis Carroll, Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, P. L. Travers, Betty MacDonald, Thornton Burgess, Laura Ingalls Wilder, . . .

Happy reading,  
Old Cricket

Dear Cricket,

How are you? I am well. I am in fourth grade. My sister, Juniper, is age eleven and in fifth grade. Because of the virus, we have to do school from home. But we get to do things more because we aren't in school. For example, we can read

WE'RE USED TO DODGING UGLY.  
IT'S LIKE A HOBBY. GOOD  
EXERCISE, TOO. (PUFF PUFF)



more. Juniper and I have gotten to ride our bikes more.

Beatrice Mahnke, age 9  
Wenham, Massachusetts

I am new to the Letterbox. I have three sisters and two younger brothers. I am the oldest. I ♥ soccer and baking and reading and taking pictures. I play violin and piano. I am missing school (May 2020) and I wonder if anyone else is. Ashes, age 10  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

I've been curious about whether anyone has found new hobbies or things that they enjoy with all this free time with a pandemic going on, or if anyone has found opportunities to do things that they have wanted to do. You can post them and talk about them here!

Feline Fantasy  
Quarantine Hobbies  
Down to Earth, Chatterbox

I've been learning both American Sign Language and Spain Spanish (which is way different from regular Spanish as to pronunciation and stuff). So at the moment I'm learning three different languages: French, ALS, and Spanish. I'm also hoping that my dad teaches me some calligraphy so I can do fancy writing.

Joan B. of Arc, age 17  
Quarantine Hobbies, Down to Earth

Here in Vermont, instead of Columbus Day, we celebrate Indigenous People's Day, 'cause Columbus didn't even discover America. He was just island hopping in the Caribbean and was an evil dude to all the native people who were there. I think it's great that we have Indigenous People's Day. There are several other states and places that have Indigenous People's Day.

Leo  
Down to Earth

IF YOU LEARNED A  
NEW LANGUAGE,  
AND I LEARNED  
ONE, WE'D HAVE  
TWO BETWEEN US.



SO WE COULD TALK  
TO EACH OTHER AND  
NOT UNDERSTAND? I  
DON'T GET IT.



Dear Cricket,

I love your magazines! Ladybug, which is your favorite color, red or black? I hope you are having a great day. I ♥ you guys! XO XO

Kitty Kane, age 10  
Missoula, Montana

BLACK! AND RED!  
HOW COULD I CHOOSE  
WHEN THEY'RE SO  
PERFECTLY FABULOUS  
TOGETHER?

MEWY NICE!



Hello, Everyone,

I love your magazines because they are colorful and fun! I have a dog named Roxie and a rabbit named Ruby, and my brother has two rabbits named Coal and Picket. I am homeschooled. I've gotten your magazines for about two years now. I am a first-time writer and I am looking forward to reading your next magazine. I like the short stories that rhyme. Thank you for sending me your magazines!

Julia Hayden  
Springfield, Ohio

Hey, Everybuggy!

I've been getting *Cricket* for about two years now, but I've never written before. I'm an avid horseback rider that does IEA (Interscholastic Equestrian Association) hunt seat. You make so many friends, and it's a really cool experience. My life pretty much revolves around horses! :)

I really, really love to read. Harry Potter, Renegades, and Keeper of the Lost Cities are my favorite book series. I also like trying different foods and writing books that never seem to get done.

If anybody rides horses, do you ride IEA? What discipline do you do? Thank you, everybuggy, for making me feel at home with y'all!

Mush-A-Roo  
Livermore, California

Here's a thread for talking about cats (and other animals you are owned by). Zipper is my oldest cat. She's almost fourteen. She's a calico. She'll eat about anything. She really likes feathers and catnip. She sucks on the feathers, and the catnip makes her lick everything and sometimes even play a little, which is rare! She's really lazy.

Indium (also known as Taffy) is our youngest cat; she's almost three. She's miniscule. She's incredibly social and loves everyone. She's also incredibly skittish; she's terrified of pretty much anything. Taffy's also a calico.

I LIKE THE SOUND OF  
MINISCULE, FEISTY,  
AND FEROCIOUS!



Kitten is our most introverted cat. She's feisty and ferocious and gets into a lot of scrapes! The vet knows her far too well. She is almost as tiny as Taffy. Most of her size is fur. She's short-furred but pretty fluffy. She's an outdoor cat, and her coat pat-

tern is a torbie (tortoiseshell-tabby)—lavender cream, to be specific. I write a lot of stories about her and recently started a comic strip about her.

Blackfooted Bobcat  
Pets, Down to Earth

We have two dogs, who are rescues, and a cat. Sunny is a goofy but incredibly smart Great Pyrenees. He knows a lot of tricks, but he'll only perform them when he wants to. He's about seven years old. He's very sweet, though he tends to be a bit antisocial.

Casey is an anxious pit bull/Black Mouth Cur mix who has been in at least three shelters. She is originally from Texas. We think she might have been through a hurricane, since she is terrified of rainstorms, and even cloudy weather will make her anxious sometimes. She'll do anything for food. She loves cheese puffs and grilled chicken.

Cosmo is the third cat we've had in my lifetime. He's very sweet and sociable, but he's also a pig—he's very fat and likes to steal food whenever he can. He's even gotten on top of a heated oven to steal cookies.

We also volunteer at the animal shelter, so we've met a lot of other animals. It's been very hard not to get another one in certain cases.

Agent Winter  
Pets, Down to Earth

I paused, one paw raised, and sniffed the air. Strange scents drifted into my nostrils. I closed my eyes, listening. I was close to B.I.G.'s headquarters atop the Peak, spying for F.A.F.A. I breathed deeply, feeling the tingling sensation of shifting into a smaller form. My wolfish frame shrunk, my silver furs compacting and cascading over my new foxlike body. My tail lengthened and bushed out, my muzzle narrowing and pupils becoming more catlike. . . .

Sylver Moonshimmer  
Kynqdom, Chatterbox

I currently live in the gigantic city of Hong Kong! It's your classic city: massive skyscrapers, lots of people, and bright lights. I really love cities because there're so many different people and places to eat and shop. One thing people don't know about Hong Kong is that there's a lot of wilderness. The city is built along the seashore and between mountains. It's a tropical area, so everything is covered with bright green trees. The beaches are also really nice, and there're always people sailing/windsurfing on the ocean.

<3 Fidelity  
Urban/Suburban/Rural Thread  
Down to Earth

## CHIRPS FROM CRICKET'S LETTERBOX AND CHATTERBOX

Inktober is a yearly October prompting, where every day you draw/ink a sketch based upon a daily prompt. I enjoy seeing everyone else's artwork!

Tuxedo Kitten  
Pudding's Place

Halloween costumes are so fun! Dressing up as a cowboy is a lot of fun. Some other ideas are pirates, Aztec warriors, a robot, some sort of knight, or a character from *The Princess Bride*.

Silverwaxwing  
Halloween Costumes, Down to Earth

I've been making my own Halloween costumes forever. I was a hot-air balloon in third grade. In sixth grade, I was the night sky. Last year I was a peacock. I've also been a phoenix and an elf. Elf ear advice: use masking tape and makeup; it's way easier than buying elf ears.

Stardust  
Halloween Costumes, Down to Earth

I L-L-L-LOVE SCARY  
STORIES! AND SCARY  
JOKES! SHIVERING AND  
LAUGHING AT THE SAME  
TIME IS THE B-B-B-BEST!



What kind of music do mummies listen to? *Wrap music!* When do skeletons laugh? *When something tickles their funny bones!* Why do ghosts like taking the elevator? *It lifts their spirits.*

Fleet  
This Month

I have a lot of ideas for my future: child therapist/psychologist, foster mom, author, public speaker. Someone who speaks for/against certain things or ideas and fights for change. And lyricist (but more for fun than a career).

Luna-Starr, age 27 eons  
Career Aspirations, Down to Earth

The Happiness Challenge thread was created by September, where you are challenged to post one or more things each day that make you happy. Mine for today is that time when the sun is really low in the sky, whether it's morning or nighttime, and it just floods everything with golden light.

Leafy  
Happiness Challenge, Down to Earth

Send letters to **Cricket's Letterbox**,

P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354,  
or email us at [cricket@cricketmedia.com](mailto:cricket@cricketmedia.com).  
Letters may be edited for length.

Visit the Chatterbox at:  
[cricketmagkids.com/chatterbox](http://cricketmagkids.com/chatterbox)



# Cricket Country

WELCOME  
TO THE FIRST  
ANNUAL GHOSTIE  
GHOST STORIES  
CAMPFIRE! YAY!

SOMEBUGGY ELSE GO  
FIRST—MY STORY  
IS SO SCARY,  
EVERYBUGGY ALWAYS  
RUNS HOME SCREAMING.

SNORT!

I KNOW ONE ABOUT A CHILDREN'S  
THEATER HAUNTED BY A GHOSTLY MOM—  
NO ONE LEAVES UNTIL EVERY KID GETS  
THIRTEEN CURTAIN CALLS!

BOOM!  
YOU'RE  
COMPOST!

YIKES! (SHIVER.)  
I'LL REMEMBER  
THAT, NEXT TIME  
I FEEL DROWSY IN  
THE GARDEN.

ECK! DID YOU HEAR  
ABOUT THE HUNGRY,  
HUNGRY GARDEN?  
IT LURES YOU IN  
WITH PRETTY  
BLOOMS, ALONG A  
MAZE OF WINDING  
PATHS, AND WHEN  
YOU GET TIRED AND  
TRY TO REST IN THE  
PLEASANT SHADE...

MEWY  
SHOOOSH!

MAYBE IT'S JUST  
YOU, LADYBUG.  
(HA HA)

I HAVE A STORY  
SET IN A HAUNTED  
LIBRARY. CHECK OUT  
AS MANY BOOKS  
AS YOU WANT...  
BUT WHEN YOU GET  
HOME, ALLLLL  
YOUR BOOKS HAVE  
DISAPPEARED INTO  
THIN AIR.

... AND?

THAT'S IT! YOUR  
BOOKS ARE GONE.

THAT'S NOT  
SCARY.

IT IS  
TO ME!

YOU WANT SCARY? HOW  
ABOUT A MYSTERIOUS  
MUSICIAN WHO PROMISES  
TO TEACH STUDENTS  
TO PLAY MUSIC THAT  
TRANSPORTS EVERYONE  
WHO HEARS IT. SO THE  
STUDENTS PRACTICE AND  
PRACTICE. THEN ONE  
DAY... POOF! THEY'RE  
ALL GONE FOREVER.  
TRANSPORTED...

ECK! (SHIVER  
SHIVER!)

GHOSTS AREN'T REAL,  
SO THEY AREN'T  
SCARY, EITHER!  
HRUMPH! I THOUGHT WE  
WERE GOING TO ROAST  
MARSHMALLOWS.

YOU'D BE SCARED  
IF YOU HEARD MY  
GHOST STORY! IT'S  
ABOUT...

OOO!

FIRST THINGS  
FIRST—WHO HAS THE  
MARSHMALLOWS?

OOOOO...OWeee...ooch-ow-ow!

CRICKET  
SAID HE WAS  
BRINGING  
MARSH-  
MALLOWS.

UMMMM...  
WHAT'S THAT  
WAILING?

TIME TO GO!  
NOT  
BECAUSE WE'RE  
AFRAID...  
WE'RE NOT!  
BUT CRICKET  
MIGHT NEED  
HELP. WITH  
THE MARSH-  
MALLOWS, OR  
WHATEVER.

OOO! I THOUGHT I  
WAS LOST, BUT HERE  
I AM! I'VE GOT THE  
MARSHMALLOWS, AND  
I COLLECTED A FEW  
STICKS, TOO, HA-HA!  
WAIT— DO I KNOW  
YOU? DID I COME TO  
THE WRONG CAMPFIRE?

SO LET'S HAVE  
THEM, CRICKET!  
CRICKET? WHERE  
IS HE?

SOUNDS LIKE GHOSTS!  
WHAT IF GHOSTS GOT  
CRICKET?

I KNOW, PROBABLY.  
BUT... WHAT IF? ARE  
WE WORRIED? SHOULD  
WE GO SEE, OR MAYBE  
JUST RUN!?

THERE  
ARE NO  
GHOSTS!

OH  
YEAH?

MEW?

UM. AHM.  
COUGH  
COUGH..

BOO!



# THE NEW ARRIVAL

BY G. G. RUSSEY

Maya had never visited the public library before, and at this rate it looked like she never would. She knew it was around here somewhere, but the fog was so thick she could barely see her sneakers. Putting off her homework had been a mistake, but getting lost in her own neighborhood? That was just embarrassing.

She realized she'd been anxiously squeezing and bending her mom's library card. Maya put it in her pocket so she wouldn't snap it in two.

She looked to the right and saw she was standing in front of a black iron gate. The fog hid everything but the first and last two letters on the arch above her: "FR" and "RY."

"Finally!" she said. The Franklin Library.

She saw a dark, boxy shape ahead. As she walked closer, she found it was the entrance to a stone building. Barred glass doors swung open with a loud creak to greet her. A few dry leaves followed her in.

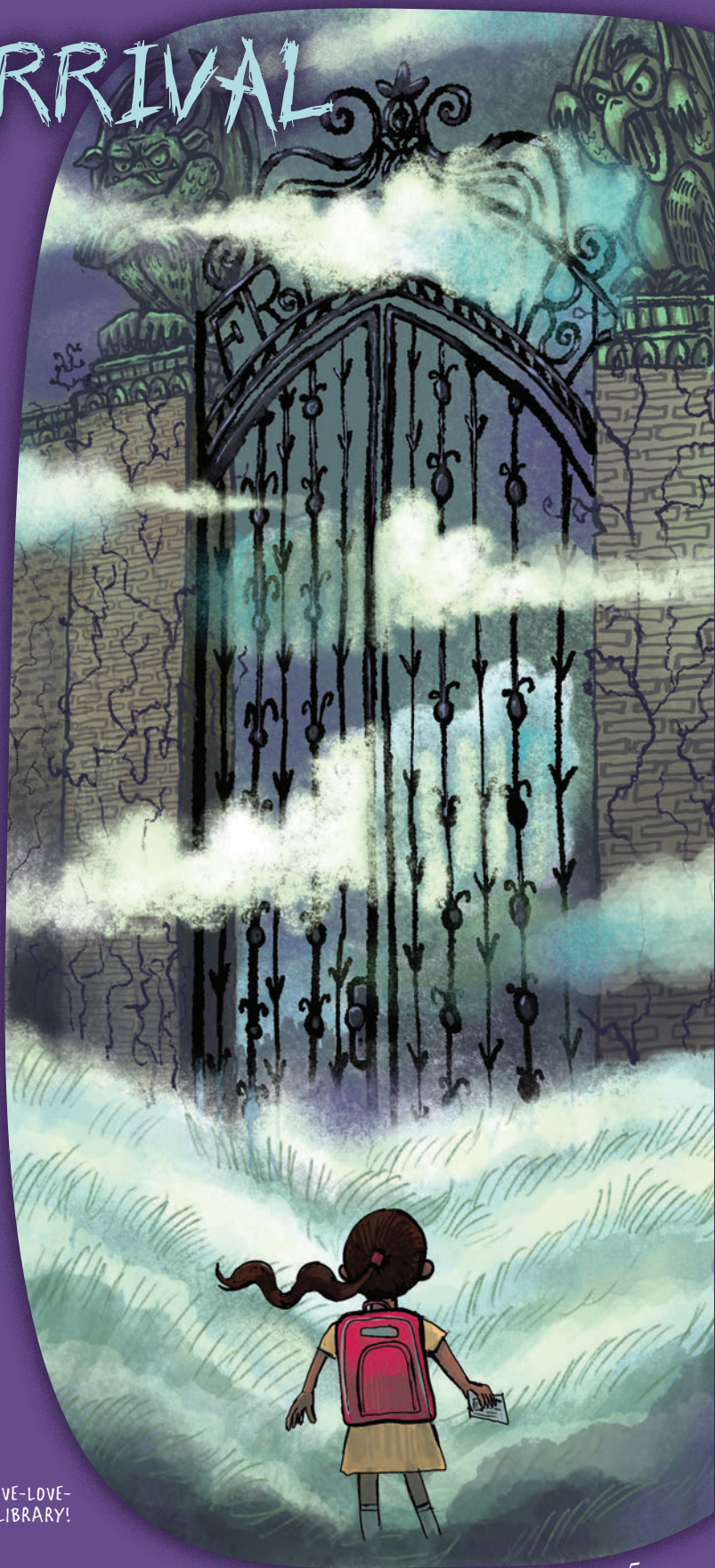
Is this it? she wondered as the doors squealed closed behind her.

The air was cold and stale. The only light came from the doors behind her and a tiny stained-glass window in front of her. It was a small, stone room—barely big enough to fit a car. It was empty except for a wide desk that looked like it was solid stone.

OOOO, I LOVE-LOVE-  
LOVE THE LIBRARY!

Illustrated by Bats Langley

text © 2020 by Dave Turka, art © 2020 by Bats Langley





HI THERE! DO YOU HAVE  
ANY MORE BOOKS ABOUT  
HORSES, OR PONIES?



HEY! QUIT THAT  
RACKET!

Maya bent down to get a better look at something carved into the front of the desk.

"Prudence Proudsort, Librarian," she read, squinting in the dim light.

"Yes?" a quiet voice replied.

Maya straightened up, startled. "I didn't see you there!"

"I must ask you to keep your voice down, young lady," Prudence Proudsort said, standing behind the desk. Her voice was just above a whisper, and her hair was pulled back in a tight, gray bun. Her stiff, heavy dress looked like something out of the old pictures hanging in Maya's grandma's house. "Now, how may I be of service?"

"Well, I—"

Maya began at her regular volume.

The librarian glared.

Maya began again, dropping her voice to a whisper. "I have to do a report on local history. My teacher says all our sources have to come from a public library. We're not allowed to use the Internet."

"There's no 'Internet' here, whatever that is. You've come to the right place to dig into

local history, though," the librarian said. "The collection is downstairs. Let's get you checked in so you can join them. Name?"

"Oh, I don't need a library card—I have my mom's."

"This isn't for a library card, dearie. It's for our collection records. Your name?"

Ugh, thought Maya, can't I just work on my stupid report?

"Maya Mays."

"Date of publication?"

"Publication?"

"Your birth date, Miss Mays."

Do all librarians talk like this? wondered Maya.

"May 6, 2009."

"2009? *Tempus fugit!* A child of the new millennium!" the librarian whispered loudly.

"Subjects?"

"Subjects?"

Maya asked back.

This was not her best conversation.

"What do you know more

about than most people? What could people learn about from you?"

"Well, I'm vegan, like my mom. Not many people around here are."

The librarian tilted her head to the side, looking puzzled.



TEMPUS FUGIT MEANS TIME FLIES—AND IT DOES!  
ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE HAVING FUN. OR WHEN  
YOUR LIBRARY BOOKS ARE COMING DUE...







“It means I don’t use anything that comes from animals. Food, drinks, clothes, whatever.”

“And you’ve been able to *survive* like that? How remarkable—you’ll make an excellent addition. Let’s take you down to the rest of the collection.”

Finally, thought Maya.

Prudence Proudsort lowered out of sight. Maya came around the desk to what looked like an open manhole.

“Come along, child,” came Prudence Proudsort’s quiet voice from the darkness below.

Maya started to get a bad feeling about this cold, dark place. Why was this librarian so weird? How could anyone living today not know about the Internet? And why were the books kept underground?

Still, it was the only public library around, and her report was due tomorrow.

Maya crouched over the manhole and gave a few sniffs. It didn’t *smell* like a sewer. . . .

Maya stepped down a circular metal staircase into the darkness. The temperature dropped several degrees, and the floor below was surprisingly soft. Her eyes tried to adjust, but she couldn’t see a thing.

“Too dark?” the librarian asked, and a dim, purple glow slowly filled the space.

Maya saw she was standing in a vast underground chamber. The floor and distant walls were dirt. Small roots hung from the low dirt ceiling.

And all around her, as far as she could see, were rows of long boxes. There were metal boxes and wooden boxes. They were all about the same size and shape as Prudence Proudsort’s desk. Or what Maya had *thought* was a desk . . .

“Are those—”



"Coffins?" finished Prudence Proudsort.  
"Oh, yes. A fine collection of Franklin  
citizens going back more than two hundred  
years. Many subject experts among them,  
and each a wealth of information about local  
history."

Maya's heartbeat drummed in her ears.  
She knew she should run, but terror gripped  
her like a stone fist—she couldn't budge.

She watched Prudence Proudsort glide  
over to a coffin.

"Here's Mr. Myers, Franklin's first  
mayor."

An old man's head and chest popped  
into view, as if he had sat up *through* the  
coffin.

"Won't you let us rest in peace, Prudy?"  
Mr. Myers said, his great white mustache  
flapping. "We've no desire to be part of your  
ridiculous library!"

The librarian ignored him and gestured to  
another coffin.

"And here we have Mr. Cohen, who  
opened a kazoo shop in 1921."

The jolt of a high-pitched *ZRRRRR!* from  
Mr. Cohen's coffin was all Maya needed  
to get moving. She scrambled up the stairs  
as fast as she could, jumped over Prudence  
Proudsort's casket, and landed in front of the  
barred double doors.

The fog outside had cleared. Maya saw  
a building across the street with a sign that  
said "Franklin Public Library." Her eyes  
found the iron gate she'd come through. It  
didn't say "FRANKLIN LIBRARY"—it said  
"FRANKLIN CEMETERY."

Maya grabbed the doors by their metal  
bars and pushed and pulled as hard as she







A MAUSOLEUM IS A BUILDING  
THAT CONTAINS A TOMB.

could. The harsh clang of rattling metal and glass echoed in the small stone mausoleum, but the doors wouldn't open.

"You're making an awful lot of noise, young lady," said the quiet voice of Prudence Proudsort.

Maya spun around to face her. "Please, let me go."

"Go? What about your study of local history?"

"My teacher wanted us to use books and newspapers. I don't think we're allowed to use . . . ghosts."

"Dear child, don't you understand? You're part of the collection now, like everyone downstairs. You can study history for its own sake. And what better source than the people who lived—and died—through that history? I don't like to speak ill of the living, but your teacher is shortsighted. Fortunately, you'll never need to see that silly teacher again."

Maya had never wanted to see a teacher so much in her life.

"But *I'm* not a ghost."

"A few days here should fix that," the librarian said with a kind smile. "You'll be right as rain in less than a week."

Maya had to escape, but how? The window was too small. The doors were barred and locked. Maya guessed only Prudence Proudsort could open them, but the librarian wanted her here. The librarian also wanted her to be quiet. That was it! Maybe if she made enough noise, she'd get kicked out of the library!

"I want to leave!" Maya yelled.

"Your place is here now, and I'll thank you to keep your voice down. This is a library, after all."

"I said I want to GO!" shouted Maya. She kept shouting, took a breath, and shouted some more.

It was working! Prudence Proudsort was coming over to let her out!

Except that she didn't let Maya out. The librarian ran an icy fingertip across Maya's neck. Maya's shout became a croak as her throat grew cold and tight. She tried to yell again, but it came out a whisper.

Mr. Myers's head popped through the floor. "Goodness, girl! I'd say you were loud enough to wake the dead, but Prudy already woke us."

Maya's mind raced, trying to figure out another way to make noise. She thought about everything she had with her that might help. That's when she got a new idea.

"Can people check things out of this library?" asked Maya, as she started digging around in her pockets.

"Well, it's never come up before," Prudence Proudsort said, "but . . . yes, I suppose so."

Maya pulled out her mom's library card. "I'd like to check myself out then, please."

"*Yourself?*" shrieked Prudence Proudsort. Mr. Myers smiled as the librarian blushed and smoothed her dress. "In all my years as a librarian, I have never had an item check *itself* out. It would be most irregular and quite out of the question."

Maya's shoulders slumped. Her throat felt thick and her vision blurred with tears.

MEW!



WAIT! YOU FORGOT  
YOUR BOOKS. WE HAVE  
"THE GIRL WITH THE  
LADYBUG TATTOO"!



SORRY, GOTTA GO LOOK UP PRETTY  
PONIES ON THE INTERNET!

"Oh, come on, Prudy," Mr. Myers said. "You've been pestering us for years about what a great library you're making. So is this a library or isn't it?"

Prudence Proudsort glared down at Mr. Myers's head. Mr. Myers glared right back up at her.

Without a word, Prudence Proudsort took a pad of paper and a fancy pen from her dress. She scribbled on the paper so hard Maya thought it might tear. The librarian tore the yellowed paper from the pad and handed it to Maya.

"See that you're back by the due date," the librarian said.

Maya felt warm air against the back of her neck. She turned and saw that the double doors were open. When she turned back, Prudence Proudsort and Mr. Myers had disappeared—she was alone.

Maya ran out of the mausoleum, through the graveyard, across the street, and up the steps of the *real* library. She stopped in the library's quiet reading room, catching her breath and waiting for her heart to slow down.

A young man in a cozy-looking chair looked at her curiously over his novel. Usually, Maya would have been embarrassed, but right now she was just happy to see someone else with a pulse. She was about to talk to a librarian—she still had that report to do—when she remembered the checkout slip from Prudence.

Maya was due back in seventy-five years. The overdue fee was a penny per day.

*I wonder how many times I can  
renew . . .* 





# Dear Unwelcome Visitors

by Jillian Schmidt



I do not want your eye of newt,  
Your weasel teeth, your mandrake root.  
Stop leaving me your fingernails,  
And spider legs, and serpent tails.  
I never asked for raven wings.  
What kind of person brings such things?

I cannot turn these “gifts” to charms  
To shield you from all ills and harms.  
I have no spells for luck or fame.  
I can’t foretell your true love’s name.  
My potions cannot make you rich.  
For the last time, I’m not a witch!

I know I live beside the bog,  
In this old cottage, wreathed in fog,  
And yes, I own black cloaks and hats  
And several very well-trained cats,  
But I’ve no power to enchant.  
And honestly, I’m glad I can’t.

You hate your neighbor? Well, a curse  
Would only make your feuding worse.  
You fell in love? Just let them know.  
Your love rejects you? Let them go.  
And don’t try to change who you are  
With rancid herbs mashed in a jar.

What you need is more common sense.  
What *I* need is a higher fence.  
Take back this mess and don’t assume  
I’m magic since I own a broom.  
I promise, if I did know how,  
You’d all be turned to toads by now!

Sincerely,

Still Not a Witch

# The Traveler

by Connie Martin

## Part 2

*Wandering around after school one day, Jamie finds herself in an unfamiliar part of town. Lost and with night falling, she follows a white cat up to a ramshackle house filled with valuable antiques. An old man named Eddy lives there, and over tea and cakes, he tells her that he's a time traveler. He says he brought Caesar, the white cat, home with him from Persia. He claims to have sailed to the New World with Christopher Columbus and helped George Washington Carver discover the fifty-ninth use for the peanut. When Jamie gets up to leave, Eddy hands her some coins so she can call home from a gas station pay phone. He also tells her that he would be glad if she came to see him again. At the gas station, the first coin refuses to fit into the slot. Looking closely, Jamie sees a heavy gold piece with Roman numerals and Latin inscribed around a man's leaf-encircled head. The coin looks ancient.*

**The next day** Jamie walked up to the same rundown house. It was Saturday afternoon, and all the ghosts of the previous, eerie night had disappeared. Awkwardly, she stood on the porch. So many boards were broken or missing, she was amazed she hadn't fallen through the night before.

She was about to turn back, when Caesar hopped onto the porch and mewed a hello.

"Yes, I'm here. Don't ask why." She knocked at the door, then waited, fingering the bulky coins nestled inside her jeans pocket. "Hello? Anybody home?"

"Come in, lass."

In the daylight the front room looked both filthier and finer. Faded grape-patterned drapes wilted over the windows. Ugly, thought Jamie. Who would buy grape drapes? The ceiling light was a frosted glass globe with dead moths entombed in it. Cracks scrawled across the plaster walls, and yellow water spots stained the ceiling.

Yet the plush rug under the massive furniture glowed a vibrant red, woven with designs of men with dog bodies. The objects in the glass display case gleamed in the sunlight and were even more beautiful than last night. The door to the coat closet stood open, revealing clothes from different eras. Maybe, she thought, Eddy was once an actor, and these were his costumes.

She saw the old man sitting on a sofa covered with heavy, flowery fabric, the arms and legs carved like lion paws. Beside the sofa stood a table with a glossy figurine on its marble top. A shepherdess, holding a crook in her right hand and a bouquet of flowers in her left.

"I, um, brought your coins back, Eddy," Jamie said. "I think you made a mistake." She held them out in her open palm. "I found a book at the library on old coins. The money you gave me, well, it's worth a lot more than fifty cents."

Illustrated by Daniel Krall





Eddy didn't say anything. He just sat looking at a wooden box in his hands.

"I didn't tell anyone," Jamie continued. "Not even about you."

He opened the lid, and music began to play.

She stepped closer, taking a package of cellophane-wrapped snack cakes out of her jacket pocket. "I brought you these, to repay you for your teacakes." Her lips formed a sarcastic smile. "Don't think they had any of these in ancient Rome."

"More than kind of ye. Keep the coins. Caesar would want ye to have 'em."

She wasn't sure if he meant the cat or the emperor. "Well, thanks for the stories. And the tea. It was really nice of you." She slid the coins back into her pocket.

He nodded heavily. He seemed different, weaker, as he slouched on the elegant cushions. There was a moment of silence. Then, both curious and testing, she asked, "Everything here is old. Antiques. Last night you said you'd never been to the future. Why?"

"How could I, now? The future is na made yet. There be no place to go. Ye, and young ones like ye, have yet to create the future."

"How? All I have is a world you grownups have left for me."

"Na, lass. Time can be a good friend or a cruel enemy to each of us. Treat her with respect, and she'll take ye to a grand future." His green eyes gazed intently at her. "The future is the most promisin' place of all. And it be waitin' for ye."

She slid her hands into her back jeans pockets. "If that's so, how come you live in the past?"

He gave a wry smile. "My future was supposed to be there. I was too rash and fool-headed to see it." His eyes fell on something inside the box. "And now it be too late."

"Tell me how you travel," she challenged him.

"With me trusty cane."

She hated grownups who lied to her. Now this old man was making a fool of her, and she wanted to trap him or embarrass him into admitting it. "What if I'm ready to pay the price for the ticket?"

"Time, lass, is a river with thousands of currents to each place. The ones behind, they be history. The ones ahead are opportunities. It's just a matter of openin' the doors and step-pin' through."

"How do you open a door?"

"I canna' tell ye that."

"How do you step through?"

"Very carefully."

She didn't know if he was serious or joking. "What does it feel like to step through time? Get any weird sensations?"

He parted his lips as if to speak, then closed them again. He studied her for a

moment and finally confided, "I see the doorway openin' and I either fall into it or fall back away from it and miss it. If I jump through, I do feel a 'weird sensation' all right as I float—colors and light and sounds fillin' me bein'. And then I hit the ground in another time and place."

"Ever hurt yourself on one of your landings?"

"I jammed me thumb, and it still is na' quite right." He showed her the oddly cocked joint. "And another time I scraped me whole face down the side of a gypsy wagon."

He took a small picture from the music box and gazed at it. "And I've broken me leg." It was as if he had traveled back in time before her eyes, the way he stared at the image. With trembling fingers, he handed it to her.

"What is this?" Astonished, she held the thin sheet of cold metal with its brown-tone images of a woman and a man. The woman wore a long, full dress with puffy sleeves. She had her hair swept up into a bun. Jamie looked at her wistfully; she was beautiful.

"It be a tintype. 'Tis how the first photographs were made 150 years ago."

"Is she alive now?" Jamie raised her eyebrows, bracing herself for his answer.

He shook his head mournfully. "She died 104 years and twenty-nine days ago."

"And you knew her?"

"That be me with her."

Jamie looked at the tintype again, this time at the man. Though he wore baggy pants with suspenders and a shirt with rolled-up sleeves, he was young and good-







looking. She peered closer at his face, then at the old man's before her. The resemblance was spooky. Uneasily, she handed Eddy the tintype and watched as he traced the woman's silver-and-brown image with his aged finger.

As if still caught inside the picture, he continued, "I landed in the back alley of a dress shop in New York City. 'Twas 1863. I fell through a pile of crates and upset a nest of mice. When I opened me eyes, I was lookin' up into the face of this beautiful lass. She was gapin' at me. She thought I was an angel the way I fell from the sky, but couldn't understand how an angel could be lyin' there in an alley with a broken leg."

"What did you tell her?"

"That I fell from the roof. I didn't realize the roof was five stories high. She couldn't believe I had survived such a fall." With a half smile, he glanced at Jamie before returning to the ghostly image in his hand.

"She nursed me back to health in the stor-age room. Said mine was the slowest-healin' leg in history. She was right. I lived each day for her visits. What a lass! I told her about me travels, and she laughed just as you did. Then one day she kissed me. Can ye believe it, now? *She* kissed *me*! After I had been lyin' awake nights plannin' it, and there she went and did it." Tears swam in his eyes. "She told me she loved me."





Jamie sat on the floor, hugging her knees to her chest. "What happened?"

"The doorway came soon after. Just after buyin' her this box. I panicked. I didn't know if the doorway would ever come again." He sat in silence, but the music box chimed on, slowing as he stared at the picture.

"Why don't you go back?" asked Jamie.

"I've tried many a time to go back and break me other leg." He made a vain attempt to smile. "I have never found that doorway again. Never caught the same current."

"You quit trying?"

"There's a price to travelin'. I pay with me life. Each time I return I'm about five years older than when I left."

"So how old are you?"

"Thirty-two." He looked at his hands as if not recognizing them. Jamie was dumbfounded. Thirty-two was old, but it wasn't *that* old. "You can see how diligently I've tried to find her again," he said.

She couldn't say anything. She felt stupid for believing such a ridiculous tale, yet she felt so much pain from him, she couldn't speak. The music box struggled to get out one last note, and then it stopped. Very slowly Eddy closed the lid.

"Do your parents know where ye are? That ye came here?" His voice sounded hollow and labored, like the last notes of the music box. She shrugged. "Why did ye na' tell them, eh?"

"*She* wouldn't understand," Jamie said fiercely.

"Ah, and *he* would?"

Her eyes shot up at him. "No. My *stepdad* just doesn't care," she muttered, "about anyone but himself."

"Then your mother, she does care, now doesn't she?"

Jamie shrugged again, pretending not to care herself. "She only cares about the rocket scientist."

"Your brother? Rockets now instead of rocks?"

"She's bought him half the hobby store. The house is so full of his junk, they'd never see me if I was there."

"Ah, and your room? It be empty?" She shrugged again.

Eddy looked back at the box and caressed the wooden lid longingly. "Things do na' matter in the end," he whispered. "It's the memories we keep. They're all we have. Lass, go home and enjoy your time with your family while ye still have 'em."

She stood slowly and walked to the door, too shocked and confused to say a word. "Lass." She stopped and glanced back at him. He looked gravely at her. "Will ye do me one last favor? Will ye come again tomorrow, one more time? For Caesar?"

"Why? You traveling again?" she asked.

"I am," he said. "Tomorrow I'll be gone."

Caesar mewed up at her, and she nodded reluctantly and left.

*to be continued*

PDDR GUY... HE'S  
SO LONELY.



GOOD LUCK, EDDY!  
FOLLOW YOUR HEART.

# Grandpa's Magic Hat

by Marilyn Helmer

**MY GRANDPA HAD** a hat, a plain old wide-brimmed straw with a red band around the crown. Strange thing was, he never wore the hat. He just kept it on a stand on his dresser, like it was something special.

One day my brother Luke and I were in Grandpa's room, helping him sort his fishing tackle. The hat caught Luke's eye. "Grandpa, you never wear that old straw hat," he said. "Why do you keep it?"

Grandpa picked up the hat. "This here's a magic hat, Luke," he said, his voice whispery low, like in a scary movie.

Luke's eyes almost popped out of his head. "A magic hat?"

Grandpa nodded. "It can bring things to life."

I'm three years older than Luke and a whole lot wiser. "Come on, Grandpa. There's no such thing as a hat that can bring things to life."

"You know that for sure, do you, Matt?" Grandpa looked me straight in the eye so it was hard to tell if he was joking or not.

Before I could answer, Grandpa's friend Clem hollered through the screen door, "Hurry up, Jack, the fishing crew's waiting."

Grandpa put the hat back on its stand. "See you tomorrow." With a wink, he was gone.

Illustrated by Rupert Van Wyk

text © 2020 by Marilyn Helmer, art © 2020 by Rupert Van Wyk



Luke had that spacey look he gets when he's thinking hard.

"You know that hat has no more magic in it than a burst balloon," I said.

I could see Luke was fighting with himself. He suspected I was right, but that wasn't what he wanted to believe.

"We'll prove it, Matt" he said. "One way or the other. And I know just the thing to do it. Old Man Miller's scarecrow."

Old Man Miller lives up the road around the bend. He has a big garden, and smack in the middle of it is a scarecrow. It's no ordinary scarecrow. Every year it gets a new set of old clothes. I've heard people say it's so lifelike, it has fooled a few folks coming home late at night.

I glanced at the hat stand. "It's nothing but a plain old hat. It's not going to bring a scarecrow to life. The magic part is just another of Grandpa's tall tales."

The set of Luke's jaw told me words alone weren't going to work. "OK," I said. "You want proof, we'll get it."

Luke nodded. "This evening, on the way to the barn dance. Mom and Dad are going early because Dad's playing the fiddle. We'll sneak the hat out of the house and put it on the scarecrow's head. Then we'll see what happens."

I thought that over. The barn wasn't far past Old Man Miller's place. We could put the hat on the scarecrow's head, watch nothing happen, sneak it back into the house, and go on to the dance. No one except Luke would be any the wiser. "OK. We'll do it. Then you'll see for sure that there's no magic in Grandpa's straw hat."

Luke's plan worked like a charm. Almost.

After Mom and Dad left, we got Grandpa's hat and headed for Old Man Miller's. The house was in darkness. Old Man Miller goes to bed with the chickens.

We sneaked into the garden. The scarecrow stood wedged on a pole between two large rocks. He was dressed in jeans and a green-and-white plaid shirt. Around his neck was a jaunty yellow bandana.

I climbed onto one of the rocks. As I put the hat on the scarecrow's head, I looked into its pale, red-cheeked face. I thought my heart was going to jump right out of my chest. I could have sworn the thing winked at me.



“What’s the matter?” Luke called up.

I jumped down, too spooked to answer. That’s when Old Man Miller’s dog started barking. Lights flicked on inside the house.

“Let’s get out of here,” Luke hissed. I didn’t need a second invitation. We took off up that road, leaving dust clouds in our wake.

We didn’t stop running until we reached the barn. I was trying to catch my breath when Luke let out a groan. “Matt, we left Grandpa’s hat behind!”

I looked back. The scarecrow was shrouded in evening shadows. Grandpa’s hat was clamped on its head, just the way I’d left it.

My heart was still jumping like a crazed bullfrog. “Are you satisfied now?” I growled at Luke. “I told you there’s no magic in that hat. That scarecrow’s as dead as a doornail.”

“But what are we going to do about Grandpa’s hat?” Luke persisted.

“We’ll get it on the way home,” I said.

Fiddle music flowed from the barn, safe and sweet. I headed for the door with Luke right on my heels.

Inside, Dad was playing the fiddle while Mom called the steps. Folks clapped in time, dancing and exchanging how-do-you-dos. My spooky feeling eased away. The barn felt like the safest, friendliest place on earth.

At the back, a table was laid out with dishes of homemade food. The food and the fiddling were what Luke and I came for. We danced a bit first, just to show we could. As soon as we thought it polite, we filled our plates and found a place to sit.

I was halfway through a slice of the best pork pie I’d ever tasted when Luke whacked my elbow. He pointed to the door. A stranger had come





in. He was wearing jeans and a green-and-white plaid shirt. Around his neck, below his pale, red-cheeked face, was a yellow bandana. On his head sat a wide-brimmed straw hat with a red band around the crown.

“Matt . . . ,” Luke choked out.

I hardly heard him. A cold, prickly feeling swept through me as I stared at the stranger.

He was dancing with Miss Betty Macon. Miss Betty is the best dancer in the county. The stranger was every bit as good as she was. Back and forth, round and round they went. Folks stood back to watch them.

The stranger was working up a sweat. I could see it, glistening on his forehead. Miss Betty must have noticed it, too. She took a dainty lace handkerchief from her pocket and handed it to him.

Luke and I didn’t have a chance to see what happened next because Mom marched over. “You two are white as paste,” she declared. “I reckon you’re coming down with something. I’m taking you home right now.” Neither of us protested.

Mom took the main road so we didn’t go past Old Man Miller’s place. It was just as well. The way I felt, I didn’t want to know.

When we got home, she sent us to bed, so there was nothing we could do about Grandpa’s hat. Luke fell asleep but I lay awake, searching my mind for a rational explanation of what we had seen.

Finally, it hit me. A word I had missed on a spelling test. *Coincidence*. That’s what it was. A *coincidence*. The more I thought about it, the more it made sense. The clothes the scarecrow was dressed in weren’t unusual. They could be found in any dry goods store. Same with the straw hat. It just happened to look like Grandpa’s. Eventually the cold, prickly feeling eased and I fell into a dreamless sleep.





At the first light of dawn, I shook Luke awake. "We have to go get Grandpa's hat back."

Luke gave me a groggy stare. "We can't get Grandpa's hat back. The scarecrow man's got it."

I let out a hissy sigh. "Luke, Old Man Miller's scarecrow will be right there in the garden where we left it. There's no magic in that straw hat. The scarecrow didn't come to life."

"But his clothes . . .," Luke began.

"The stranger's clothes just happened to look like the ones the scarecrow was wearing. You can buy clothes like that anywhere," I snapped.

"His hat was exactly like Grandpa's magic hat," Luke snapped back.

"Hats like that are a dime a dozen," I countered.

"We'll never get Grandpa's hat back," Luke went on as though he hadn't heard me. "It brought the scarecrow to life, Matt. He'll never go back to Old Man Miller's garden again."

"Luke, the scarecrow did not come to life. He'll be there in the garden like always. You'll see."

Outside, the grass sparkled with dew as the sun rose in a blaze of glory. As we came around the bend, I sent a whoop of joy into the quiet morning air. The scarecrow stood where he always had. On his head was Grandpa's straw hat.

I raced ahead, scrambled up onto the rocks and grabbed the hat. I looked into the scarecrow's face. Not a wink, not even a twitch.

But as I went to jump down, something caught my eye. To this day, I haven't told anyone about it, not even Luke. Neither rational explanation nor coincidence can explain it. Sticking out of the scarecrow's pocket was a dainty lace handkerchief.

So . . . is there such a thing as magic or not? I'll let you decide.





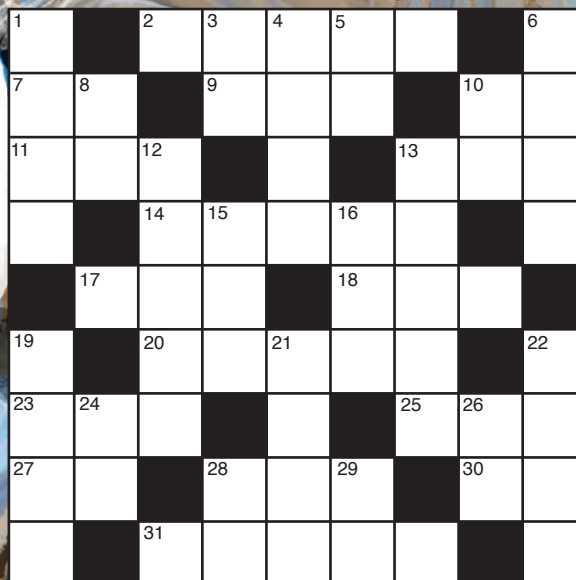
# Ugly Bird's Creepy Shivers Crossbird Puzzle

## Across

2. Trick or \_\_\_\_\_
7. Elevated railroad
9. Witch's furry friend
10. Mister (abbreviation)
11. Flying mammal
13. Horse command: \_\_\_\_\_ up
14. Sorceress
17. Muscle spasm
18. What a backward ghost says
20. Oozes
23. Industrious insect
25. A pair
27. Trick-or-treaters walk from house \_\_\_\_\_ house
28. Split \_\_\_\_\_ soup
30. Post office (abbreviation)
31. False faces

## Down

1. Spider homes
3. Red Cross (abbreviation)
4. Compass direction
5. A knock \_\_\_\_\_ the door
6. Witch's concoction
8. Los Angeles (abbreviation)
10. Don't scare \_\_\_\_\_ like that!
12. Writhe or squirm
13. Phantom
15. Frozen water
16. Police officer
19. Long-tailed rodents
21. Candlelight shone through the jack-o'-lantern's \_\_\_\_\_
22. Night light
24. Expression of denial or refusal
26. Word processing (abbreviation)
28. Dad
29. Alaska (abbreviation)



Solution on page 47



HEY! UGLY  
COPIED MY  
COSTUME.

ACTUALLY,  
YOU AND  
UGLY BOTH  
COPIED ME.

AND  
MEWY  
ME!

OK. THIS IS JUST  
WEIRD.

WHAT IS?

by Woo-Woo Williams  
& Caterwauling Conahan



# STORK TIME

BY VILA GINGERICH

## EVERY AFTERNOON COSTI

jogged through his village to the bus stop to meet the daily bus from Bucharest. Today his breath made puffs of white in front of his face, like the cotton candy he and his friend had sampled on Children's Day last year. At the plastic lean-to, he perched on a cold seat next to the village priest and his younger sister Ana.

"*Buna ziua,*" the priest said.

Costi wished him a good day in return, but he didn't look at the priest's sister. Ana, tall and beautiful and always laughing, made him stutter and shy.

"You are here again?" the priest asked.

Costi said, "I wait every afternoon for my brother. He will come home from Germany any day now."

The priest grunted. So many Romanian young people left their villages these days. Often they went to Germany to pick strawberries or other produce, and in winter they came home to help cut the Christmas pig and go caroling. Sometimes they let their families know when they'd arrive. Other times, they couldn't afford international calls and showed up unannounced.

"Mama and I are worried about Pavel," Costi told the priest. "He sent lots of money at first—he even sent three hundred euros just for me—but we have not heard from him for a long time."

Costi peeked at the priest's sister from the corner of his eye. She winked at him.

"Maybe I will see him," Ana said. "I leave for Germany the day after New Year's. My cousins have found cleaning jobs for me there."

Costi longed to reply, to say that Pavel would be home well before the holidays, but his cheeks felt hot as a terra-cotta stove. He opened his mouth, then closed it.

The bus pulled up and stopped with a screeching of brakes. Costi leaped to his feet. The priest got on. Nobody got off. No tall teenager with twinkling brown eyes and sticky-out black hair. Would Pavel never come?

Costi trudged back home, picking his way around potholes and cow droppings.

Mama stood on the porch, draping laundry over the railing. "Don't worry. Pavel will come soon," she said when he flopped onto the step beside her. "Probably in the time of the storks."

"But that's so long yet," Costi said. "By now, even the German pumpkins must be harvested."

"Maybe he will at least call soon," Mama snapped a pillowcase, her forehead furrowed.

**CHRISTMAS CAME AND** went. Since Costi's family was small, they cut a pig with his grandparents, gorging on meat for two rich weeks.

BUCHAREST IS THE CAPITAL OF ROMANIA, A COUNTRY IN EASTERN EUROPE. THE CURRENCY IS THE EURO, WHICH IS WORTH A LITTLE MORE THAN A DOLLAR.



CHILDREN'S DAY IS A HOLIDAY WITH TREATS AND GAMES FOR KIDS. SOUNDS FUN, EH PUSS?

Illustrated by Sarah van Dongen

text © 2020 by Vila Gingerich, art © 2020 by Sarah van Dongen





"I can't believe Pavel missed Christmas," Costi told Mama as he went to bed on New Year's Eve. "He'd never miss Grandma's cabbage rolls on purpose. He must be stuck somehow."

"He'll surely come back with the storks," his mother said.

But her lip quivered as she tucked the down-filled comforter over him.

Two days later, Costi opened the dusty wardrobe in the corner of the front room. He burrowed his arm under outgrown woolen sweaters and unfinished mending and pulled

out his special carved box. His mother had used Pavel's money for food and wood, but Costi had saved his all these long months. He slipped his three hundred euros into a used envelope along with a scribbled note and set off across the village.

As he'd hoped, Ana waited at the bus stop. She greeted him, and Costi muttered a *buna ziua* in return. He felt his face flame.

Costi opened his mouth to speak. Ana smiled at him. He swallowed.

The bus appeared. He tried again. No words came out.



The bus slowed. Stopped. Ana stepped forward and climbed aboard, carrying her small duffel and a packet of sandwiches and a water bottle for her long trip.

“Ana,” Costi said, but it came out in a whisper.

The bus doors shuddered, ready to close. Costi leaped forward onto the bottom step.

“Ana,” he bellowed.

She stopped in the aisle and turned her laughing face toward him.

“Tell Pavel. Tell him.” Costi cleared his throat and tried again. “Tell Pavel to come home soon. Tell him I wait for him every day.”

Ana nodded. Costi thrust the envelope into her hand, turned, and scrambled off the bus.

**SPRING POPPED OUT** its head.

Warm breezes blew, and melting snow turned the ground gooey. Chickens and ducks led their tiny offspring out into the sunshine. Buds grew fat on the plum trees lining the street.

“Guess what,” Beni announced on the way home from school. “My *tata* saw a stork yesterday. The first one.”

Costi stopped dead in the middle of the street. Beni’s father saw what?

“The storks are back?” he choked. “But—but—Mama said—We thought—”

He left Beni gaping as he raced away, legs pumping to an awful rhythm of disappointment.

**SPRING STRETCHED INTO** summer.

Every day Costi checked the stork nests. There were three in his village. The nests—as huge and round as the tires of a bus—perched on telephone poles, supported by crossbeams the villagers had built just for that reason.

At first only the black-and-white adult storks showed above the nests. Then one day tiny orange beaks rose into the air, mouths open wide as the babies begged for food.

The chicks grew larger. The nests grew fuller. At last the half-grown birds perched on the edges of the nests, flapping their wings to strengthen them.

Costi always liked watching the baby storks learn to fly, but this year he didn’t stay long. Those wobbly practice runs in the open field meant the storks would leave soon.





“Here, drink this,” Mama said every morning, pushing a mug of bitter tea into his hand. “You aren’t yourself lately.”

By September, the time of the storks was over. The birds had gone, and Pavel had not come.

**THE BUS ARRIVED** like usual on the warm October afternoon. Screeching brakes. Stinky fumes. Shuddery doors. Costi didn’t bother getting up from where he slumped under the plastic awning.

But then. A pair of skinny, jeaned legs ending in bright blue sneakers. A familiar wool sweater. Sticky-out black hair. Twinkling brown eyes.

“Pavel!” Costi’s yell echoed around the plastic awning.

Then he was hugging and hugging his big brother while they both tried to talk at once.

“We thought you—”

“But I couldn’t—”

“Mama said—”

“Honest, I tried—”

Villagers clustered around the brothers, chattering at once. They ushered Pavel and Costi home across the village and right into Mama’s kitchen. A neighbor slipped away and came back with Coke for everyone. Another neighbor turned on her radio and blasted traditional folk music into their yard.

It took ages to find out the whole story. How Pavel had finished the harvest last year, how he’d hung around looking for more work. How he’d ended up sick, in the hospital, with nobody to help him.



“When I got out,” Pavel said, “I was too weak to work. All my money went to pay the hospital bills. I lived on the street and ate out of the garbage. I couldn’t find any other Romanians.”

Tears streamed down Mama’s face. Costi swiped at his eyes.

“I was hanging around the bus station one day,” Pavel said, “when a familiar girl walked past. It was Ana, the priest’s sister.”

Ana had delivered the envelope from Costi, and Pavel had used the money to buy himself a bus ticket home.

“You saved my life, little brother.” Pavel ruffled Costi’s hair.

Mama blew her nose furiously. Somebody refilled Costi’s Coke glass to the brim.



After the hullabaloo died down a bit, and Pavel had gone to lie down, Beni pulled Costi outside.


“Come, let’s take a walk,” Beni said. “Everyone’s talking about the old stork in the nest by the post office. *Tata* says a stork in October is a strange thing.”

Costi’s breath caught in his throat. He jogged with Beni down to the post office and there, sure enough, a black-and-white stork sat in the nest on top of the telephone pole.

“It’s so weird,” Beni said, pointing. “They never stay this long.”

Costi tipped his head to gaze at the gigantic bird, already a month late for its flight back to Egypt. What had it been waiting for? Costi thought he knew.

“Storks have most excellent timing,” Costi said.

The big bird cocked its head and seemed to wink down at him. 

**AUTHOR’S NOTE** The situation my story is based on is a common one in Romania, where 20 percent of the working-age population works abroad. When you drive through villages, especially in the poorest counties, you see mostly the elderly and children: grandparents caring for their grandchildren while their parents work in Western Europe. Although it can be a hard time for families, working abroad brings money that has steadily raised the standard of living. Many people come home with new cars or with enough money to start their own businesses.

The white storks that nest and breed in Romania in the spring and fall migrate thousands of miles to winter in Africa. Romanians say the storks fly to Egypt, but they can migrate as far as South Africa. Storks are a sure sign of both approaching spring and autumn, and the villagers welcome them as good omens.

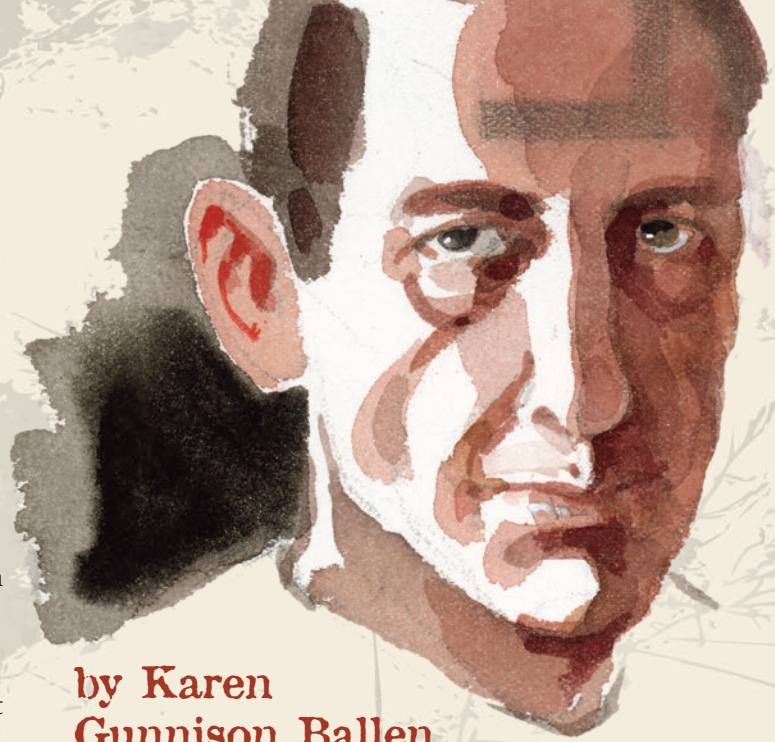


# Foiled

*Dr. Matulewicz wasn't sure his trick would work, but it was the only chance to save his friend. If the Nazis found out, the penalty would be death. It was worth the risk.*

**In 1942, physician** Stanislaw Matulewicz was working for the Polish Red Cross in the rural villages of Rozwadow and Zbysniowie, about 150 miles from Warsaw. After Germany invaded Poland in 1939, launching World War II, hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens, many just in their teens, had been rounded up to provide slave labor for German factories, railroads, mines, and farms. Tens of thousands died of exhaustion and starvation in the labor camps. Polish Jews were taken to special concentration camps, either to be exterminated immediately or worked to death. Now, in 1942, Dr. Matulewicz's friend had been ordered to report to a Nazi labor camp. The poor man was desperate to avoid going, but if he did not report on time, his whole family would be imprisoned and probably killed. To get out of this bind, he was even considering suicide.

There was one hope. Dr. Matulewicz knew that the Nazis would not send anyone testing positive for epidemic typhus to a labor camp. Sometimes called "war fever," epidemic typhus spreads rapidly in crowded, unsanitary conditions, causing its victims to suffer miserably from high fever, extreme weakness, delirium, and organ failure. Millions of Eastern Europeans died from the disease during World War I. When French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Russia in the



**by Karen  
Gunnison Ballen**

early nineteenth century, he lost more of his army to typhus than in combat.

The Germans feared that an outbreak of typhus was a greater threat to slowing or wiping out their army than lines of Allied tanks. When anyone showed possible symptoms of the disease, Polish physicians were required to send a sample of his or her blood to a German lab to be tested for typhus antibodies. Produced by the immune system to fight disease, antibodies are Y-shaped proteins that attach to invading bacteria, enabling other cells of the immune system to engulf and destroy them. If the lab workers found antibodies to



BACTERIA HAVE  
NAMES?



YOU HAVE TO CALL THEM SOMETHING...  
TYPHUS BACTERIA ARE CALLED  
RIH-KET-SEE-US PRO-US-ZEH-KEE.

DR. LITTLE RICKY,  
TO THEIR FRIENDS.



MAYBE, IF THE TYPHUS  
BACTERIA HAD ANY  
FRIENDS.

the typhus bacteria, *Rickettsia prowazekii*, in the blood, they would know that the patient was fighting a typhus infection.

Dr. Matulewicz had an idea how the test for typhus might be exploited to help his friend. *R. prowazekii* was so dangerous and difficult to grow in the lab that the Germans used a substitute in their test to detect typhus antibodies. Although antibodies are usually highly specialized, attaching to only one kind of bacteria, Polish scientists had discovered during World War I that typhus antibodies also attached to *Proteus* OX-19, a type of bacteria that was much easier to grow and safer to handle than *R. prowazekii*. In the test used by the Germans, a blood sample containing typhus antibodies would turn cloudy when mixed with *Proteus* OX-19, as the antibodies attached to the bacteria.

Dr. Matulewicz thought there might be another way to make a blood sample turn cloudy when tested. He reasoned that if he gave his friend an injection of *Proteus* OX-19, his friend's immune system would form antibodies to that bacterium, and a sample of his blood would then turn cloudy when mixed with *Proteus* OX-19 in the Nazi lab. The blood would test positive for typhus, even though there were no typhus antibodies in the sample and his friend did not have the disease.

Dr. Matulewicz worried about possible side effects from the injection, but his friend didn't hesitate to take the risk. So Dr. Matulewicz coached him in how to fake the symptoms of typhus and sent him home, where his friend soon began to act confused and complain of

bad headaches. His family asked Dr. Matulewicz to treat him. The doctor gave his friend an injection of *Proteus* OX-19, and several days later, sent a sample of his blood to a Nazi lab, along with a report explaining that this patient was suffering from symptoms of typhus.

The trick worked! Although his friend was not really ill, his blood sample tested positive for the dread disease. Neither he nor his family would be taken to the Nazi camps.

Dr. Matulewicz told his colleague, Dr. Eugene Lazowski, how he saved his friend. Dr. Lazowski had already risked his own life by providing medical care to Jews and to others working against the Nazis. Eager to save more lives, Dr. Lazowski suggested that the two physicians create a fake typhus epidemic.

Dr. Matulewicz agreed. Every time the doctors saw a patient with symptoms that even hinted at typhus, they injected him or her with *Proteus* OX-19 and sent a sample of the patient's blood to a Nazi lab, where it tested positive for typhus. The doctors increased the injections in the fall and winter months and decreased them in spring and summer, to mimic the behavior of a true epidemic. Sometimes they injected patients with *Proteus* OX-19 and then sent them to other doctors—who were not aware of the hoax—for blood samples, so that the Nazis would not become too suspicious about so many typhus cases being reported by only two doctors. The doctors were careful, however, not to inject anyone who was Jewish with *Proteus* OX-19, since Jews who tested positive for







typhus were immediately killed. Indeed, most of the Jews in the district had been taken to concentration camps before the fake epidemic could be started.


As more and more blood samples tested positive for typhus, the Nazis quarantined about a dozen villages where the two doctors practiced. The German army avoided the area, sparing the villagers many of the horrors of Nazi occupation and the threat of forced labor.

These doctors were taking a tremendous risk. If the Nazis found out what was going on, they would have tortured and killed them. So the doctors did not tell anyone—including their wives and the patients whose blood they sent to labs—what they were doing. When they injected patients with *Proteus* OX-19, they told them that it was just a shot to strengthen their immune system. Of course, village residents wondered why, since they were supposedly experiencing a typhus epidemic, no one died, but the doctors did not admit anything. “If someone asked me why he recovered so quickly from such a serious disease, I just told him he was a lucky man,” said Dr. Lazowski. Many villagers did not believe him, but they kept quiet because they suspected that the doctors were protecting them.

In late 1943, the Nazis finally became suspicious and sent a team of doctors to investigate. The Poles welcomed the Nazi doctors and entertained them with a good dinner and lots of vodka. The most experienced doctor in the group didn’t want

to leave the party, so he sent his younger colleagues into the village to examine the “typhus sufferers,” who were really people with other illnesses that had been given injections of *Proteus* OX-19. Dr. Lazowski later remembered, “I told them to be my guest and examine the patients, but to be careful because the Polish are dirty and full of lice, which transfer typhus.” The Nazi doctors, worried that they might become infected, took some blood samples, and left without closely examining any of the villagers. Of course, all of the samples tested positive for typhus.

After Dr. Matulewicz left the area, Dr. Lazowski continued to conduct the fake typhus epidemic alone. Loyal to his duty as a physician, he treated anyone who needed medical care, including a German soldier who, in the summer of 1944, repaid the doctor’s kindness by warning him that the Gestapo, the Nazi secret police, was planning to arrest him. Dr. Lazowski took his wife and daughter and fled the area.

About one-fifth of the population of Poland, close to six million people, would lose their lives at the hands of the Nazis during the war. But 8,000 Poles living in a rural district in central Poland were protected by the intelligence and courage of Dr. Matulewicz and Dr. Lazowski. “The basic duty of a physician is to preserve life, and this was a way of saving lives,” Dr. Lazowski later said. “I was not able to fight with a gun or sword, but I found a way to scare the Germans.” 



# Midnight Visits the Vet

by Delia Hamilton

*Midnight is a little rescue cat whose original owners reluctantly had to leave her behind when they moved away from England. She has come to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jones, a kindly older couple with a large house in the country. Midnight has a number of adventures with the Joneses and the other cats they've adopted, including a big ginger cat named The Colonel, two beautiful Siamese cats named Lucy and Sally, their house cats Jeremy and Jemimah, and an aging street cat missing half an ear, Scotty.*



**IT'S A WELL-KNOWN** fact that cats, like all animals, do not like to go to the vet, and for Midnight it's worse when she has to go by car. Today, though, that is exactly what is going to happen. Poor Midnight!

Midnight, the little black rescue cat, was lying in Mrs. Jones's sunny conservatory, asleep. She was dreaming of nice things to eat, like fish and cream, and her little whiskers were twitching in delight when she heard Mrs. Jones calling her name.

"Midnight, Midnight, where are you?"

Midnight's ears twitched, but she didn't move. It was lovely and warm in the conservatory, and in her dream she was just about to

bite into one of her favorite sweets. And so, although she knew Mrs. Jones wanted her, she just ignored her. Naughty cat!

Mrs. Jones's footsteps and calls got closer. "Midnight, where are you? We have to go out!"

Soon she found Midnight sleeping in the conservatory. "Come on, Midnight," she said. "We have to go on a journey."

She picked Midnight up and cuddled her close. Midnight snuggled in and enjoyed it when Mrs. Jones tickled her under her chin. It was only when they went into the large kitchen that Midnight noticed THE BASKET.

A  
CONSERVATORY  
IS A  
GREENHOUSE,  
USUALLY  
ATTACHED TO  
A DWELLING.



Illustrated by Michael Chesworth

text © 2020 by Delia Hamilton, art © 2020 by Michael Chesworth

WE SHOULD GET YOU A CHECKUP, SHOULDN'T WE,  
PUSS? NOTHING'S TOO GOOD FOR YOU.



... MEWY YIPE!

WELLIES IS A NICKNAME FOR WELLINGTON BOOTS, WHICH ARE KNEE-HIGH WATERPROOF BOOTS. HEY! WHAT'S UP, LADYBUG?



PUSS NEEDS A CHECKUP! (PUFF-PUFF)  
SHE HASN'T HAD ONE IN... EVER!



MEWY PHOOEY  
ON THAT!... 

"Oh no," she thought, "I'm not going in there!"

Suddenly, Midnight scrambled out of Mrs. Jones's arms and ran to hide under the table. Mrs. Jones was so surprised that she jumped in the air! Midnight laughed to see Mrs. Jones jumping.

Mrs. Jones was looking everywhere for Midnight, and it took her some minutes to look under the table. "H'm, I know how to get you."

Mrs. Jones got some of Midnight's favorite treats and showed them to her. Midnight lay still, but her whiskers twitched. Mrs. Jones came closer, and the smell was so delicious that Midnight couldn't resist. She took the treats from Mrs. Jones and was caught, but not for long. Midnight lunged away again and got under the stairs.

"Mr. Jones, you'll have to come and help me get Midnight. She keeps running away from me," called Mrs. Jones.

Mr. Jones came into the kitchen. He had on his bright green wellies, as he had been working in the garden. "What's all this then, Midnight? You know you have to go to the vet. We need to keep you healthy."

Mr. Jones spied Midnight. "So, you're under the stairs, are you? Well, Mrs. Jones, if you go to the front of the stairs, I'll go the back, and we'll have her trapped."

Mr. and Mrs. Jones took up their positions, and Midnight looked from one to the other and then started to wash herself. She washed her face with one paw and then noticed a little bit of dust on her tummy, so

she washed her tummy, and then thought she'd have a little nap. All this running around was making her sleepy.

"I think we'll have to try something else," said Mr. Jones. "Come on, Midnight, come and see what I've got."

But Midnight was too comfortable and didn't move. She swished her tail and thought of fish and cream—*mmm*, delicious. Suddenly, Mr. Jones's huge hand came under the stairs and almost caught her, but Midnight was just that little bit quicker and escaped. Mr. Jones turned around quickly, tripped over his wellingtons, and fell right on his bottom. Midnight laughed. She is naughty sometimes. Mr. Jones quickly got to his feet, feeling a little embarrassed, to tell you the truth.

"What are we going to do to? We have to get her to the vet," said Mrs. Jones.

They both looked at Midnight, who was casually washing her face and generally feeling pleased with herself. She didn't notice Mr. Jones, who had gotten closer and managed with one big swoop to pick her up and put her in the basket!

"I think I'll come with you, just to make sure she's OK," said Mr. Jones, still rubbing his bottom.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones and Midnight, now quiet in her basket, got into the car. As soon as the car started moving, Midnight started howling.

"She doesn't like being in a moving car," said Mr. Jones.

"It's OK, Midnight, we won't be long in the car," said Mrs. Jones.





THE SURGERY IS THE ROOM  
OR OFFICE WHERE THE  
DOCTOR SEES PATIENTS. IS,  
UMMM, SOMETHING WRONG?

NO, JUST A  
RUNAWAY  
PUSSYWILLOW.

COME BACK, PUSS!  
IT'S TIME FOR YOUR  
APPOINTMENT!

MEWY CATCH ME!

Mr. Jones drove the two miles to the vet with Midnight letting her feelings be known very loudly. *Mew! Mew! Mew!* she cried all the way.

Once they got to the vet, Midnight was very interested in what was going on. It was a very busy place, and there was lots to keep Midnight amused. There was a very big dog with what looked like a lampshade on his neck, which he was trying unsuccessfully to get off, and a little dog who seemed to have a sore paw that he kept licking while looking miserably at his owner. There was another little cat who was meowing quite loudly and scratching to get out of her basket.

Mrs. Jones gave Midnight's name to the receptionist, and they sat down. Midnight was quiet now and happy just to watch the

other animals and people. Soon more animals came in, and Midnight was very surprised to see a very small horse!

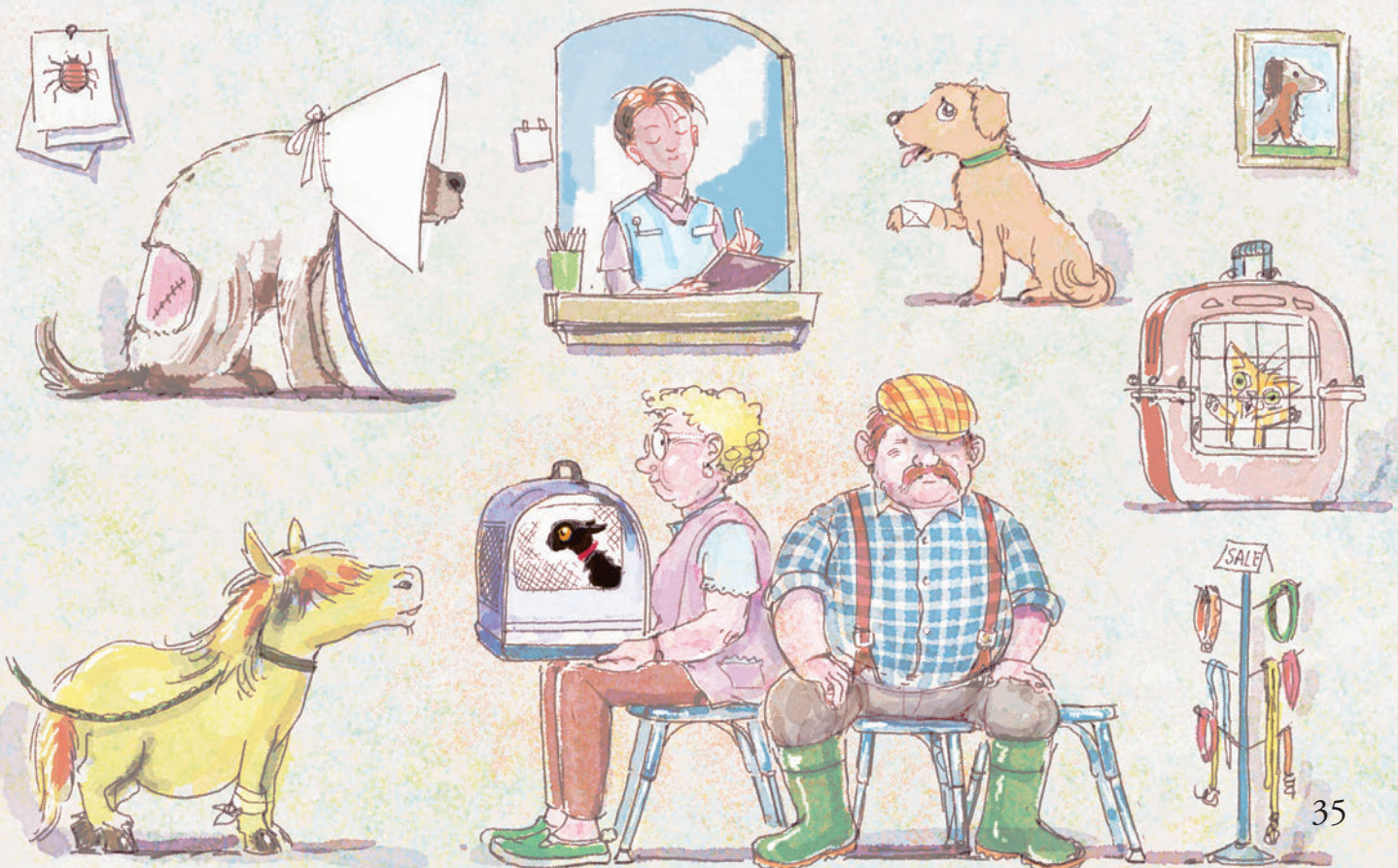
After a while it was Midnight's turn, and she was taken to the surgery and her basket placed on the table. Midnight waited for her chance, and as soon as the zip was opened, she was out like a flash and off the table, onto the floor and behind the fridge.

"Ha," Midnight thought to herself. "Get me out of here if you can."

The vet, who was a very nice young lady and looked to be a bit nervous, and Mr. and Mrs. Jones called to Midnight to come out.

"Don't think so, you're going to have to get me."

Mr. Jones managed to move the fridge a little way and out jumped Midnight, right







She was running and jumping all around the room. The humans were chasing and trying to catch her and getting in each other's way and generally causing chaos. Instruments were lying about, and Mr. Jones very nearly got a needle in his bottom as he fell to the floor.

Midnight played like this for a few minutes and was having great fun, when suddenly, the vet caught her! It was very undignified being caught by such a young person, but Midnight was getting tired anyway so decided to let her get away with it.

Back up on the table the vet managed to hold Midnight and checked her ears and felt along her body. She felt her tummy, and Midnight enjoyed it when the vet tickled her under her chin.

"She is in very good condition and everything feels normal," the vet said.

"Now for her injection." The vet held

onto a high counter where she knocked over the trays that were placed there, spilling all the contents to the floor.

"Ha, ha," chuckled Midnight, the naughty cat.

"Come here, Midnight, be a good girl," cried Mrs. Jones.

"Come on, Midnight, be a good cat," called the vet.

"Come on, Midnight, don't be naughty," said Mr. Jones.

There was confusion all over the surgery. Midnight was enjoying herself enormously.

onto the fur at the back of Midnight's neck and gave her the shot. It didn't hurt a bit.

The young vet said it didn't matter about the mess and that she would clean it up. Mr. and Mrs. Jones put Midnight back in the basket for the journey home.

They went to get into the car, but in his rush to get Midnight into the basket, Mr. Jones had not fastened it securely. Midnight was gnawing at the zip to get it to go higher, and suddenly she was free and running down the road. Mrs. Jones chased after her, calling "Midnight! Midnight!"





OH, MY! EVERYBUGGY  
OK HERE?



PUSS SEEMS PRETTY FIT.  
MAYBE LADYBUG NEEDS A  
CHECKUP INSTEAD!



ODD! PUFF-  
PUFF-PUFF.



MEW!

Mr. Jones got out of the car again, and people were amazed to see a little black cat running down the street with two adults chasing her, one with a big basket and one in big green wellies.

Midnight went straight down the road, which luckily led to a country lane with no traffic, so she was able to run as fast as she wanted. Mr. and Mrs. Jones were finding it hard to keep up.

“Midnight, please stop!” shouted Mrs. Jones. But Midnight wouldn’t. As she got further along the country lane, a farmer spotted her. “Please try to catch her,” puffed Mrs. Jones. The farmer put out his big beefy arms and tried to grab the scurrying cat, but it was no good. She was off and running. The farmer’s son came out to see what the uproar was all about. He chased after Midnight, too, but fell into a puddle, so Midnight got away again.

Can you imagine the scene? Midnight in the front, little legs pumping up and down. The farmer’s son in a puddle, hopping up and trying to catch her again. Then the farmer, then Mr. Jones in his big green wellies, and finally Mrs. Jones with her basket. Midnight did laugh. She is a naughty cat.

Finally, just as Midnight was nearing the farm, a big black-and-white cat appeared. It was HUGE. “What are you doing in my garden?” asked the cat.

“Nothing really,” panted Midnight, “just playing a chase game with my humans.”

“Humph, are they having fun?”

“Don’t know, don’t care,” answered the naughty cat.

“Well, you should. They look after you, feed you, and keep you healthy. Maybe you should let them catch you.”

“Oh, OK. I’m getting tired anyway.”

Midnight sat where she was and began to clean herself, first her face and then her paws, which were quite dirty from the farmland. She then settled down for a nap, as the humans hadn’t reached her yet.



Soon the farmer's son, the farmer, Mr. Jones in his big green wellies, and Mrs. Jones with her big basket came into view.

"Midnight, there you are," cried Mrs. Jones. "What a time we have had trying to catch you."

Midnight allowed herself to be put into the basket, where she continued to nap, while Mr. and Mrs. Jones thanked the farmer and his son for their help.


Midnight mewed all the way home. She still didn't like being in a moving car. Once home, Mrs. Jones let Midnight out of the basket, just as The Colonel came into the kitchen.

"Hello, young Midnight," he said in his gruff voice. "Where have you been today?"

"Well, I've been to the vet, and what an adventure I've had." Midnight began to tell The Colonel all about her day.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones thought they deserved a cup of tea, a piece of cake, and a sit down after all their hard work.

The rest of the day went quite quickly, with Midnight telling all the other cats about her adventure. At last it was night, and everyone went to bed.

"I have had a good day," thought Midnight, chuckling to herself as she went to sleep, dreaming of fish and cream. 

# Ninja Cat

by Carolyn Leiloglou

I'm proud to be a ninja cat  
I creep on quiet paws so that  
You'll never sense my silent stride.

My fur, black silk, blends in the night  
In shadows I am out of sight  
With soundless grace I glide.

text © 2018 by Carolyn Leiloglou







**“OWEN WANTED  
TO SCREAM AT THE  
HORROR BEFORE  
HIM.”**

**STORY THIEVES** by James Riley  
submitted by Claire Springston of Erin, NY

**“Yeah, I know, you guys  
are going to read about  
how I died in agony,  
and you’re going to be  
like ‘Wow!’”**

**MAGNUS CHASE AND THE  
SWORD OF SUMMER** (Magnus Chase  
and the Gods of Asgard, Book 1)  
by Rick Riordan  
submitted by Caroline H.  
of Washington, DC

**“Running against the  
grain was the Edison  
family tradition.”**

**THOMAS EDISON** (DK Biography)  
by Jan Adkins  
submitted by Wesley Martin  
of Mifflinburg, PA

**“Sophie had waited  
all her life to be  
kidnapped.”**

**THE SCHOOL FOR GOOD  
AND EVIL** by Soman Chainani  
submitted by Josie Rae Matkowski  
of Springfield, MO

**“FROM A VERY EARLY  
PERIOD OF MY LIFE THE  
ENTIRE BENT OF MY  
INCLINATIONS HAD BEEN  
TOWARDS MICROSCOPIC  
INVESTIGATIONS.”**

**THE DIAMOND LENS**  
by Fitz-James O’Brien  
submitted by Lino M. of San Diego, CA

**“There was once a  
little princess whose  
father was king over a  
great country full of  
mountains and valleys.”**

**THE PRINCESS AND THE GOBLIN**  
by George MacDonald  
submitted by Lucy M. of Austin, TX

**“I never had a brain until  
Freak came along and let  
me borrow his for a while,  
and that’s the truth, the  
whole truth.”**

**FREAK THE MIGHTY**  
by Rodman Philbrick  
submitted by Ishani S.  
of Holmdel, NJ

**“It was a dark and  
stormy night.”**

**A WRINKLE IN TIME**  
by Madeleine L’Engle  
submitted by Alizarine via Blab About  
Books, Chatterbox

Have we missed your favorite first sentence?  
Send it to **Cricket /Favorite First Sentences**, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354.  
Please include only one sentence and be sure to write your complete name and address on the letter.  
Or send your favorite first sentence to: [cricket@cricketmedia.com](mailto:cricket@cricketmedia.com)

## Part 2

# The Goose and the Swan

by Kate Selby



*A young snow-white goose and a smaller black swan with an injured leg find themselves left behind on a lake when their flocks migrate south for the winter. After avoiding each other for a time, they begin to seek each other's company, feeding together and taking turns watching for predators. Living on a nearby farm are two children who have been watching the birds, wondering how they will survive the harsh northern winter. One day they bring an old rabbit hutch to the lake and place it where the goose and swan have been sleeping, hoping the birds will shelter inside it.*

**The brother and** sister kept an eye on the birds from their front porch with a pair of binoculars their father used for bird-watching. They got very excited when they saw the birds exploring the hutch, though they noticed that the two still slept outside.

When the weekend came, the weather took a turn. The temperatures dropped, and the first winter storm arrived, bringing icy snow and a bitter wind. By Monday morning, there were several inches of snow on the ground and a thin rim of frost around the edge of the lake. By the time the children got a chance to check on the birds through the binoculars, the sun had come out and the birds were swimming and feeding, but





they were farther from the shore due to the icy edge.

After school, the children decided they would go down to the lake and see where the birds had slept. Most of the snow had melted during the day, and the ice was gone. Scanning the ground, they could just barely make out that the birds still slept outside of the box. They wondered what might entice them to go inside the little shelter. The boy got down on his hands and knees and peered inside. It seemed awfully dark in there, even on the bright afternoon. They wondered if they propped the roof open just a little bit and let some light in, the birds might like it better. They found a sturdy short stick and

wedged it between the hinged roof and wall so a narrow gap was made. This let a lot of light in, and the hutch seemed much less gloomy. Pleased with the outcome, they left the birds in peace.

School and the upcoming holidays kept the children quite busy the next week. But soon it was the weekend, and they spent a while taking turns with the binoculars trying to spy the big birds. It was no use—either the birds had left or some harm must have come to them, as the they didn't see any sign of them. With heavy hearts, the children walked down to the lakeside to try to discover what might have happened.

Thinking that the birds were gone, they chatted along the way instead of moving softly and quietly as they had done before in order not to frighten the birds. Much to their surprise, as they neared the hutch, two very large, very excited birds leapt out from inside and scrambled across the ice until they reached open water. There they turned, honking and blonking in alarm at the kids.

Startled by the sudden outburst, at first the kids didn't move. They were too astonished. Then, realizing that all was well, they cried out and began jumping around, whooping and clapping for joy! This made the birds even more flustered, and they started making a louder racket, beating their wings against the water's surface. The kids immediately quieted down and backed away.

The children were thrilled that the birds were not only OK and still very much alive but were also using the box as a nest! Then

**BLONKING** IS A MADE-UP WORD THAT'S NOT A HONK OR QUACK, BUT A DEEPER NOTE, LIKE A BADLY PLAYED BASSOON.



IS THAT SO?



HONK.

BLONK!





natural habits of the birds—which were fortunately surprisingly similar—and hatched a plan to help the birds survive the winter. Before long, they returned from town with a large sack of feed.

As the winter months passed, the kids brought grain out to the big birds each day and made sure

they then began to wonder what would become of them when winter's snow and ice cut them off completely from the water and their food supply. How would the birds survive? How could the two of them help?

They discussed the dilemma with their father. The swan was still too lame to fly, and the goose, though it could fly, seemed reluctant to leave the swan. After a thoughtful pause, he said the problem required a bit of research. That afternoon, their father called the brother and sister out to the truck and told them to hop in. He said he'd done some reading on the two big birds to determine the general diet of each species, and now it was time to go shopping. The three of them jumped in the pickup and headed to the feed store. On the drive, they discussed the

the stream stayed open to provide them fresh water to drink. On stormy days, the birds would spend most of the day in the shelter, venturing out only briefly to stretch, eat, and get a drink through a hole in the ice. As winter turned again toward spring, and the birds began spending more and more time outside the hutch, the kids cut back on the grain, hoping to encourage the odd pair to forage as the grasses came back. When the days were longer, and the ice almost gone, the first green shoots began appearing amid the dried winter grass. The birds no longer needed the grain and could forage on their own.

One spring night, a strong storm blew in on a south wind. The rain pelted down, and the temperatures rose. The birds stayed nestled together, safe and warm in their box.



By morning the whole lake was covered with a thick mist. The snow and ice were gone.

As the mist cleared and the two birds emerged from their hutch, they saw something else had changed overnight. The lake was filled with glowing white geese and shiny black swans. Their flocks had returned!

With hardly a second thought, the young, strong goose flapped his huge wings three times, rising above the clear blue surface and into the sky. Then he settled back down at the far end of the lake to swim and forage with his flock. At the same time, the sleek black swan quickly swam toward the other swans at the opposite end. There was a lot of

noise and playful splashing as each flock reestablished itself for the summer on the lake.

When all the birds had returned, and things settled down into a new daily routine, the children looked through the binoculars but couldn't tell which birds were which. Then one evening, while sitting on the porch idly watching the activity at the lake, they noticed something odd. Off to one side, near the old hutch, two birds swam alone: one big, bright white goose, and one shining black swan. The brother and sister smiled at each other, happy to see their old friends.

By fall, the goose had grown up and learned to pay attention as the leaves on the






trees turned bright red and yellow and the flock grew restless. When it came time to fly south for winter, he hesitated only a moment, then beat his mighty wings and took to the sky. Soon the whole flock of geese had disappeared from sight.

The only bird that watched this departure was one black swan. He tried to chase after his friend, beating the surface of the lake with his wings and pounding the water with his large webbed feet. And suddenly, he was in the air! The year of rest had healed his leg, and he could fly once more. Amazed, he flew circles around the lake, landing solidly on the water on two good legs. The swan honked and blonked for joy!

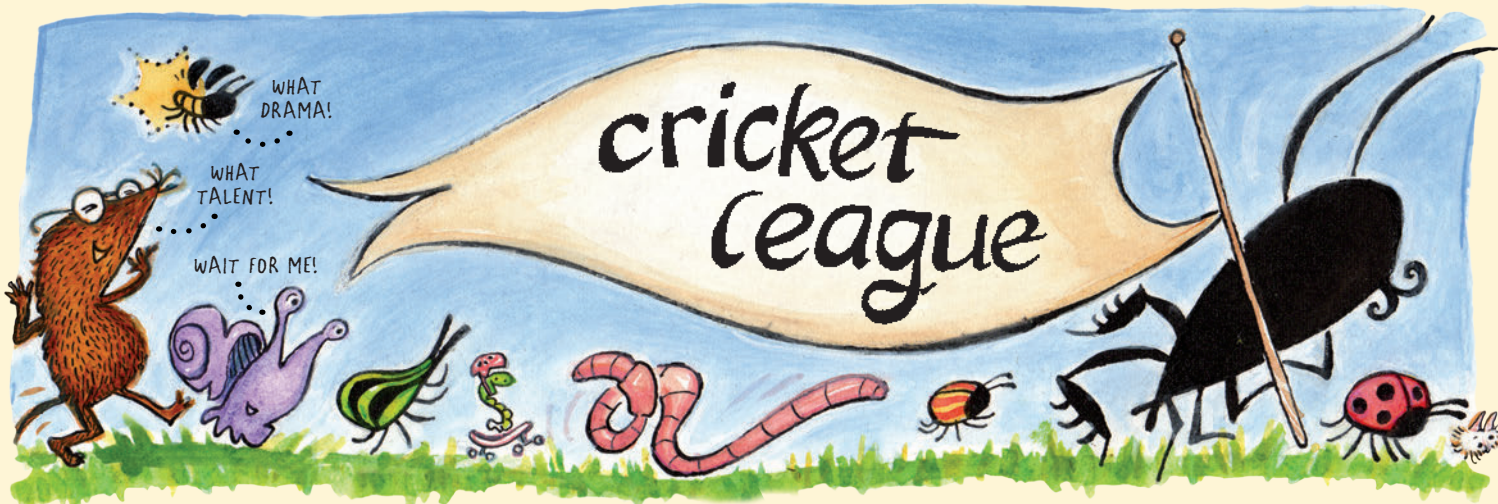
A week later, when his own flock took flight and veered toward the south, the black swan with the bright orange bill was with them once again.

The lake was eerily quiet that winter. The kids and their father guessed, and hoped, that the birds had gone off with their own flocks. But they still kept an eye on the hutch, keeping it ready and in good repair—just in case it was needed.

Each summer, the kids wait for the flocks to return. Then they watch carefully, for every evening they can see two birds off on their own to one side of the lake: a giant snow-white goose, and a slightly smaller sleek black swan. 







**WINNERS**  
**MAY 2020 POETRY CONTEST**  
 I Wonder

**First prize 10 and under**

**Caroline Percival**, age 10  
 San Antonio, TX

**I Wonder**

I wonder what it's like  
 To be everyone else.  
 What do they think about?  
 Talk about?  
 Feel?

What's it like  
 To be short  
 And look up at everyone else?

What's it like  
 To not have a home,  
 To sleep on the street?

What's it like,  
 Having different fears?  
 Does anyone have the same as mine?

Does everyone have thoughts,  
 Or ideas,  
 Or souls?  
 Does everyone have challenges  
 Or do some go through life easy?  
 Is anything for sure?

**First prize 11 and up**

**Jiaqi Sophie Huang**, age 11  
 Ann Arbor, MI

**The Mystery of Stonehenge**

What inked the grooves written in the ground?  
 What erected those gray boulders  
 That tower over the swaying grass  
 And paint shadows on the fields?  
 What hoisted the slabs of heather gray  
 Onto the backs of its ashen kin?

Did the hands of ancient gods  
 Or the blood and sweat of slaves and servants  
 Raise these wonders of stone?  
 Or was it magic,  
 A force of nature beyond reckon and thought,  
 Or machines of wood and steel?

What etched those scars into the pastures beyond?  
 What marred these meadows that stretch out for miles?

Did the heels of boots and the points of swords  
 Scratch and claw these shallow carvings  
 That spiral ever so gracefully from grounds of grass  
 and flowers?  
 Or are these the trails of winds and snow falling from  
 stormy skies  
 Or of feather waters drifting over earth?

What built this solemn council of stones  
 That goes by the alias "Stonehenge,"  
 A magic both foreboding and a temptation,  
 A curiosity and an enigma?  
 The mystery of the Earth and the beauty of creation.

**Second prize 10 and under**

**Lola Seiter**, age 10  
 Putnam Valley, NY

**Missing**

I wonder where  
 All my missing stuff goes  
 Does it hide beneath the snow  
 Down a pathway  
 Over a hill  
 Maybe they're hiding with Jack and Jill  
 Under the water  
 Through a stream  
 Every night I have a dream  
 To a far-off land  
 With lots of bees  
 Buzz, buzz, buzzing in different color trees  
 They use my socks as blankets

And my lunchbox as a bed  
 And my little pink eraser as a place to put their heads  
 I wonder where all my missing stuff goes  
 Maybe I'll find the answer someday  
 But right now I can't find my tray  
 Oh no!  
 I think I've lost it again!

**Second prize 11 and up**

**Susie Lu**, age 12  
 Sammamish, WA

**I Wonder About Math**

I wonder  
 as I see equations in black ink,  
 sharp numbers on white paper.  
 A disconnected storm of confusion,  
 like fishing in murky water.

I wonder  
 as I think, Should I use this theorem, that formula,  
 or the method from yesterday?  
 I try, but each leads to a dead end.

I wonder  
 as I will to see something,  
 to cross the border on impossibility,  
 to find the trick, the starting point,  
 that idea I missed.

But aha!  
 I see the pattern,  
 a shaft of light in trees,  
 a hidden path out of jungle:  
 the disorganized calculations aligned.

I sprint, I leap, like runner reaching end  
 on flying legs I race  
 I tear across finish line ribbon  
 cheers of imaginary crowd ring in my ears—  
 as I wonder about math. . . .

### Second prize 11 and up

**Willa Sands**, age 13  
Nashville, TN

#### In the Moonlit Night

Soft white light bathes the ground.  
Moonlit trees gleam silver.

Silence.  
But listen.  
If you listen deeper,  
Push back the curtain of quiet serenity,  
You can hear.

You can hear  
Birds nestling into sleep.  
Trees inching upward.  
Mountains growing, reaching up into the heavens.  
Stars sighing.

In the dead of the night, a single white rosebud opens.  
The petals slowly unfurl,  
The flower lifts its white face to drink the moonlight  
Floating, a faint white whisper, in the air.  
A small, simple moth lands on the rose,  
Flutters wings,

And settles  
In the moonlit night  
And I, watching, am filled with wonder.

### Third prize 10 and under

**Larkin Sempsrott**, age 8  
Franklin, IN

#### My Pride and Joy

Sing lei la roy!  
My pride and joy!

I wish I had a manual  
To this Brittany Spaniel  
On his language!

Then he gives me a grin  
And goes running off again!  
Then I give him three treats  
And then I retreat  
Home,  
Where I ponder  
And I wonder  
About Rudy's language.

### Third prize 11 and up

**Abby C.**, age 13  
Salem, SC

#### Max

he stops at each bush  
finding calling cards unseen  
what do they tell him?

### Third prize 11 and up

**Isabella Eileen Gallo**, age 12  
Elmwood Park, NJ

#### The Red Dancer

The mysterious red dancer's scourging red hair swayed  
with her dance partner  
Moving rapidly when her partner moved fast and slowly  
as the music ceased.  
Who was this mysterious red dancer whose crown  
reflected her regal power  
Illuminating all that she touches, The Red Dancer changes  
the dark into light with a red glow,  
like lightning lighting up the sky in a storm  
Who was this unknown dancer whose many names were  
as well known as the sun





Her presence brought relief and joy as well as fear and caution

No matter what place or time, wonder was always consuming the admirer who watched her dance with the wind.

So many were inspired by her rays of light and so many used her presence as a guide through the worries of life.

Who was this dancer who was so famous, but yet so unknown

The Flame, The Fire

### Third prize 11 and up

**Tyler Ren**, age 11  
Warren, NJ

### I Wonder

I wonder what the Earth will look like  
After two hundred more years.  
Will it fulfill our greatest dreams  
Or present our deepest fears?

I wonder if humans  
Will still exist.  
Will we live and thrive  
Or vanish in the mist?

I wonder if in the future  
All wars will cease.  
Will there be loads of conflicts  
Or worldwide peace?

I wonder if our planet  
Will still look very nice.  
Will it be filled with flowers  
Or full of melting ice?

I wonder what science  
Will look like there.  
Will we be able to clone people  
Or create clean air?

I wonder if the Earth will flourish  
And I want to know how.  
I hope that the Earth  
Will look as beautiful as it does now.

## NEW POETRY CONTEST: AT THE LIBRARY

Muffin loves going to the library. (She almost never encounters a ghost there, like in “The New Arrival.”) The seemingly endless shelves of books fill her with awe and wonder. Who wrote all those books? What mysteries and adventures do they contain? And where is the new issue of *Cricket*? Her dream is to read through the whole library. Then she would know everything! For this month’s contest, Muffin would love to add your best poem about a library to the Cricket Country Library for everybuggy to read and enjoy.

Will your poem be inspired by a large public library with great columns, busts of famous authors, and a motto chiseled in stone? Or by your own personal library at home, filled with your favorite books? Maybe you will write about a library in ancient Rome or Egypt, or a time when librarians delivered books on horseback to children in remote areas, or a library of music or art or scientific specimens. Perhaps you will imagine working in a library of the future, or shelving books in a library where magical things happen, like a wizard’s library of spells. You might even wonder who is checking out the same books as you at your library!

Whether you write about curling up all day in your favorite reading nook, frantically looking up information for a school report, or returning a long overdue book, everybuggy in Cricket Country will be renewing their library cards to check out your best poem—of 24 lines or less, please—about a library. *Shhh!*

### Contest Rules

1. Your contest entry must be your very own original work. Ideas and words should not be copied.
2. Your entry must be signed by your parent or guardian, stating that it is your own work, that no help was given, and that *Cricket* has permission to publish it in the magazine and on our website.
3. Be sure to include your name, age, and full address on your entry.
4. Only one entry per person, please.
5. If you want your work returned, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for each entry.
6. Your entry must be received by October 25, 2020.
7. Send entries to **Cricket League**, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354. (No faxes or email submissions, please!)
8. We will publish winning entries in the February 2021 issue and on the *Cricket* website.

### Honorable Mention

**Sara Grace Abernathy**, age 13, Kingston, GA  
**Cecilia Appel**, age 13, Tucson, AZ  
**Eliza Bruemmer**, age 12, Bloomington, IL  
**Ruth Gebhardt**, age 12, Inola, OK  
**Tessa Ladouceur**, age 9, Freeport, PA  
**Niamh Lynch**, age 9, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

To see more winning Cricket League entries, visit our website:  
[cricketmagkids.com/contests](http://cricketmagkids.com/contests)

### Solution to Crossbird Puzzle

N		S	K	S	V	M		S
O	P		A	E	P		O	T
O	M	T		Y		T	N	A
M		S	P	E	E	S		R
	B	O	O		C	I	T	
W		H	C	T	I	W		S
E	E	G		S		A	B	
R	M		T	A	C		L	E
B		T	A	E		T		W

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**CAN A MUSICAL** instrument hypnotize you? Drive you crazy? Make you tremble in fear? Jane Rosenberg wrote to tell me that all this was said to be true of the glass harmonica, which was invented by Benjamin Franklin more than two hundred and fifty years ago.



In 1761, Franklin attended an unusual concert in England played on water glasses. Each glass held a different amount of water which produced a different note when its rim was rubbed with a wet finger. Enchanted by the delicate sound, Franklin was inspired to create a new design. Instead of water-filled glasses, he stacked thirty-seven glass bowls of graduated sizes on an iron rod. He then placed the rod sideways in a cabinet, where it could be turned by a foot pedal. A musician sitting at the instrument could play different notes by lightly rubbing the rims of the spinning bowls with moistened fingers. Franklin called his instrument the armonica, from the Italian word *armonia*, meaning harmony.

The armonica sounded eerie and otherworldly. Some feared its haunting tones, and many a tall tale grew up around it. Musicians were warned against playing it or risk going mad. The instrument was said to frighten animals, make strong men faint, and drive listeners to tears, shrieks, and attacks of laughter. It was even outlawed in some German cities. A famous doctor from the 1700s, Franz Anton Mesmer, used it to help hypnotize people.

Still, from the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, and Strauss wrote about four hundred works for the glass harmonica. In our time, the glass harmonica is heard in ballet and opera music, contemporary classical music, movie scores, Broadway musicals, rock music, and electronic music. One of the best examples of the instrument can be heard in Gaetano Donizetti's 1835 opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor*. What happens in the opera? Lucia goes mad, of course, and what better instrument to use for her famous mad scene than the glass harmonica?

*Old Cricket*





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