

GLODWYN'S TREASURE CHEST

Volume 1 of the Crimson Cloak Anthologies.

A collection of Children's Stories by

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Mushroom Hop illustrated by Mary Filmer

The Cute Family Go Ballooning illustrated by Vincent Noot

Horrid Rex illustrated by [Veronica Castle](#)

GLODWYN'S TREASURE CHEST

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*To Mary Filmer, and all those everywhere who are fighting the fight with cancer.
May you win that fight, or experience no pain while fighting it. May you have the
strength, desire and fortitude to beat it, and the love and support to continue on. And
when you finally go into that beautiful light, please do not be afraid, for God is there
to take you home.
I love you Aunt Brenda.*

Where a charge is made for this book, all profit will go to the

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*A note on spelling: you will find either UK or US spellings employed according to
usage in the country of origin of the author concerned.*

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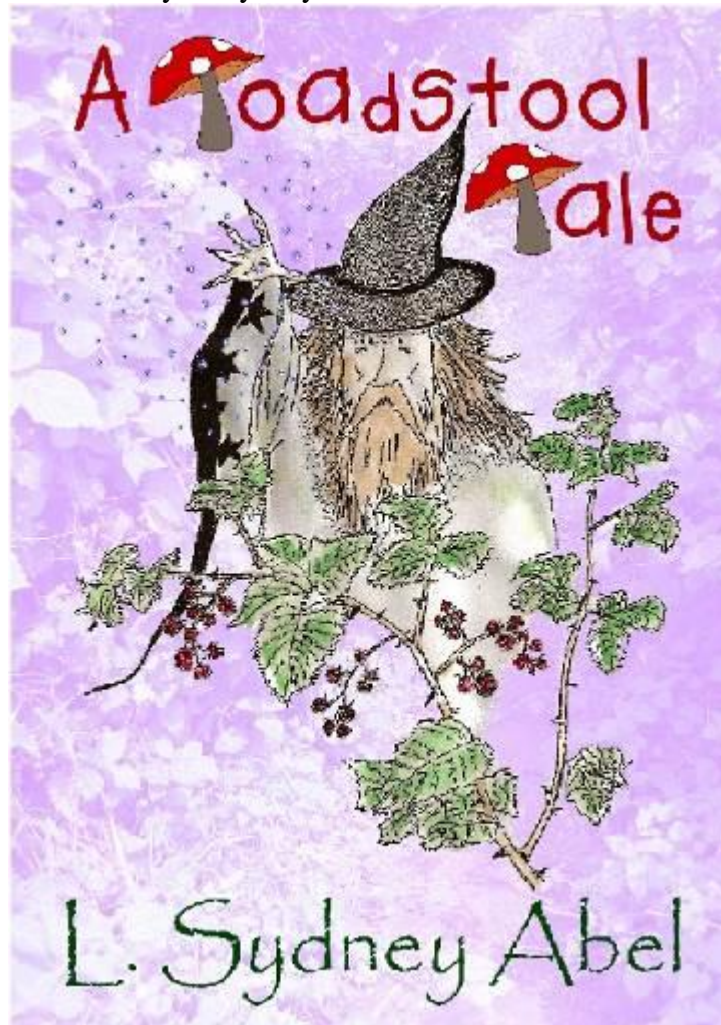
Hi everyone! I am Glodwyn the Gnome, and I live in Bracken Lea Wood.
You can find me in “Horrid Rex Bites the Dust”. I hope you enjoy this collection
of stories I have gathered for you!

~~~

## A Toadstool Tale

By L. Sydney Abel

Illustrated by L. Sydney Abel



for Holly



*The Ridikiles Kekkles has three holes*

*One under the lid of tin to let the water in  
One at its spout that should let the water out  
Its other is in its bottom*

The sun was shining a brilliant yellow. Mouse was out walking and had the feeling it was going to be a magical day.

The plant life on Bramble Lane towered. Flowers on tall stems looked upwards with petals spreading wide. The yellow sun shone through them, casting pools of colour upon the ground.

An old kettle, thrown out by some careless person, was lying on the ground. Mouse went up to it, looked at it and saw his reflection. His nose was bright and black, his fur was smooth and brown and his eyes twinkled brightly.

Mouse sat lazily upon the ground, ready to watch the day drift by.

Along Bramble Lane rushed a wizard. He was wiser than most wizards and even though he didn't look a day over one-hundred, he was the age of the world.

"Hello, mouse, have you nothing to do?" asked the wizard.

"Not today," answered Mouse.

"Then aren't you glad I came along?" said the wizard, "for today you'll be very busy. I need a house for a friend. And it's you, Mouse, that's going to build him one."

The wizard began chanting to the sky, with words Mouse didn't understand.



The wizard grasped the air and rubbed his hands together. When he opened them they were covered in silver-blue stars.

Sparkling silver-blue stars were flung into the air. They landed on Mouse and the ground around his feet. The wizard, in his magical way, simply disappeared.

And so it was that behind Mouse grew a giant toadstool.

Mouse's whiskers and nose began to twitch, his teeth craved something to gnaw, and his hands wanted something beautiful to make.

The wizard's words 'for today you'll be very busy' began their magic.

Mouse, by using his teeth, started to hollow the giant toadstool. Then, by using his nails on his hands and feet, scraped and scraped smooth the inside of the giant toadstool. At the end of hollowing and scraping, Mouse felt quite exhausted.

Carrying on, Mouse found two sticks and a toffee tin lid for the outside porch. Taking a thorn from a wild rose, he cut out a small, four-sided hole into the toadstool's wall, to let the light in. Then, very carefully, he joined leafless twigs together, to make a square frame with four smaller squares within. This was then fixed into the hole to make a window.

The next task was the hardest. Mouse climbed up the stalk of a large flower and pulled off a petal. It was a see-through yellow. When carefully trimmed, it was stuck to the window frame using blackbird poo. Messy, but it was the strongest setting compound known to him. The window looked magnificent. A door was made in much the same way. The inside of the toadstool was a shimmering yellow.

After clearing away, Mouse put up the porch with its toffee tin lid top. He began rushing to collect stones for a path as time was running out – the wizard would be back soon to see a finished house.

It wasn't long after, that the toadstool looked grand with its path of multi-coloured, not quite round stones.

Mouse stood back and took a good long look at his work. He was very pleased.





The wizard suddenly reappeared. His face beamed at what he saw. He was also very pleased. Mouse knew he had done well when the wizard disappeared again in a splash of stars to bring his friend.



Mouse scurried home to a very strange form of sky transport, so he could tell his friends what he'd been doing.

Moments later, a big pig's bladder balloon soared into the sky and moved in the direction of faraway fields.

From above, Mouse could see the wizard throwing stars to the sun, as the reflection of his balloon sailed like a boat on the lily-pond below. The sun shone through twinkling daytime stars and Mouse felt pleased. He wondered who it would be that was going to live in the toadstool on Bramble Lane.

The End

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## The Ugly Princess

By Helen Alexander

The Ugly Princess was so ugly that even her own mirrors ran away at the mere sight of her, hopping away on their short stubby legs and handles. The ones that couldn't run away, because they were affixed to walls or had heavy frames without legs, shattered the moment the Ugly Princess approached. (They were magical mirrors, so that as soon as the Princess passed by, they either went back on tip toe to their usual places or, had they shattered, gathered all their glass fragments and became whole again.)

All the mirrors in the palace where the Princess lived had been instructed to never let her catch a glimpse of her own reflection. The Princess never went outside the Palace, and thus had no idea that she was ugly. In fact, she thought that she was quite beautiful. She had been told so by the Big Mirror in the dining room. The Big Mirror had a pretty red cherry wood frame, in which it could rotate. Every time the Princess approached, the Big Mirror would do a swift about-face, creaking a bit on its hinges, for it was rather old.

One day, however, the Princess got curious to know what she looked like. She turned to one of the Little Mirrors, which was sleeping on a sunlit spot on the windowsill. It was momentarily caught off guard and tried to run away from the Princess on its three stubby legs, but she reached for it quickly and caught it. She put her hand on the surface of the Mirror, without looking into it, and brought it close to her face. Then she whispered: "Little Mirror, Little Mirror, why do you run away from me?"

The little gold-framed Mirror was an honest but polite mirror. It softly replied, "Princess, I have been instructed to do so by your Fairy Mother, and I must obey. I do not know why." The Little Mirror then wiggled its short legs emptily in the air in an attempt to get free, but the Princess suddenly held it up to her face. Before the mirror shattered, she caught a brief glimpse of herself. She threw down the Little Mirror with a scream.

"Oh!" she cried. "I'm so ugly!" She covered her face with both hands and cried for exactly fifteen minutes.

Meanwhile, the Little Mirror had picked itself up off the floor and managed to put its glass face back together again, so that only faint lines showed where it had broken, and they were beginning to gradually fade away now, so that, all in all, the Little Mirror looked almost as good as new.

It was a brave Little Mirror, too, and it approached the Princess as she was crying and tapped her on the ankle with one of its stubby legs. The Princess glanced at it, but saw her own reflection again, which sent her into a new fit of crying.

"Don't be sad," the Little Mirror said.

"How can I not be sad?" cried the Princess through her tears. "I am the ugliest princess that ever lived!"

The Mirror couldn't quite find what to say, and so it just scuffed the polished red parquet floor with one of its feet.

"Maybe," the Mirror said, at length, "I'm not the right kind of mirror. Maybe I'm wrong. Perhaps you should ask the others for a second opinion."

"You think so?" asked the Princess.

The Little Mirror was honest, but it was also very polite, and so it said: "I'm sure of it."

And they both walked out of the Princess' room and down the somber, candle-lit passageway that was the main hallway of the Palace. All kinds of portraits lined its dark walls: great past kings, queens, and princes and princesses, and not one of them was ugly. The Ugly Princess sighed sadly as she and the Little Mirror went on.

Together they went into the big dining room which contained the Big Mirror in its pretty cherry wood frame. The Big Mirror spotted the Princess in the doorway and was about to do an about-face, but the Little Mirror piped up from the floor at the Princess' feet.

"Wait!" the Little Mirror said to the Big Mirror.

"Don't come any closer!" the Big Mirror warned in a heavy and bossy baritone.

"Wait!" repeated the Little Mirror.

"What for?" the Big Mirror inquired.

"Maybe we're all wrong and the Princess is not ugly after all," said the Little Mirror. "Reflect the Princess. We promise that we won't tell on you to the Fairy Mother."

"Well, all right," replied the Big Mirror indecisively, after giving it some thought. "But this is highly unorthodox."

"Come closer, Princess," the Little Mirror suggested, and the Princess stepped closer. She slowly approached the Big Mirror, which was trembling in its frame out of fear.

When she saw her reflection, the Princess was not surprised and began to cry again. The Little Mirror approached her and said, "Let's try another mirror, Princess."

"Oh, what's the use?" the Princess cried. "I'm ugly! No mirror could tell me otherwise." And then she cried some more.

"Perhaps, then, you should go outside the Palace and ask the others," the Little Mirror advised, and the Big Mirror rotated heavily once inside its frame.

"Oh, but do you think I should?" wondered the Princess, for she had never been outside her Palace before.

"You could try, Princess," the Big Mirror replied.

And so the Princess put on her big feathered hat and took her royal walking stick and ventured outside the Palace. Everyone who saw her bowed politely, because she was a Princess, after all, but then they all ran away in a big hurry. The Princess returned to her Palace in tears.

Little Mirror and Big Mirror looked at her, and she did not have to say a word for them to understand what happened.

The Princess sat down on one of the dining room chairs and began to cry again. Her crying was so sad that, bit by bit, the Little Mirror began to cry too, in a thin,



wailing tone that was not unlike the Princess' crying. Then the Big Mirror joined in the crying chorus as well, shaking and sobbing loudly in its red cherry wood frame.

It is debatable as to exactly how long this crying would have continued, were it not for a quiet knock on the Palace's door.

The three fell silent. Little Mirror ran up to the door and asked, "Who's there?"

The response was a very muffled one, and Little Mirror had some trouble understanding what the visitor was saying.

"Could you please repeat that?" the Little Mirror asked, but there was no answer. In fact, it seemed as if their visitor had already left.

When Little Mirror opened the door, there was no one in sight: only a small box, tied with a pretty yellow ribbon, sat on the doorstep.

"Huh..." pondered the Little Mirror, and took the box and carried it inside for the Princess.

When the Princess opened the box, there was nothing in it except a mirror, which was lying face down among some wood shavings.

"That's not funny at all," the Princess said in dismay.

"Look at me," the New Mirror said suddenly in a very muffled voice, for it was lying on its face. It had a simple, somewhat rough frame made of dull bronze, and looked nothing like the fancy gilded mirrors in the Palace.

The Princess picked it up and looked at it, and could not recognize the face she saw in the reflection.

"Who is this?" the Princess asked no one in particular.

The Big Mirror and the Little Mirror both looked into the New Bronze Mirror and were surprised as well, for it showed a very pretty Princess who was not ugly at all. Then the two Mirrors looked with suspicion at the New Mirror, and then at the Princess, and then again at the New Mirror, and then at each other.

"The New Mirror is a liar!" the Little Mirror cried.

"No, I am not," responded the New Mirror calmly. Its voice had a hollow, bell-like ring to it, so that each word seemed to echo for a while before falling silent.

"I've always said the Princess was beautiful," the Big Mirror said in its bassy tone, and did a slight turn in its cherry wood frame.

"Then you're a liar, too!" the Little Mirror replied fiercely, and did a little angry kick with its foot in the direction of the Big Mirror.

And the Princess looked at the three mirrors, and did not know which one she should trust.

"How dare you call me a liar?" the Big Mirror exclaimed indignantly. "Why, if I wasn't so attached to my frame, I'd call you out to a duel this very minute!"

The Little Mirror then proceeded to make a few jumps at the Big Mirror, attempting to kick it with its legs, as the Big Mirror spun around in its frame trying to hit it back, while the New Mirror ran around them both like a referee, attempting to intervene in their fighting.

"Stop it!" the Princess cried, and the three mirrors immediately stopped their fighting and became still and silent. They looked at the Princess, and she looked at them.

"There's only one way to find out," the Princess said, and picked up her big feathered hat and her royal walking stick and once more went outside the Palace.

To her amazement, no one ran away at the sight of her anymore. Everyone greeted her cheerfully, and she happily greeted them back.

When she returned, she saw the Bronze Mirror lying face down on the floor. Its glass was broken, but it was not a magic mirror, and so it could not put itself back together.

"What have the two of you done?" the Princess demanded of the Little Mirror and the Big Mirror, who turned away from her and dared not look upon her face in shame.

"Look at me," said the Princess, and first the Little Mirror, and then the Big Mirror turned to face her. The Princess looked just as beautiful as she had in the New Mirror.

"I don't understand this at all," the Princess said. "And you two, you should be ashamed of yourselves, attacking a poor defenseless mirror while I was away."

The two mirrors tilted away into the shadows and did not dare to look at the Princess anymore.

"We're sorry," they both said.

The End

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## **The Dragon Said Moo**

By **Janice Clark**

Daniel drew neat little circles with a felt pen. Row after row of perfect little circles. The old gray sweatshirt from the rag bag began to look like a knight's chain mail shirt. He cut off a good piece of cloth from a worn-out sheet, and cut a hole for his head to go through.

Daniel put on the sweatshirt and the piece of sheet. He added a belt with a little bag on it, and a wooden sword. He looked at himself in the mirror.

What a cool costume, he thought. Wait until Charley sees this.

"Wait," said Mom, as Daniel started out the door. "We have company coming. Uncle Dan and Aunt Tricia will be here in about half an hour. You can play with the twins while the grownups talk."

"Mom," said Daniel, "I'm almost ten years old. Don't you think that's too old to play with five-year-olds?"

"Almost ten is old enough for responsibilities. Karen and Derrick have never been on a farm before. I need you to watch them and keep them out of trouble."

"Oh, you mean you want me to baby-sit?"

"Yes," said Mom. "I want you to baby-sit. Can I count on you?"

"Sure," said Daniel. "I can play knights with Charley tomorrow."

Daniel went back upstairs. He began making something with cardboard, tape, and the colored foil he had saved from his Christmas candy.

When the guests arrived, Daniel was still in his costume. He shook hands with Uncle Dan and Aunt Tricia. He bowed to Karen and Derrick.

"Greetings, your majesties. I am your loyal knight, Sir Daniel. Would you like to put on your crowns and inspect the castle grounds?" He held out two cardboard crowns.

"Oh," said Karen. "How pretty. Am I a princess?"

"Yes," said Daniel. "Please follow me." They started toward the barn. "The royal cat has new kittens. We can visit them on the way to see the dragons."

They went to the barn. They climbed on bales of straw and petted the kittens.

Derrick looked out the door and saw the duck pond. "I'm hot," he said. "I'm going to play in the water."

"I'm sorry," said Daniel, "but that's not allowed."

"You can't tell me what to do." Derrick headed for the water. Daniel whistled. A big gray goose came running up, hissing and flapping its wings. The twins screamed and hid behind Daniel. Daniel gave the goose some food out of his bag. The goose waddled away.

"What was that?" asked Karen.

"Just a baby watch-dragon. He can't breathe fire yet, just hisses a little steam."

They walked toward the pasture. There were big animals in the distance. Some were eating grass, while others lay in the shade of a big maple tree. One was by itself, behind a fence.

"Are those the dragons?" asked Derrick. "I'm going to ride that one." He started towards the fence.

"Stop," said Daniel. That one's not safe." He whistled, and the big gray goose came running up again. Derrick came back to the path. Daniel gave the goose some more food. Soon they were close to the big animals under the tree.

Karen asked, "Where are their wings?"

"They haven't grown out yet. They grow new ones every year. Would you like to feed one? They love dandelions."

The twins picked some dandelions. Daniel showed them how to feed the dragons without getting their fingers bitten. Karen patted the dragon's nose.

"Moo," said the dragon. It licked Karen's arm.

After a while, Daniel said, "It's time for lunch. Let's go back to the house."

Derrick didn't want to go. Daniel had to whistle for the goose again.

Mom and Dad had a big lunch set out on the picnic table under the elm tree.

"Mama, Daddy," said Karen, "Sir Daniel took us to see the dragons and we fed them and one of them kissed me."

"But I don't like the baby dragon," said Derrick. "He's too mean."

"Dragons?" said Daniel's Mom.

Daniel just smiled and helped himself to a sandwich.

The End

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## **The Red-Eyed Mr. Glumb**

By **Penny Estelle**

His eyes burned. Tears threatened to fall from his enormous brown eyes. "Please," Timmy thought, "don't let me cry."

The teacher looked down at the two five year old boys. "Who started this fight?"

Timmy pointed to the other boy and said, "We were playing with the soccer ball and he took it!"

Ethan, the other little fighter, just looked at the ground. He was new in school and had not made any friends.

"Ethan, do you have anything to say?" Ms. Johnson asked.

The little blond-haired boy looked up at her, his green eyes round with fright, mumbled, "I just wanted to play."

“Fighting is not allowed in this school for any reason. Both of you are going to have to see Mr. Glumb, the principal.”

They sat in the principal’s office, waiting to be called in. Timmy whispered, “My sister has been in Mr. Glumb’s office before. She said when he is really mad, his face goes all puffy and his eyes go funny. They start glowing bright red and then he starts making this growling noise.” A tear travelled down Timmy’s cheek.

Ethan stared at Timmy. He tried to talk, but the words wouldn’t come.

“Boys,” a small gray-haired secretary said kindly, “Mr. Glumb would like to see you in his office.” Her long pointy nose and close set dark eyes gave Timmy the chills. The door squeaked loudly as it slowly opened.

A balding man was sitting at his desk. He looked up, pushing his glasses back up onto the bridge of his nose, and told the boys to sit down. “I see we had a problem over a soccer ball. Who wants to tell me what happened?”

At first, neither boy said anything. There were no red flashing eyes or growling noises. “They were playing soccer and I wanted to play,” Ethan said. “I don’t know anybody here and I just wanted to play.”

“Timmy, is that what happened?” Mr. Glumb asked gently.

“I thought he was taking our ball. I didn’t know he just wanted to play.”

Mr. Glumb took off his glasses and looked at both boys. “I think, this time, I am going to let you go back to class with a warning. I won’t tolerate boys fighting in my school, but I think this was just a misunderstanding.” He walked them to the door, “I hope I don’t see you two in here again.”

Two older boys were waiting to see the principal. Mr. Glumb called them in and shut the door. When Timmy and Ethan turned to walk out of the office, they heard a low rumbling noise. They looked back and saw a red glow coming from under the principal’s door. Timmy and Ethan looked at each other, eyes wide.

“Are you boys waiting for something?” the secretary asked: the kindness in her voice was gone.

Ethan grabbed Timmy’s hand and they hurried back to class. Neither boy would be back to see Mr. Glumb for a very long time!

The End

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## Mushroom Hop

By Mary Filmer

Illustrated by Mary Filmer



“Granny Ann, is this mushroom one we can eat?” asked Mary. She then put the mushroom she had picked into the basket, which Granny Ann had taken to carry them home in.

“Why I do believe it is, Mary. Did I ever tell you about the Mushroom hop?” said Granny Ann as she sat down on the old wooden chair, which was under the fig tree in the shade, as it really was quite a hot day.

“No, you haven’t told me, but I really would love to know” answered Mary. Then she knelt down beside her grandmother to listen to the story.

Poppy the troll who lived with Granny Ann was sitting on the seat beside her and he could hardly wait to hear the story. Both Mary and Poppy loved to hear it when Granny Ann told those stories about the fairy folk.

“Well make yourselves comfortable and I will tell you all about the Mushroom hop.”

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In the little bottom garden of Mrs. Pollywattle’s home, lived a magic little person. Not a pixie or a gnome, but a beautiful fairy known as Snowdrop: she was a fairy who was so sweet and gay. Every morning at the start of the day a sunbeam would wake her.

Now on this particular day she was fast asleep by the pond and the sun was not able to wake her. But luckily for her, Mr Goldfish who lived in the pond splashed her, and it did give her such a fright.

He popped out of the water and Snowdrop heard him say:

“I hope you haven’t forgotten that today is a special day for all fairies in this land.”



“Oh, you would never let me forget,” said Snowdrop with a smile. For today was one of the most important days in a fairy’s life. It was a day when all fairies would wake before any humans did and do the mushroom hop.

For very soon you know that Snowdrop and the other fairies would be spreading the seeds for the mushrooms by the miles.

“Well then, my pretty little fairy friend, you had better shake a leg. Because you know the fairy Queen will be cross with you if you are not on time” said the old goldfish, as he splashed around in the water. Then he swam away into the middle of the pond.

So Snowdrop took to the sky and with one flap of her wings she was flying high over the beautiful gardens. She flew down to smell the roses as she glided on the wind. There was Mrs. Pollywattle’s garden with the blooming red and yellow roses. Mrs. Jenkins’ rhubarb patch and old Mr Jones’ flowers in all beautiful bright colours just like the rainbow.

Snowdrop flew on towards Mrs. Willowy’s gum tree and when she passed the old garden shed she knew she would soon be in the ripe and juicy vegetable garden where her friend Peapod would be. Snowdrop landed on a cabbage that was really quite a size and peered around, on tippy toe. She shaded her eyes with her hand and looked around for Peapod. In a whisper that no human could hear, she called to Peapod and asked him if he was there. But she was afraid he did not hear so she called a little louder to make sure he could hear her. Then out from underneath a lettuce leaf a sleepy face peeped out to see who was calling him.

“Of course I am here,” said a yawning Peapod.

“What is all the noise about?”

Now Peapod was Snowdrop’s special friend and they had travelled far and wide together, and Snowdrop would never Mushroom Hop without him by her side.

So when she said what time it was, Peapod was really surprised.

“Is it Mushroom Hop time already? Well, I never realized.” He said.

So off they flew hand in hand and in no time it seemed they were joining all their fairy friends, in the fields which are so green and lush near the stream, and the paddocks where the sheep would lie asleep. It was there that King and Queen Doodledye offered buttercups of dew and little plates of fairy bread, for they were the hosts of the mushroom hop. Now it was not long before the king was handing out the bags of magic dust for the fairies to spread for the mushrooms to grow, mushroom seeds needed the fairies to weave a little magic on them as they planted the mushroom seeds. King Doodledye handed out the lists of Mushroom stops and then he waved his little golden flag and started the Mushroom hop. Fairies flapped their wings and spread them like glowing fans. It was not long before they were stirring up the morning breeze and spreading all the magic seeds. They darted left and right and up and down till all the meadows were covered.

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“Now if you were very quiet, you could hear a little ploppy, plop, and this was the tiny little feet of the fairies as they did the Mushroom Hop. And when the day was over and all the work was done, Snowdrop and Peapod joined the other fairies for a little party fun. So when you and I woke up this morning Mary, the mushrooms were there for us to pick and I think if you look very closely between the flowers of our garden, you may just see them having a party.”

Poppy the little troll scratched his head, and as he looked at Granny Ann with a smile on his face he winked one of his beautiful blue eyes and said, "I always wanted to know who planted these mushrooms."

The End

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## An Everglades Tale

By Elizabeth Grace

Gladys looked over at the scaly green monsters with a shudder. They were hideous looking, with their small beady eyes and crooked teeth. Gladys didn't know how they could live like that, knowing themselves to be so ugly.

Gladys knew full well it wasn't right to think such mean thoughts, but she couldn't help it.

These creatures should not even be allowed to live in her neighborhood. It wasn't just that they were ugly; it was the fact that they went around munching on whatever, and whomever, they pleased. If they all disappeared tomorrow, Gladys wouldn't feel a bit guilty.

Of course Gladys couldn't help feeling especially beautiful compared to them. With her sleek smooth skin and thin, muscular body that could glide gracefully over land or marsh. There wasn't a place Gladys couldn't go, with her sharp claws to help her climb trees, and powerful lungs to help her hold her breath at the bottom of the river. Gladys knew she was special from the day she was hatched, she had barely been out of her egg when she heard one of the visiting humans call her "cute." She was smart too, she knew the big, ugly creatures were called "Gators," and the humans didn't like them. She also knew the snake-necked birds that held out their wings to dry in the sunshine were "Anhinga" birds. She liked the humans and listened as they talked. It seemed they had a name for everything, even her home, which they called the "Everglades."

Everything in the Everglades had a name, except for her.

Many times Gladys had shown herself to humans, waiting for one to point at her and exclaim what she was. Yet, no one did. She'd been called a strange looking snake, a lizard, and even a frog, but Gladys knew what those creatures were and she was none of them. Lizards lived on land, snakes didn't have legs, and frogs always had the annoying habit of saying, "rib-bit".

Gladys also grew more and more each day. She had started out no longer than a human finger, and now she wouldn't have been able to fit in their hand. It was startling how quickly she grew, and she wondered how large she would get to be. This gave Gladys an idea. She was going to eat so much to grow big enough to be able to get those nasty Gators out of her home. Where they went to, Gladys didn't care as long as they were gone.

The first day of her plan went swimmingly. In fact, she swam around catching minnows and small frogs until her belly was bulging.

The next day went even better; she caught more minnows than the day before and a frog. She could feel her stomach growing larger.

After an entire week of eating her fill, Gladys was certain she was successful. She had grown a whole inch. Unfortunately, the extra inch was found around her waist.

This would never do. If she grew more round, she'd end up being the slowest in the marsh. The slowest never lasted the longest.

With this breakthrough, Gladys had a better plan. Every day she would exercise and grow her muscles until she was big and strong, not big and fat. She'd get so strong she'd be able to scare those terrible Gators back to where they belonged.

The first day of her new plan she dove and climbed trees half of the day. It was tiring work but she felt stronger.

The next day went even better. She dove and climbed trees almost the entire day.

After an entire week of concentrating on exercising, Gladys discovered she had lost an inch!

This was the opposite of what she had wanted! She could see her muscles had bulged and now her stomach was flat. Gladys realized she hadn't been thinking about it the right way. If she ate too much, she got fat. If she exercised too much, she got lean. If she wanted to get big, but not fat, she needed to eat a lot and exercise.

For the next few weeks, Gladys ate everything in sight and exercised all day long. She was happy and healthy, growing steadily every day. Without even realizing it, Gladys was as big as the Gators she so despised. The time had come.

Feeling confident, Gladys went up to a bunch of lazy Gators as they sprawled out in the mud.

"Hey," she said.

Not a single Gator moved. In fact, a fly landed right on a Gator's nose and started crawling around on his face, even daring to venture into the Gator's open mouth, treating itself to a chunk of meat stuck between two pointy teeth.

"Hey!" This time Gladys raised her voice. She wasn't afraid of these creatures.

One by one, eyes lazily opened. Four very large, very mean looking Gators glared at her.

"Whaddaya want?" the biggest of the bunch asked, only bothering to open one eye to her. A scar near the unopened eye suggested there was a reason he only had one eye open.

"I'm here to let you know you are not welcome in the Everglades any longer," proud of herself for her voice not cracking.

The Gators just laughed.

"Chill out, climb in the mud for a bit and cool yourself," the Gator said and closed his eye.

Gladys couldn't believe it. They weren't taking her seriously.

"I mean it!" Gladys said with a shout. "You better get lost real quick."

Not a single Gator eye looked back at her. Gladys was furious.

"Don't you get it? No one wants to see your ugly, scaly faces around here." It was harsh but needed to be said. Gladys didn't feel a bit guilty.

"Who are you calling ugly? I ought to take a bite out of you." The big Gator looked at her and snapped his teeth. The other Gator's eyes popped open and Gladys saw seven eyes and several dozen very sharp teeth looking her way. Maybe she had gone too far. After all, there were four of them and only one of her.

Gladys turned away to retreat and think up a new plan. As she turned, she caught a glimpse of herself in the murky water. Instead of her smooth skin and small cute mouth, she saw tough scales and a toothy grin staring back at her. She screamed: what had she grown into?

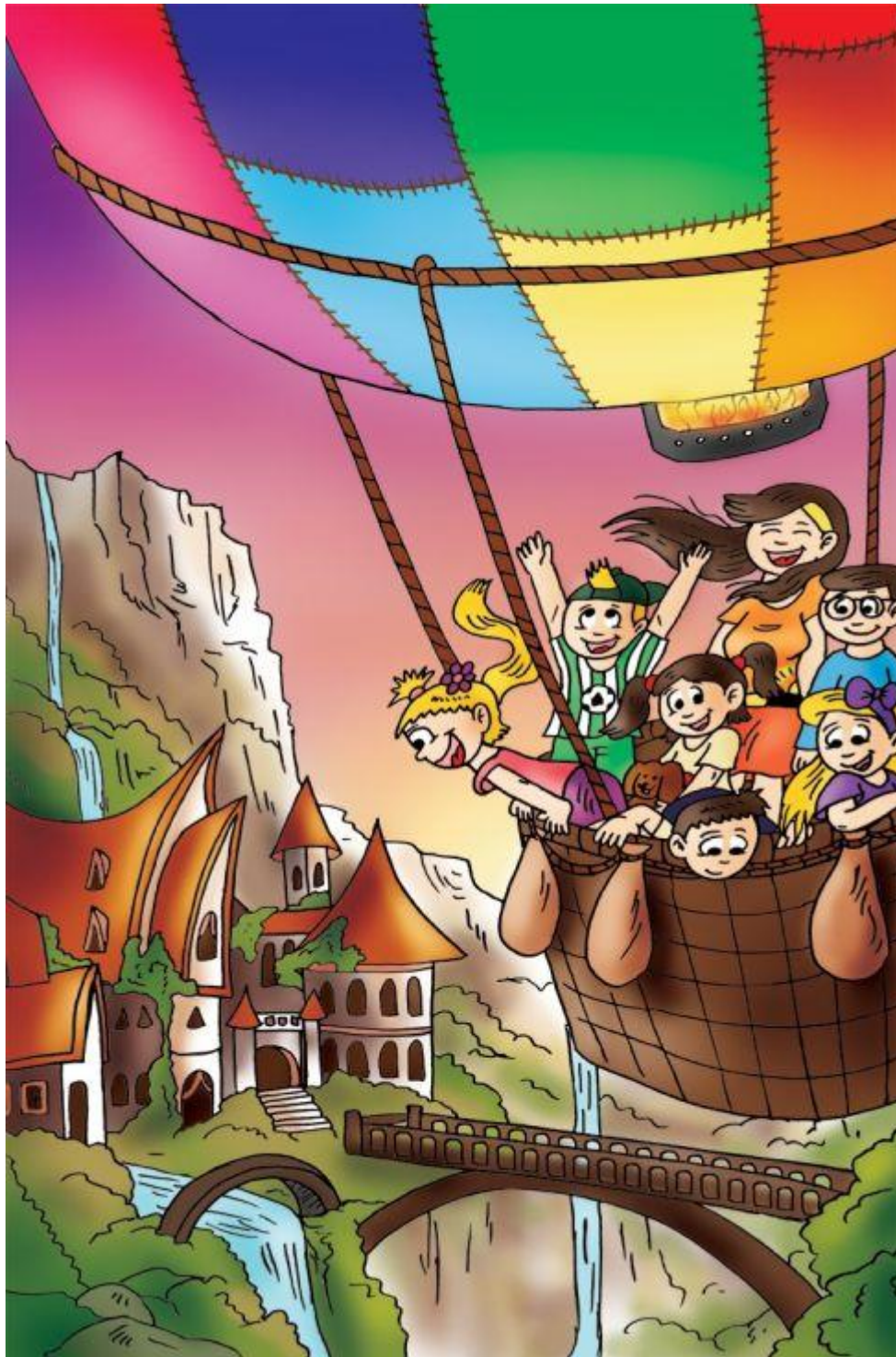
"Don't leave, I was only joking," the big Gator called out to her, thinking the scream had been fear of his sharp teeth. "We don't get such beautiful Gators around here as YOU."

The End

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## The Cute Family Go Ballooning

By Vincent Noot



The Cute Family are on holiday. As a treat, they have taken a trip in a hot air balloon. Can you guess where they are? Can you name some countries which have mountains in them?

Carissa, Chaz, Cade, Cammy, Chelsey, Cody and Cindy are having a wonderful time, floating high above the valley. Cindy is pretending she has created the pretty buildings with her magic wand. Cammy has brought along her favourite toy rabbit. Chelsey enjoys the beautiful colors of the scenery. Cody is curiously looking down and listening to the whispers of the wind. Poor Carissa is at her wits' end trying to keep Chaz from climbing on the sides of the basket, while Cade is trying to remember the names of all the mountains.

This is a holiday they will all remember!

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## **Horrid Rex Bites the Dust**

By [Esma Race](#)

Illustrated by [Veronica Castle](#)



Horrid Rex was lost. When the Big Brown Dog had rolled him over and over in the dust, he had been very frightened, and he ran and ran until he found himself in a large wood, and so he crawled underneath a big bush and tried to get his breath back.

When, after a little while, he peeped out from beneath the bush, he saw that it was beginning to get dark, and he felt even more frightened by the strange, unfamiliar noises that he heard, so he curled up as small as he could, and fell asleep; not realising that all around him the woodland Fairy Folk and small creatures were watching him, and wondering where he had come from.

Horrid Rex was not the little puppy's real name. His real name was just Rex, but all the neighbours where he lived in Bracken Lea village had heard his owner call him Horrid Rex, because he was so naughty, and the name had stuck with him. But he was only ten months old, and he had no idea what the word "horrid" meant.

Horrid Rex was always up to mischief. He made a mess wherever he went: he chewed up everything in sight, dragged things from inside the house and into the garden, he ate plants, and tormented the cat next door, and the Little White Dog who lived close by.

Now he was lost and fast asleep, hidden underneath a bush in Bracken Lea Wood.

Horrid Rex was a very cute looking puppy dog. His coat was curly and white, just like a little lamb's. He had lovely big brown eyes, ears that flopped up and down



when he was running, and his tail was feathery at the end. Also he could jump up and down as though he had springs in his legs.

Back in Bracken Lea village, Horrid Rex's owner was looking everywhere for him. She asked everyone if they had seen him. She even passed close by the wood, but because Horrid Rex was still fast asleep deep within the woodland, he didn't hear his name being called.

Someone who did hear, however, was Glodwyn the Gnome, who lived in Bracken Lea Wood with other gnomes and Fairy Folk, and had been watching the sleeping puppy dog.

"He is called Horrid Rex," Glodwyn told his friend Celandine the Flower Fairy "and he must be lost."

"Oh, the poor little thing!" answered Celandine. "We must help him to find his way home."

"Well, that won't be easy," Glodwyn said. "We shall have to find out where he lives first."



The sun was quite high in the sky when Horrid Rex finally woke up. He crawled out from underneath the bush and looked all around him.

He was very hungry, but most of all he was thirsty, his mouth was very dry from all the dust that had got into it when the Big Brown Dog rolled him all around on the ground.

As he stood up and stretched, he saw a small fairy close by. "Hello," said Celandine. "Can I help you, little puppy?"

"Oh, yes, please," answered Horrid Rex. "I need a drink of water."

"Come along with me then," said Celandine kindly, and led him along the Fairy Trail which led to the pond, where very soon Horrid Rex was enjoying a long cool drink of water. Then he told Celandine that he was hungry, but she had no idea what little puppy dogs ate, so she told him to wait for her, and she went to ask the other Fairy Folk for advice.

"Dogs eat meat," said Buttercup the Flower Fairy.

When he heard this remark, Rabbit decided to pop back down into his burrow, and Hedgehog rolled himself into a prickly ball of spikes.

"What is the matter with those two?" asked Glodwyn, laughing. "They don't really think that the puppy will eat them, do they?"

"I hope not," laughed Celandine.

"Well, I am going to fetch him a few carrots and apples," Glodwyn said. "They will do him for now, until somebody comes and finds him."

So Glodwyn used his earth magic to feed Horrid Rex, and the little puppy dog was quite happy playing in the woods.



Although the Fairy Folk and woodland creatures did their best to care for Horrid Rex, they found it very difficult, because he was very naughty. He dug up all the nuts that Squirrel had stored for the winter and ate them. He chewed up a whole patch of bluebells, flattened most of the dandelions, and dug lots of holes everywhere. He chased after the small creatures, and even tried to eat a ladybird – and that all happened in one day.

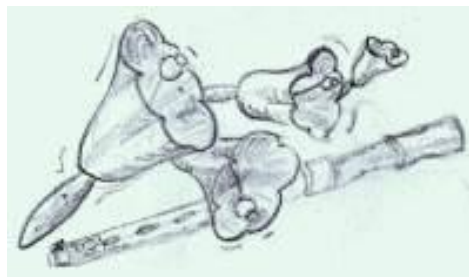
So when Horrid Rex's owner came back again calling out his name, Glodwyn and his friends sighed with relief. But Horrid Rex was enjoying himself, and having so much fun in the woods that he decided to stay where he was.

"Oh, no, you don't!" Glodwyn told him. "You must go home: this is no place for a puppy dog!"

So the puppy dog raced out from beneath the trees, to where his owner was standing.

"Thank Goodness!" she said; and picked him up to give him a big hug. He licked her hand, and tried to tell her that he was glad to see her and needed feeding, but he couldn't talk to her as easily as he could talk to the fairies and other animals.

Glodwyn, Celandine and all the rest of the Fairy Folk were so happy to see Horrid Rex go that they decided to have a party, with lots of singing and dancing to the music of the Fairy Band.



Back home, Horrid Rex tried very hard to be a good dog, but it was not easy, and sometimes he could not quite manage it.

The man who owned the Big Brown Dog was told that he must keep him on a lead in future, so that no other puppy dog got rolled in the dust like Horrid Rex.

The End.

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## **Mister Sparks, the Fire House Dog**

**By Wesley Tallant**

Mister Sparks Finds a Home.

The bells start ringing and the lights start flashing. Ben McAfee, the fire station dispatcher, picks up a telephone and listens to the voice coming out of it. "Twenty three eighteen Maple Street," he says into the telephone. "We're on the way."

He reaches over and grabs a microphone for the station address system. "House fire, house fire, twenty three eighteen Maple Street." His voice fills the inside of the Central Fire Station as fire men rush to get to the big red firetrucks.

Floyd Rogers climbs into his seat behind the steering wheel of Engine 1 and Mister Sparks runs across his lap to get to his place on the engine cover between the two front seats of the truck. His tail is wagging so fast that it is a blur. He starts barking to the other firemen as if giving them orders to hurry up and get on the truck. He is growing impatient and wants the truck to move. 'People are in trouble and are counting on us', he is thinking.

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Mister Sparks was a small dog with black fur, a white fur collar around his neck, white feet and a white tip on his tail. His short legs made him look and walk funny.

He came to the fire station by way of the alley in back of the station. Ben and one of the other firemen, Charlie Mack, were standing in the doorway that opened into the alley talking, when they noticed the small pup sniffing at the trash cans that lined the alley.

"He looks hungry," Ben said. He squatted down and tried to get the small hungry pup to come to him, but the pup was too scared. The pup just sat down and looked around the alley.

"I'll be right back," Ben told Charlie and went into the station.

He soon returned with a small bowl of left-over stew from the kitchen. He slowly walked over close to the pup, set the bowl down and backed away.

At first the pup seemed to ignore the offering, but the aroma coming from the bowl got the better of him and he eased over to it, keeping a watchful eye on the two men. He quickly emptied the bowl and turned to walk away down the alley.

The pup climbed into a cardboard box that he had been calling home and lay down. When he looked up, he found that Ben had followed him.

"Is this where you live?" Ben asked as if the pup could answer him. Ben looked around, all the doors in the alley were shut and locked. There was no food or water dish by the box. "You need a home, don't you fella."

Ben noticed that the pup wasn't wearing a collar and tags. He squatted down beside the box and reached out his hand for the pup to sniff.

'Nothing strange about that. Just another human hand,' the pup thought. 'But what's that smell on his sleeve?' And the pup sniffed further up Ben's arm.

"You must be smelling Barker," Ben said. "He's my Golden Retriever at home. I always give him a hug before I come to work."

The pup then looked up at Ben, his big sad eyes said it all. 'I lost my mom and brothers and sisters. Can I stay with you?'

The pup was still a little nervous when Ben reached down and picked up the box with him in it, and carried him back to the fire station.

"What did you find?" Charlie asked when Ben returned.

"He must be a stray. He went straight to this box as if he had been living in it for a while."

Ben carried the box into a small room at the front of the station. He sat the box on the floor beside the dispatch desk. The pup stayed hunched down in the box, too scared to move.

"What you got there?" a big man asked when he came into the office. He was John Anthony, the shift captain.

"He's a little stray pup I found in the alley out back. I thought I'd see if I could find him a home."

"Hello boy," John said as he leaned over to pat the pup on the head.

The pup didn't know what to think of this new person. He crouched as far into his box as he could get.

"Timid little fellow, isn't he?" John said.

"Yeah, I gave him a bowl of left over stew from lunch. He gobbled it down like he hadn't eaten in a while."

"Looks like he's maybe three, four months old. He's got several different breeds of blood in him. Short legs and long body like a Dachshund, pointy ears like a German Shepherd, and a head like a Labrador."

Just then a loud bell started ringing. John stood back up and watched Ben answer the telephone on the desk and begin to speak into it.

"Sixteen twelve Main Street. Got it, we're on the way." He laid the telephone back down and picked up a silver stick, flipped a switch and began to speak into it. But the pup didn't hear Ben's voice come from Ben, but from somewhere in the station. "House fire, house fire, sixteen twelve Main Street."

Ben then wrote on a piece of paper and gave it to John. John turned and ran out the door to the big room filled with big red trucks.

The pup sat up in his box and watched Ben pick up another telephone, a red one this time, and begin talking into it. Outside the office men were running by and hollering, "Let's go, let's go."

The pup slowly got up out of his box and peeked out the door. Men were running everywhere putting on long coats, big boots and black hats. He heard the big red trucks start up and lights on top of them started flashing. Then a loud wailing noise filled the station and the trucks began to roll out the door.

He watched as one by one, the big trucks rolled out of the station. When the last one had gone, he realized that his tail was slowly wagging for the first time in weeks.

"Do you like that, boy?" he heard Ben's voice ask. He turned around to see Ben sitting in his chair and looking at him. "We may have just found you a home right here."

The pup went back to his box and climbed in. But this time he didn't hunch down in fright, he sat up and watched Ben write on another piece of paper. Then he heard John's voice come over a small gray box and Ben flipped another switch and talked into the silver stick again.

For the next hour, the pup watched Ben write on paper and talk into the silver stick.

The pup finally heard a familiar sound outside the station. When he looked out the office door, he saw the biggest of the red trucks backing into the station. Then the middle sized truck followed by a small red car.

For the next few minutes, the station was a bee hive of activity. Men removed dirty hoses from the backs of the trucks and put clean hoses in their place. John came into the office and sat beside Ben and began to write on yet another piece of paper.

When John finished writing on the piece of paper, he put it in a stack of papers on the desk. He then turned and looked at the pup. "Hello pup," he said.

"Captain," Ben said. "That pup has fire dog written all over him."

"What do you mean?"

"As soon as all the excitement started when that alarm came in, he got out of his box and watched you leave. And for the first time, I saw him wagging his tail. When you came back, he got back out of his box and watched you back in."

"Really?"

"Yeah. Do you think the chief would let him stay here?"

"It wouldn't hurt to ask." John reached down and rubbed the pup on his head. This time the pup let him.

"Have you got a name for him?" John asked.

"Well, Sparky is a common name for fire house dogs. But he has an air of dignity about him that needs to be addressed. The way that black fur wraps around him and the white collar, it makes him look like he's wearing a tuxedo. I think Mister Sparks would better suit him."

"You know, I think you're right," John said as he reached down and patted the pup on his head. "He may not be a show dog or have a pedigree, but he is a fine looking pup."

"Then that's what his name will be. Mister Sparks," Ben said.

"Mister Sparks". I like that name,' thought the pup.

As darkness fell over the fire station, the men went one by one into a room upstairs and went to bed. Ben shut the back door to the office and patted Mister Sparks on the head. "You'll be safe in here. I'll see you in the morning." He then turned the lights out and shut the other door to the office.

That night, Mister Sparks slept better than he had in some time. Ben had placed some old towels in his box to make a proper bed. A water bowl was placed beside the bed and another plate of left-over food was given to him after supper.

The next morning, Ben awoke before the other fire men. When he opened the dispatch office door, he found that Mister Sparks had left him a little present on the floor. "We'll have to do something about that," he said.

Ben got a piece of paper and picked up the deposit and took it outside. Mister Sparks followed him and watched as he placed it under a bush beside the station. "This is where this goes," Ben said.

Mister Sparks sniffed at the item and lifted his leg and left another scent to mark it as his territory. "Good boy," Ben said and rubbed him on his head.

Back inside the dispatch office, Mister Sparks climbed into his box. The other fire men had started getting up and coming into the office. Each one reached down and patted the pup on his head.

Then new men started coming in and the others started to leave.

"Good morning, Ben," Mister Sparks heard a new voice say. He turned to see one of the new men talking to Ben. "Any excitement yesterday?"

"Just a house fire yesterday afternoon. And we may have a new station mascot." Ben pointed at Mister Sparks as he sat in his box.

"Why, hello pup. Where'd you come from?" asked the new man.

'My name is Mister Sparks. Tell him, Ben. My name is Mister Sparks.'

"We're going to call him Mister Sparks. But I still need to get the chief's approval for him to stay," Ben said.

"He's supposed to come in early today. He has some paper work to do and then he's going out of town for a few days."



"Anyway, here's what's going on, Hal," Ben said. The two men then turned to the desk and started going over papers that were laid there. "Station 3's bells are broken and you have to call them by telephone..."

Mister Sparks took this to be the time to meet the other men that had come in the station. Some of the familiar faces from the day before were still there. Captain John was first to pet him. "Men, this is Mister Sparks," John said and picked him up.

"Depending on what the chief says, he may be staying here for a while."

Several of the men then came over and petted Mister Sparks.

"There you are," Mister Sparks heard Ben say. "I was looking for you."

"He came out here to say hello," John said.

"I saw the chief go upstairs. I'll take Mister Sparks up there and see what he says about him staying."

Ben took Mister Sparks from John's arms and walked up a flight of stairs. He stopped at a door and knocked. "Come in," came a voice from the other side.

Ben opened the door and carried Mister Sparks inside the small office. Behind the desk was an older man than the men downstairs. He had white hair and a big bushy mustache. He wore a white shirt, black tie, a gold badge, and a name tag. He was writing on yet more papers.

"Can I talk to you a second, Chief?" Ben asked.

"About what?" the man behind the desk responded without looking up.

"I found this pup in the alley behind the station yesterday and some of the guys think he'd make a good station mascot."

The chief slowly looked up from the paperwork. "Funny looking little dog, isn't he?"

"Yes, sir. But he's real friendly. He was living in a box down the alley. He looked like he hadn't eaten in days."

The chief laid down his pen and leaned back in his chair. "When I started working here almost thirty years ago, we had a dog here then. His name was Embers. He was a Dalmatian. He would follow us into burning buildings and actually found several people that were trapped. He was a brave dog but dumb as a lamp post. We never could teach him to do his business outside.

"But, everybody loved that dog and he was with us for eleven years. His last few years were spent at my house. He got to where he couldn't get around too good."

Mister Sparks began to squirm in Ben's arms. Ben set him on the floor and Mister Sparks walked around the desk and placed his paw on the chief's leg and looked up at him.

"Look here," the chief said. "He's asking me himself."

Mister Sparks wagged his tail and looked at the chief.

The chief chuckled and petted Mister Sparks on his head. "He can stay. But, if you can't house break him, he goes."

"We've already started working on that," Ben said.

"Now go on. I've got to do these papers before I go to the state capital on business."

"Yes, sir. Come on boy." Ben picked Mister Sparks up and left the chief to his papers.

Down in the dispatch office, Hal was sitting in the chair that Ben had occupied the day before. "What'd the chief say?"

"Mister Sparks can stay." Ben leaned over and put Mister Sparks in his box. "But we need to get him house broken."

“Leave that to me,” Hal said as he patted Mister Sparks on the head. “I’ve been training dogs for years.”

“I’ve already started with a deposit from last night. The bushes outside is where he needs to go.”

Captain John and several of the other men came and stood beside the dispatch office door. “What’d the chief say?” he asked.

“Mister Sparks is the new fire house dog.”

The men cheered and Mister Sparks barked. This was the happiest he had ever felt.

Mister Sparks soon got acquainted with the other men that worked there.

There was R. B. Black. He was one of the drivers of the big red pumper trucks. He had a round face and a receding hair line. But his most distinguishing feature was a missing front tooth. He was always playing tricks on somebody.

Tommy Toms was rather quiet and kept to himself. He did like to laugh with the other fire fighters, though. He almost always had a new joke to tell.

Corrie Bass was another jokester. Sometimes his pranks would backfire and he would get caught.

Ben, Hal, and the chief turned out to be Mister Sparks' best friends. He was constantly at their sides.

One day the chief came in with a big basket. “I was cleaning out a storeroom at home last night and came across this,” he said to Ben. He sat the basket on the floor. “It’s Embers' old bed. I thought it had been thrown out long ago.”

“It’s a little big for Mister Sparks,” Ben said. “But it’s got to be better than that box.”

Mister Sparks couldn't figure out what was going on when Ben picked up his box and the chief put the basket on the floor where his box had been. He cautiously approached the basket and sniffed. The pillow inside the basket had a fresh clean scent to it. He looked at Ben and then the chief.

“Go on, boy,” Ben said. “It’s all yours.”

Mister Sparks climbed into the bed, turned around two times, and lay down. He truly felt like he now had a home.

The End

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## **Signs of Friendship**

By **Michael L. Thal**

Charlie sat in the back of the bus. He couldn’t wait to watch “Tom and Jerry” cartoons.

He felt a tap on his shoulder.

“What you doing?” signed Bud.

“What you think?”

“You as bored as me?” Bud twisted his finger towards his nose. “At 5:00 I watch “Tom and Jerry.”

“Did you see the one...?”

The boys chatted with their hands and laughed. As the bus pulled up to Bud's stop, Charlie signed, "Let's watch the show tonight. Tomorrow we talk about it."

Bud nodded as he leaped off the bus.

Late that afternoon Charlie watched cartoons.

In one scene, hungry Tom ran with a caged bird.

Jerry left his mouse hole and extended his leg.

Tom tripped. The cage flew from his paws, and into a tree trunk.

The little yellow bird escaped, waving his wing to Jerry in thanks.

Hearing her son's deafening belly laughs, Charlie's mom dashed to the den door.

Mom signed, "Don't they give homework in school?"

"I did it on the bus. And this is the only show on TV without words."

The next morning, on the bus, Charlie and Bud talked about the cartoons.

Charlie mimed his favorite scene. With the index fingers of both hands he outlined the shape of a cat. He then lassooed a helpless bird.

Bud outlined a mouse and drew himself a bow and arrow. The Bud-Jerry mouse shot the Charlie-Tom cat in the butt.

Charlie's eyes opened in wild shock. He pulled the arrow from his rear. Then he let out a long breath of air twisting and turning his body until he hit the bus floor.

The children applauded.

That afternoon, a troop of performers came to their school. Charlie and Bud sat together expecting another boring show. But this group was different. Their production of "Jack and the Beanstalk" was in sign.

After the performance, the boys snuck to the back stage to talk to an actor.

As soon as he saw the 'Jack' character, Charlie jumped up and down and waved his hands signing, "You really deaf?"

'Jack' signed, "Yes." He noticed a stage struck gleam in Charlie's eyes. "You thinking of becoming an actor?"

The boys nodded.

"It's a lot of work and dedication. You up to that?"

Again they nodded.

"Then you better get back to class."

And off they ran. Their dream was sown.

That afternoon, on the bus, Charlie said, "There's hope for us."

Bud agreed.

They picked their favorite cartoon and practiced it everyday.

One week later, on the bus, the boys acted out a scene for the other students.

Bud-Jerry flew on his paper airplane.

Charlie-Tom, in hot pursuit, used a pair of strapped on wings.

The boys ran up and down the bus's aisle as the kids cheered. The cat was catching up to the mouse. Charlie-Tom opened his mouth ready to catch his prey.

Bud-Jerry flew through an opening in a wooden fence, instead.

Charlie-Tom didn't have time to stop. He got his head stuck in the hole.

Bud-Jerry landed safely on top of the cardboard prop.

Charlie-Tom looked up in shock as Bud-Jerry flipped open his paper plane, which read: "Tom and Jerry.... The End."

The kids jumped up and down, hooting.

Bud and Charlie high-fived. The bus driver signed for everyone to be seated.

Bud signed, "One day we'll become the first deaf comedy team, 'Bud and Charlie'."

"NO! Charlie and Bud."

With both open hands in front of their bodies, fingers pointing toward each other, they slapped their fingertips together. “Whatever.”

The End

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## **Curiosity and the Two Princes**

by **B. Well**

“I don’t want to play with Curiosity!” Viola whined.

Her mother had more or less stopped listening by this point. She simply gripped the wheel more tightly and stared straight ahead, her sunglasses covering any emotion.

“She’s weird, Mom!” Viola tried to explain.

The light changed, and Viola’s mother turned left.

“Everything she does is weird. Her clothes are weird, she says weird things, and all she does is read books, which is weird!”

Still her mother did not seem to hear.

Viola sighed, beginning to admit her defeat. “Can I at least bring in my iPad?”

This time, her mother responded. “No.”

Viola exhaled loudly, then leaned back in her seat.

A few days before her life had been perfect. She had her friends, she didn’t mind school, and things were more or less as they should be. Then one night, her mother had come home and announced that one of the women in her yoga class had a daughter in Viola’s fourth grade class, and the women had arranged a play date.

Viola’s eyes had widened in terror. “Who is it?” she demanded, hoping it wasn’t Hester, the notorious nosepicker, or Brooke, who made fun of everyone, or....

“Curiosity. Isn’t that an unusual name?”

Viola had groaned. “No, not Curiosity! She’s so weird...”

And so the next few days had passed, until suddenly they were pulling up in front of Curiosity’s house.

For a moment Viola was distracted. Curiosity’s house was old, beautiful, and huge, but all in a very odd sort of way. It seemed like the kind of house kids made up stories about, and some were afraid to go near. Anyone could have lived in that house: a hidden princess, an old lonely billionaire, ghosts...

The house was just mesmerizing enough to guide Viola from the car to the front door. She gazed up at the windows, imagining the faces that might be staring back at her. Surprisingly it didn’t frighten her. It intrigued her.

Curiosity’s mother answered the door, smiling brightly. She was tall, thin, and beautifully blonde, like someone on TV. She ushered them into the house cheerfully, putting her hand on Viola’s shoulder as she did so.

“Welcome, welcome, so good to see you! Curiosity is still upstairs...must have closed her door, because she hasn’t answered me. You can go on up, she’s the first door on the right.”

She then led Viola’s mother into the kitchen, chattering on about something else entirely.

Viola sighed. She wondered for a minute if they would notice if she slipped outside and never went upstairs at all. But she couldn't bring herself to do that. So instead she took a deep breath and walked upstairs.

The first door on the right was closed. Viola hesitated again before knocking. After a few seconds, Curiosity opened the door.

Curiosity looked very much like her name. She was tall and pale, with hair so light it was practically white. Her eyes were wide and an unusual shade of gray. They gazed at Viola in bewilderment for a moment.

Oh great, Viola thought, she didn't want me here either.

But Curiosity's face slowly softened into a smile. "Oh, yes. I forgot you were coming today. Come in."

Viola walked into the room. Curiosity closed the door behind her, which made Viola just a little bit nervous.

It was a very simple room. Other than the furniture, the only things Curiosity seemed to have were books. A ton of books. Her window was even set up to be a kind of reading nook, with pillows propped up all over. It looked comfortable, but not very exciting.

"So, what do you want to do?" Viola asked, scanning the room for any sign of games. Maybe they're all kept downstairs, she thought.

Curiosity tilted her head to the side. "What do you mean?"

Viola forced herself not to roll her eyes. "I mean, do you have any games, or did you want to watch movies, or..."

"I would really like to finish my book actually."

Viola raised her eyebrows. "Okaaayyy..."

Curiosity smiled. "You can help me!"

She ran over to the window and grabbed a book that lay open on the sill. Viola gaped for a moment, not sure what was happening. I should have brought my iPad, she thought again, as Curiosity settled in and began to read.

Then to her surprise, Curiosity ushered her over. "Hurry, it's happening."

Viola reluctantly dragged herself over to the window. But when she was just an arm's length away from Curiosity, she stopped, amazed.

A faint, shimmering light had begun to form around Curiosity and the book. For a moment it could have been an illusion caused by the sun, but Viola could have sworn it was beginning to sparkle silver...

"Hurry!" Curiosity called. She reached out and grabbed Viola's arm, and all of a sudden they were lost in a swirling cloud of light.

Viola gasped. She felt weightless, and couldn't see anything other than the beautiful dazzling light. She actually felt comforted by the fact that Curiosity still held on tightly to her arm as the world began to spin all around them.

Finally, the light faded, and Viola sunk to a cold, hard ground. She looked around, bewildered.

They were in a small stone room with a single slit of a window and two open archways instead of doors. There were torches on the walls, giving off a faint ominous glow.

"It's like a castle," she said, thinking of the old fairy tales she used to read. This seemed like the kind of castle where the evil stepmother lived, not the prince charming.

"The Tower of London, actually," Curiosity said. "Or at least, I hope it is."

"How...How did we get....We were right....London?" Viola stammered. Her eyes were the size of saucers as she gazed around in disbelief.



“The book, of course,” Curiosity explained quickly. “But we’re not just in London. We’re in London of 1483.”

“1483?!” Viola thought she might faint. She had never thought of any time really before 1776, and even then she rarely considered it at all. How had they managed to land in such a far away time and a far away place in a matter of minutes?

Suddenly, Curiosity shushed her. Her eyes were fixed on one of the entryways, where the soft glow of a torch could be seen coming closer. The girls backed themselves toward the other doorway, although Curiosity did not seem entirely afraid. Viola, on the other hand, was trembling, as she imagined an armed guard coming in and attacking them without so much as a pause.

Instead, a woman walked in, wearing a long dress and hood that kept most of her hidden. Viola could still make out a few strands of wavy blonde hair, and could see that the woman was tall and slender and carried herself with grace and confidence. This may have been why she wasn’t surprised when Curiosity curtsied low, and said, “Your Majesty.” Viola’s jaw dropped, but then she quickly curtsied as well.

The woman pushed her hood further back so the girls could see her face. She was a beautiful woman, although her eyes appeared to have been recently washed with tears. Viola instantly felt the need to help her.

“Thank God you are here,” the queen said. She pointed to Viola, but looked at Curiosity. “Can she be trusted?”

“She can,” Curiosity said confidently. Viola felt a surge of pride.

“Good. There is not much time.”

Curiosity nodded. “Right. Tonight?”

“Tonight.”

Curiosity nodded again, then hesitated. “What am I supposed to do?”

“You must lead them out the way you came in,” the queen said. “I will distract the guards.”

Suddenly, they heard shouting and the sounds of footsteps. The queen’s head snapped around as quickly as a hunted animal.

“I must go,” she said. “Good luck to you both. Please save my children!”

And with that last desperate cry, she ran off away from the sounds. Curiosity and Viola followed behind, but when the queen dashed around one corner, they went straight ahead.

“They’re this way,” Curiosity explained.

“Who?” Viola demanded.

“The princes. We have to save them. Come on!”

She led them down a long hall until they spotted another guard standing watch. Viola held her breath, her eyes uneasily watching the guard, and convinced that any moment he would turn and spot them...

Suddenly, there was a burst of light out in the courtyard. Over a dozen men’s voices began to call out, and the sound of rushing feet and clanging weapons reverberated through the walls. The nearby guard rushed away as well, running away from Viola and Curiosity.

“Quickly!” Curiosity cried, and she pulled Viola over to the door. To Viola’s surprise, it was unlocked, and the two easily slipped inside.

Viola wasn’t sure what exactly she had been expecting. But the sight of the occupants of the room surprised her. In this dark and frightening castle, in a dark and dreadful room, were two boys. They even seemed to be about the same age as Viola and Curiosity, although one was slightly taller than the other.

But Viola had never seen such sad faces on boys so young. They must have once been very handsome, with wide brown eyes and soft blonde curls. But now there were circles under their eyes, and their cheeks were sunken in. Plus they cowered at the sight of the strangers in their room, as if they couldn't imagine any emotion other than fear.

"Why are you here?" the taller one asked, putting his arm protectively around the other. Even though he seemed afraid, he stood tall and spoke very clearly, just as Viola imagined a young prince would.

"We're here to save you," Curiosity said.

Viola nodded in agreement. She had no idea what was happening, but didn't want them to look so afraid.

"How?" the older boy asked. "Our uncle has already taken the throne. Others have tried to save us and failed. There's nothing you can do."

"We have another way." Curiosity began to scan the room. Viola looked, too, although she had no idea what they were looking for. The room was mostly bare stone walls and a single barred window, with a few pieces of ancient wooden furniture and some thick blankets that appeared in desperate need of a good washing. She wondered what kind of people would keep children in such a miserable place.

"Do you have any books?" Curiosity finally asked.

The boys shook their heads. "They took all our books after...after they caught the men sent to free us," the older boy said. "You must go, or they will kill you, too."

"We're not leaving here without you," Curiosity said firmly. Viola felt a little less firm. She could still hear shouting outside the walls, and her eye kept glancing back nervously toward the door. She wondered if it was possible to actually die in a dream.

Suddenly, Curiosity whirled around, her eyes wide. "Do you have any paper? Or something to write with?"

The boys looked at each other. After a long pause, they crawled underneath the bed and began to claw at a stone. Underneath were a few scraps of parchment, a small container with what looked like ink, and a sharpened quill. They silently handed them over to Curiosity.

Curiosity quickly dropped to the floor and began to write something. At first the other three simply watched.

Then they heard the shouting grow louder.

Viola's eyes widened as she glanced to the door. She could see the distant light of torches coming down the hall, like a mob in a horror scene. She gasped and ran closer to the others.

"They're coming!" she cried.

Curiosity glanced up, gulped, and began to write even more feverishly.

The orange glow of the torchlight was just beginning to cast larger than life shadows on the floor when Viola noticed the faint silvery haze that had taken them before.

"Quick! Take my arms!" Curiosity called.

All three instantly grabbed on, and the moment the door swung open, all four of them were gone.

When Viola opened her eyes again, she could smell the grass beneath her, and felt the gentle light of the spring sun on her face. She sighed, grateful to be out of the dank tower, and rolled over.

They were in a small haven in some woods. Curiosity was sitting, smiling, while the boys turned around in amazed circles, drinking in all the sights and smells as if they had never seen daylight.

"Where are we?" the younger one asked. It was the first time he had spoken at all.

"Near my home," Curiosity said. "I wrote a story bringing us back here. But you can go wherever you want from here. I have all kinds of books in my room. I can take you anywhere you want to go."

"I think for now I would like to stay right here," the older one said. "I can't remember the last time I felt so free."

Curiosity smiled. "My house is right up there," she said, pointing. "And my window overlooks the yard. When you decide where you want to go, just come and tap on my window."

"Thank you," he said, but with a severity well beyond his years. "We can never repay you for what you have done, but we will be eternally grateful. You saved our lives."

His brother beamed at the girls, the picture of happiness.

"It was our pleasure," Curiosity said. "I'll bring you some food shortly."

The boys breathed in deeply and collapsed to the ground with huge grins on both their faces.

"I'll be back soon," Curiosity said, and she led Viola up out of the woods to her own backyard.

Viola's head was racing. A few questions almost made it to her lips before she paused, considered them, and stopped. She wondered if this had all been some kind of dream, or an elaborate prank.

Or had they really just been in a castle, helping a queen, saving two princes, and traveling back again through time...

"Thank you for your help," Curiosity suddenly said. "It was much better to have company this time."

"My help?" Viola stammered. "I didn't..."

"There they are!"

Both girls froze. For a second Viola wondered if they had been followed, and were about to be imprisoned...or worse.

Instead, their two mothers sat at a little table in the backyard, sipping wine and smiling.

"We didn't even see you girls come outside," Curiosity's mother exclaimed.

"We went out a long time ago," Curiosity said truthfully.

Viola snickered.

"Well, it's time for us to get going, Viola," her mother said. "Did you girls have fun?"

The girls hesitated.

"It was...different..." Viola finally said.

Her mother raised an eyebrow. "Do you want to come back next week?"

Viola grinned. "Absolutely!"

The End

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## **The Pony No-One Could Ride**

by **Gary Winstead**

The dreams of being an all-around cowboy were what helped little Billy get going each morning. Would today be the day the pony arrived? Would today be the start of a great adventure? Bill would ask himself every morning at the breakfast table.

“Hey Dad, do you know what day it is? Well do ya!” Bill said with a bright smile on his face and youthful charm in his voice. “It is February 28th. Do you know what that means, Mom? Almost my birthday, and ya know what, no pony in the barn. Guess I will look again tomorrow.” He tossed that last comment over his shoulder as he ran out the door to do his morning chores.

Cutter and Margo were used to Bill’s early morning antics and smiled to each other as little Bill shut the door behind him and hollered for his faithful companion, Duke the Australian Ridgeback. The nine year old boy had cherished Duke since the dog first came into this world. The two were inseparable and today was no different. Bill would do his chores, which included milking the goat, cleaning the stalls on his side of the barn, and feeding all the horses. Duke the wonder dog would be right there with him. More than once Duke had saved the boy from a rattlesnake bite and the dog was always looking around. He would sniff the air or look around for danger whenever the boy was near. This cool winter morning in Carbon Canyon he would be as alert as ever.

Life on a ranch was not easy, and as a reward for his hard work Cutter and Margo, his ever loving parents, had promised Bill a pony for his 9th birthday. The fact that his birthday was not until the end of July meant little to the excitable boy and he made a point of saying something every morning. Problem was, money was hard to come by for this family of cowboys, and Cutter worried that he had over spoke when he told Bill of his promise.

It was that very hard life that had prevented Cutter from pursuing the pony and anyway, he thought, it was still many months until Bill’s birthday. Winter became spring, spring summer and by now Bill had stopped asking, and Mom and Dad had almost forgotten their promise to him, when Margo mentioned it at the breakfast table: “Is there any chance we can get Bill that pony? It is only three weeks until his birthday and we did promise.”

Months had passed since Cutter promised a pony to his stepson Bill, and the kid was not letting him forget it. Standing tall from the table and stretching to the ceiling, Cutter smiled a knowing smile and said; “I will make some calls as soon as I finish the round work in the pen this morning, Mama. Word.”

As he worked the colt, a possible solution was circling his head, when the phone started its loud, irritating, ring. Perched high atop an oil soaked telephone pole, the 1960s-style phone was deafening, allowing anyone within shouting distance of the arena to hear it. Someone had the foresight to position the phone high enough up the pole that a misthrown rope or runaway horse would not cause damage if the pole were struck.

There were no answering machines or mail boxes to pick up the calls back then, and the ringing never stopped. Cutter knew it was an acquaintance because only those familiar with the lifestyle realized how long it could take to get to the phone from the back of a horse. Salesmen and bill collectors usually stopped in frustration after five or six rings knowing the call was futile. Only friends knew to let it ring at least a dozen times.

Down in the round pen Cutter had just stepped back from a wild, off the range, two year old Bay Mustang, after an hour of gentle work. These majestic beauties were part of America, and it was necessary to break them gentle to preserve their spirit, and with it the history of the old west.

The mere possession of one of nature's finest creations meant Cutter and his family had been closely checked out by the US Government. Strict rules are enforced prior to and during ownership and Cutter's family did not escape the watchful eye of the law enforcement team of the United States.

The Mustang was standing quietly as Cutter walked up and changed out the lunge line for a short lead. After washing down the bay, and making sure there was ample feed and a working waterer, Cutter secured the stall door and turned to inform the matriarch of the family, when he heard the tell-tale rings.

The middle aged Cowboy hurried over to one of Man's great inventions and answered in his usual friendly way, "Runnin' W Ranch, Cutter speakin', what's up friend?" Sweat dripped from his six feet three, two hundred ten pound frame as he angled for what little shade the telephone pole provided on a hot July morning in Southern California.

The warm and ever pleasant voice of William O'Brian resonated from the receiver, "Hey, Cutter: heard you were looking for a pony for your boy. Well, I think your quest is over."

"Great, whatcha got?" Cowboys were not known for their verbal skills.

"My wife has had it up to her eyeballs with this wild pony running through our nursery. Lately he has been eating some of her prized, hard to grow plants. That was the last straw. She said it was the pony or me, so after some thought, just a slight pause for effect, I chose to let the pony go."

The O'Brians owned twenty acres of prime land along Bastenchury Road in the horse friendly city of Fullerton, Ca. It was the early seventies and civilization was slowly moving its way out into the dusty untouched hills of North Orange County. The nursery business was booming and the last thing William needed was a pony eating his profits.

"When can I come pick him up?"

"We are always open for you; just remember though, you have to catch him. I don't know if he has ever had a halter on him let alone a saddle. He pretty much has the run of the place."

"No problem, I'll saddle up Tip and come git him. Be there in about two hours."

The free pony seemed like a good idea at the time, but good ideas can turn bad in a heartbeat in the horse business, so one always had to be alert. From the start it sounded like a sweet deal. A free pony for the boy would make Bill and mommy happy, since no money was involved.

Tip the wonder horse had the best spot in the barn. A fitting tribute to one of the best horses he had ever owned. She was a direct descendant of Two-Eyed Jack and her value was immeasurable. Her place in the animal pecking order of Runnin' W Ranch assured her of the best care around. Her stall gave her the advantage of not too much sunlight during those hot summer days, or heavy winds during the Santa Ana, and being first in line she would always get the best hay and grain.

The sun burned cowboy slid open the stall door and, with his tongue, made a clucking sound that told the big mare someone was near. Tip lifted her proud head and slowly spun around, walking deliberately toward her favorite human. The two nuzzled like young lovers before Cutter slipped the halter over her golden head.

“Hey, girl, ready to earn your keep?” He did an about-face and led the gentle mare to the tie rack near the tack room and cross-tied her with two slip knots.

With a practiced ease, the owner/operator of the Runnin’ W Ranch brushed and saddled his prize possession. He was wearing one of the many buckles Tip had won for him. Yes, he knew, as did any cowboy, a roper was only as good as his mount and he had the gold buckles to prove it. After gently snugging down the saddle, Cutter unclipped the halter and headed to the truck and trailer that was always at the ready.

The beat up, bright red 1973 Chevy 454 sat quietly, nestled next to the big barn. The four horse trailer was always attached to save time when moving horses and, on occasion, a fingernail that might get smashed inside the hitch and ball. The only thing you need to be aware of is always to unhook the electrical harness. There was always the possibility of a short that would drain a battery and leave you without the ability to go anywhere fast.

Cutter unhooked the double wide door and made a chirping sound once. Tip hopped up into the four-horse like it was her second home and settled down for the ride. Cutter then reached through the front window and snugged down the lead so Tip would not be able to turn around or back out without instruction.

After plugging in the electrical, Cutter fired up the big red machine and gently, but with skill from years of practice, maneuvered the truck and trailer up the drive and onto the road. Just a few miles down Bastenchury Road and Cutter pulled into the gravel strewn driveway, up a small berm, and making a hard left, drove slowly towards the single-wide trailer that served as an office.

William, a stocky Irishman, with a gleaming smile and short cropped hair, stepped out of the business trailer and offered a warm handshake and nod of the head. “Just scour the back side of the property: he’s in the tall trees somewhere. My wife has been after me all morning wanting to know when you would get here. Please get that little demon out of my life and my nursery.”

With long strides, the ruddy horseman walked to the front of the trailer and unlatched a small door, reached in and tugged at the lead rope. He made a smooching noise and Tip started her cautious backward crawl out of the four-horse onto the loose pea gravel.

The American Quarter Horse is considered the premier breed when working on a ranch. They are quick and highly intelligent which is a plus when trying to herd cantankerous cattle.

Tip was a full bodied muscular quarter horse that stood fifteen two hands and weighed in at 1250 pounds. She was so good working cattle she could stop and turn with amazing speed and, if the rider was still in the saddle, give him or her a sure victory.

Her job was catching fast running animals and today would be a true test of her skill. Tip could feel the tension in the air. Whenever she was saddled, before an outing, Tip knew she was going to be earning her keep. Her head was high in anticipation, but her demeanor was calm, like a surgeon about to perform a lifesaving operation on a child.

When cutting cattle in completion, (separating out one steer and keeping it away from the herd for a short time), Tip would pin her ears back, bare her teeth, and dare any steer to get around her. Her head would be low to the ground and her eyes never left the hapless steer.

She was also cross trained in roping and trail, making her the perfect family horse. Bill had learned to ride on her and had developed a quiet confidence that comes



from time in the saddle. He was fast approaching his tenth birthday and had been buggin' his step dad for a ride of his own.

Cutter grabbed the lead rope as Tip backed out and gently spun her around, leading her to the tie rack. She had already been saddled loosely and just needed to have the cinch drawn tight and the bridle put on. Tip could sense something was up and did a little jig with all four feet as she stood at the rail. "Calm down girl, ain't no steer around here. We're just gonna git us a little pony and take him home for Bill."

"She's ready to do what she does best, I see." It was the soft voice of LaDorna, a tall leggy redhead who was a staple at the ranch. If Cutter ever needed a backup, good with horses, she was it. Her skin, encasing a lithe 115 pounds of muscle and sinew, had long since been burned brown by fifty five years in the sun and looked a lot like the rough side of a leather hand bag, but she sure did know her way around horses and was a valuable asset on more than one occasion. Cutter often wondered if the skin cancer would eventually claim her. She was lucky, it never did.

LaDorna was retired with too much time on her hands so hung out around the ranch looking to help anyone in need. When she saw Cutter loading up Tip she quickly volunteered to come along. "You can always use another rope out there ya know."

"Yep, push your gelding into the trailer and give me a hand."

Now it was time for all four of them to go to work. With that, Cutter slipped his left foot into the worn leather stirrup and swung on board. After settling in and making sure everything was adjusted to his liking, Cutter pulled his rope out of the carry bag and casually swung it over his head, making a manageable loop and leaving the tail and three coils in his left hand.

The ropes in the seventies were not as slick and flexible as today's fast ropes used by the pros, but they got the job done. Today the cowboy would use a Classic Power line 3/8's lite recommended by his good friend, Leo Camarillo; but the old grass type rope would do just fine on a little harmless pony, right?

"This should be fun, come on LaDorna: let's go huntin'." Cutter had a bad habit of dropping the trailing G from his words and sounded as dumb as a post; sometimes fooling people with his seemingly bumbling country boy ways. He was, in fact, a college educated country boy with a PhD and proud of it. He was the only one in a family of eleven to finish college and only three of the eleven kids had even finished high school.

Having deposited his sinewy frame into the well-worn saddle, the two fanned out and started down the rows of boxed trees looking for the little paint pony. LaDorna spotted him first and gave chase, trying to maneuver him into a position for a quick head shot. The pony, however, had been running wild for some time and was way too smart to be picked off on the first run. Every time Tip would get close enough to toss a loop, the pony would dart right or left into another row of plants, lift his tail and head high, as if to laugh at the pursuing horse and rider and sprint for the distant fence.

If he had run in a straight line it would have been easy, but like a steer it would take the two of them to catch him. LaDorna would have to maneuver her horse into a hazing position to keep the energetic paint pony running true.

With all the plants in the area it was impossible to get a clear shot at the pony's head so they would have to devise a plan. LaDorna surveyed the area and came up with what she thought would be workable. "Let's block off an area with boxes of trees and pen the little sucker in."

“That might work,” Cutter replied as he wiped salt and dirt from his furrowed and sun burned brow.

Some time later, with a lot of sweat and grunting, they had devised a rectangular area made completely out of trees in boxes. It would make for a nice look in a dressage course (fancy horse stuff for the rich and boring), but this was business, they had to get that pony. It was open at one end running one hundred feet by fifty feet. Too narrow and short for a roping arena but it would have to do. The two riders slipped their horses out of sight of the pony and circled behind him. Slowly they worked a crisscross pattern and tricked the little four legged demon into the roping area.

The quick little paint would sprint for all it was worth, crow hop near the wall of trees and break right or left in an effort to evade capture. On the fourth attempt, when LaDorna was able to finally slip onto the right flank, Cutter was able to drop a loop over the pony’s head and take a quick dally.

This is when Tip was at her best. Once the loop sailed past her head, in anticipation she started her turn left. When Cutter threw the slack, and the rope snugged, Tip planted and faced the little paint with what a casual observer might take as a smile on her lips, as she jerked the pony to a halt.

Paint pony struggled in vain against a monster four times his size but he wasn’t going to go easily. Tip and Cutter dragged him as close to the trailer as possible and tied him to a big California oak tree that was still standing after decades in the dry semi-arid sun.

The paint stood surprisingly still as Cutter walked up with the halter and slipped it on. Cutter paused for an instant in wonder then stepped back. It was obvious the pony had been handled at one time by someone, but no one knew how or when. The pony had just showed up at the nursery one rainy, cold winter day (rare in So Cal) and stayed. “Well I’ll be darned, never saw anything like this.”

“Just walk easy and let’s see if he will load,” LaDorna offered.

The cowboy slipped the rope off the pony’s neck and pulled on the lead. The pony walked like a well trained trail horse right up to and into the transport. The trailer, being a four horse, had a double wide door not posing too much of a threat to the miniature horse and he stepped right in like entering a box stall.

The two riders looked at each other and shrugged, “Let’s get him home.” LaDorna smiled and tipped her head.

Back at the ranch, Cutter maneuvered the trailer as close to the round pen as possible before bringing the big bulky one ton to a halt. They slipped out, walked easily around to the back and gently pulled on the oversized door.

Once again, surprisingly, the paint backed out and allowed himself to be tied. Cutter and LaDorna were cautious after the tie and waited to see if Paint would sit back. When he didn’t they collectively breathed a sigh of relief and headed up the hill to get Bill.

“Yo, Bill got somethin’ for ya. Git your gear on and come on out. Oh, and happy birthday in advance.”

Bill was never one to be in much of a hurry so it came as no surprise when he finally showed at the pen thirty minutes later. The boy stood four feet nine inches without the cowboy boots and was just to the portly side for a kid his age. Any more weight and something larger than a pony would have been necessary. This Shetland pony stood forty one inches at the withers, giving Bill only a slight advantage in height and none in strength. Bill would need every ounce of strength, and some good luck, in the coming days if he was to tame ole Paint here.

The origin of the Shetland is well documented by the Scotland Shetland Pony breeder's society. They came from the North East of Scotland on the Shetland Islands and they were known to be around in the Bronze Age.

Shetland ponies were first used for pulling carts, carrying peat, coal and other items, and plowing farm land. Then, as the Industrial Revolution increased the need for coal in the mid-19th century, thousands of Shetland ponies traveled to mainland Britain to be pit ponies, working underground hauling coal, often for their entire (often short) lives. Coal mines in the eastern United States also imported some of these animals. The last pony mine in the United States closed in 1971.

With luck and some skill, this pony would prove to be a nice start for Bill in his quest to be an all around cowboy. Ponies, on the other hand, have proven over the years to have a mind of their own when it comes to uses, and this paint would be no exception.

With a smooth practiced ease, the young man pulled the knot loose and led the Shetland into the center of the round pen in the first step to see what he could do. Cutter had informed him of the pony's ability to halter, lead and tie so there must have been some training in its background. Bill hooked the lunge line, let out the slack and snapped the whip in the air.

There it was again: the pony started a slow trot in a left hand circle like he had been born into the circus. Cutter looked at LaDorna who was looking back at him and said, "What do ya make of that? Why would someone turn loose a perfectly trained animal for no reason?"

"Gotta be something we haven't seen yet. Just tell Bill to be careful."

"Hey, turn him the other way, let's see what he does."

Again the little paint did as told and loped in a circle to the right until brought to a stop by the boy. "Bring him over to the tie rack. We can try to saddle him now."

Cutter went to the back of the tack shed, lifted some old dusty blankets and pulled out a brand new saddle he had been hiding from the kid. He tossed the saddle pad to LaDorna, grabbed a bridle off the rack and stepped out into the afternoon sun. The thermometer read eighty five and climbing.

In just a matter of minutes they all were about to see why the cute painted pony had been abandoned. When little Paint saw the lady with the saddle pad his eyes went wide with fear and his ears laid back. With one swift motion he pulled back on the lead rope as if he were trying to sit on the ground. His front feet were working overtime pawing the soil. Bill quickly slipped the knot loose and allowed the pony to relax. As LaDorna approached with the pad, the pony started a spin in the direction away from her as if lit by a match. LaDorna was savvy enough to know the drill and quickly backed away and dropped the pad to the ground.

As if sprinkled by fairy dust, the pony settled and dropped his head. "Well, think we now know why" grumbled Cutter.

"Oh yeah, gonna be a challenge. You up for it, Bill?"

"Never been one to back away from a fight." Bill grinned. What he didn't know, what none of them knew, is who would win this fight.

An hour passed as the three tried to get the saddle on the reluctant, skittish little pony. They used a twitch and tried a blindfold with no success. Finally, covered in horse sweat and slobber and frustrated beyond belief at the fighting spirit of this little monster, they decided to take a break.

Muscle sore, dripping in their sweat and sitting in the shade of a tall walnut tree, the three devised a plan they just knew would work. "We could drug him," offered Bill.

“Nah, not the right thing to do, you don’t want to use drugs unless it is absolutely necessary,” replied Cutter.

“How about we lunge him until he is dead tired then try?” the obviously tired red head offered.

They hurried down to the corral and for the next hour took turns running the paint in circles. He handled just like he was as gentle as a kid’s pony should be. With an hour of sunlight left they pulled him up and headed to the tie rack: all with the same results. He was not going to be saddled. As the sun set in the west, Cutter decided it might be best to just let little Paint rest the night and formulate a new plan.

The next day proved as futile as the first and left the three of them scratching their heads in bewilderment. There had been some unknown trauma in the pony’s past that he just could not overcome.

They tried the whole month to tame this fiery little forty-one inch tall devil with no success whatsoever. What was a cowboy to do? The pony obviously would not work for Bill so what choices did he have, what to do?

The auction was out of the question. Cutter couldn’t in good conscience pass this off to another unsuspecting person and the little paint might end up in the killer’s truck destined to be someone’s dinner in Europe. That just was not acceptable. But then, an idea, seemingly out of the dust of the corral, flashed into his weather worn head. Cutter hurriedly moved into his office off to the side of the pen and grabbed his well-worn phone book. He quickly dialed the numbers and waited with only the slightest concern.

“Hello, Marci? Are you available for a reading anytime soon? I have a real lulu of a head case here and I need some advice.”

Marci was a renowned animal psychic and if anyone could figure out the problem it would be her. For all his education, Cutter had a certain unexplainable trust in psychic phenomena and thought what the heck, nothing else worked.

Marci arrived at the ranch bright and early the next morning, covered in her usually bangles and beads. Her long, waist length hair now tinted with grey, framed her oval, perpetually smiling face. Her firm, muscled body was showing signs of age even though she spent hours on her yoga practice. She sauntered up to Cutter, gave him a peck on the cheek and asked, “So where is the little patient?”

The paint was munching on hay in a corner stall as the two of them approached. Marci suddenly stopped in her tracks and said one word, “Trauma.”

Breathing heavily, as if in a trance, Marci gave a vivid description of what had happened to Pony the past few years. Cutter guessed it was all make believe but he was desperate for an answer and his wife was a true believer. With a flourish of her hands and a snap of her fingers she was out of her own trance and started to tell of the woes of the pony. “He was kept in a ten feet by ten feet corral with little water and food. The owners wanted to use him as a rental to make money but had no idea how to train a horse. He was gently broken by his first owner who suddenly died without ever having put a saddle on him.”

That would explain the compliance up to the point of being under saddle. “He was sold to the last people at auction and so severely injured from the improper use of the saddle he is too traumatized to allow one to be put on him without a fight.”

Cutter made a decision on the spot. It would not be right to continue to endanger those around the barn, nor would it be right to keep traumatizing the little pony. The paint had to go, but to where?

The next morning waking from a dream it came to Cutter the best solution to the problem pony. He would call his friend in Oregon for advice.

“Morning Hook, how things on the ranch?”

“Ah, nothing really changes. Just another day in paradise. How can I help you, my friend?” Hook’s gravelly voice never really changed over the years.

When Cutter fully explained the situation the answer was simple: load him up and head north. The pony would find a home on the range in wet, green and lush Oregon.

Three days later Cutter and Bill pulled into Two Forks Ranch on the Mackenzie River in Western Oregon. The McKenzie River is a 90-mile (145 km) tributary of the Willamette River in western Oregon in the United States. It drains part of the Cascade Range east of Eugene and flows into the southernmost end of the Willamette Valley. It is named for Donald Mackenzie, a Scottish Canadian fur trader who explored parts of the Pacific Northwest for the Pacific Fur Company. In the 21st century, there are six large dams on the McKenzie and its tributaries.

After exchanging pleasantries they unloaded the Shetland and walked over to the gate that would open into a large grassy field. “Ok Bill: let him go.”

Bill slipped the halter off the white and brown Shetland and watched as he kicked up his heels and headed east. “Run Pony, run.” Bill shouted after him.

The paint crow-hopped twice, looked over his left shoulder and with what you would have thought was an “I told you so whinny,” lifted his tail and head high in an arch and took off across the pasture.

The last the Southern California cowboys saw of the little demon spawn was his tail dropping down the far side of a hill and they heard a high pitched whinny as if to say, “Hey cowboys: you can’t win them all, now can ya.”

Well score one for the pony that could not be rode. Cutter and Bill left for home the next day and as far as anyone knows the little pony’s spirit still roams the lush pasture fronting the frothing waters along the Mackenzie River daring anyone to catch him.

But sometimes at night when the wind is out of the north and a winter chill precedes the coming storm, little Billie wakes in a cold sweat and looks out the window, certain that pony is lurking nearby waiting for the morning to reprise the fun. Billie checks the windows for lock, and slips back into bed pulling the covers up tight. He then fitfully drifts back off to sleep, a restless sleep until the dawn.

And if you ask the neighbors, they will swear they heard a high pitched whinny and saw the outline of a pony just outside Bill’s window.

The End

###

*We hope you have enjoyed this anthology of stories. You can find out more about all the contributors and their other books below.*

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

[L. Sydney Abel](#)



L. Sydney Abel is the pen name of Lawrence Abel. He writes fiction founded on his personal experiences using that wonderful thing called 'imagination'.

Lawrence was born and raised in Kingston upon Hull; he is married and has two grown-up children. He attended Hull College, where he qualified as a TV/Electronics Engineer. His first dream was music; writing, playing and recording his own songs. During his children's early years, he invented his own stories. He didn't know it then, but story writing was to become his goal, his world and his new dream.

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<http://lsydneyabel.weebly.com/>

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[https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/6202926.L\\_Sydney\\_Abel](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/6202926.L_Sydney_Abel)

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/lsydneyabel>

<http://www.amazon.com/Gruvel-Great-L-Sydney->

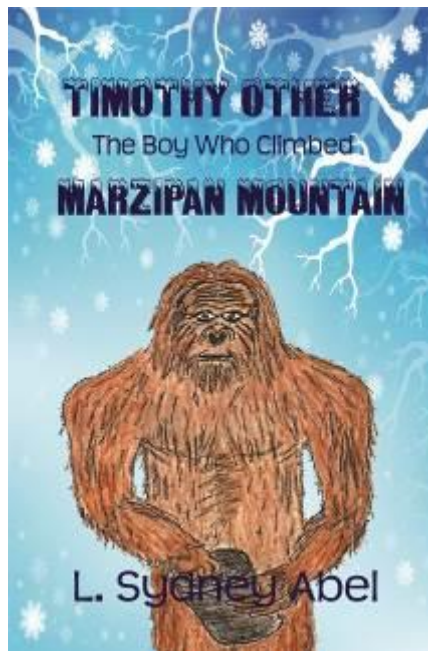
[Abel/dp/1907552022/ref=la\\_B0046BRW2S\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076998&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Gruvel-Great-L-Sydney-Abel/dp/1907552022/ref=la_B0046BRW2S_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076998&sr=1-1)

Books out soon: *Timothy Other - the boy who climbed Marzipan Mountain*

Adult: **12:07 THE SLEEPING**

Synopsis and excerpt from *Timothy Other –the boy who climbed Marzipan Mountain*





## **PROLOGUE**

### *A little explanation*

We are all led to believe adventures are fun, but let me tell you, some are not, they are darn right scary. A true adventure is one that's both fun and scary at the same time, and of course, talked about for years and years to follow. Not some silly little story of how you managed to get to school past all those horrid bullies, or how you escaped the hungry crocodiles and tigers with only a catapult and a piece of string in your pocket as you popped to the shops for your mum. I mean, they're probably really good adventures, but let's be honest, all of us at some time manage to get past bullies on the way to school, and as for going to the shops, well, crocodiles and tigers are also good adventures, but not if they're imaginary.

Did you know life for some can be one big adventure, and the things that happen along life's journey can be so fantastic, sometimes unbelievably terrifying, they almost sound untrue? Yes, unbelievably terrifying are probably the most truthful adventurous ones, the ones that live on and on and are told again and again and again.

Now if you're ready and sitting comfortably, I'll tell you about an adventure so unbelievable and terrifying it sounds positively untrue, but it is with all honesty, true.

It involves a strange mountain, a very protective beastie and a boy. There are of course other things, as a story about a mountain, a beastie and a boy can't be that unbelievable, can it?

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### *The Dreams and Hopes Orphanage*

It all began on a lonely, dark street some time ago. How long ago? It doesn't really matter, but what matters is you understand it didn't happen yesterday.

Somewhere between midnight and one in the morning, the tip-tapping of shoes was the only sound to be heard walking urgently along. From the sound, it would be accurate to assume there was only one person out that morning, and that would be true, but in fact there were two people. Let's say, only one was walking. The moon kept playing hide-and-seek behind fast racing night-sky clouds. Each shadow flickered and jumped erratically around every red-brick corner and leafy tree in the moon's toying light.

The tip-tapping shoes strode past tall, black-fashioned railings and stopped outside a lofty, arched wrought-iron gate that loomed gravely down. Even the amber glow of the light from the doorway beyond, danced unwelcomingly.

A figure cloaked by darkness knelt and put down a wooden box. It was slid as close as possibly to the arched gate, until wood touched metal. A hand rested softly upon the contents.

“Forgive me, I have no choice,” floated a whisper in the night air.

The words dissolved into nothing as the shadow rose and went. The tip-tapping sound of shoes slowly faded into the endless world of shadows, their owner, never to be seen again.

The approaching dawn brought a chirping of birds as the first glow of light glinted over the roof-tops. Golden rays rushed through the sleepy, dewy mist to greet the land from a pale turquoise-to-blue advancing sky. A busy clinking and rattling of bottles on the milk float was a waking call to the peaceful Dreams and Hopes Orphanage. The milk was left as usual by the gate, with no attention paid to the other container.

\*

Mr. Nigel Penny gave a wide yawn and opened his curtains to a world full of uncertainty. He liked to think it was a world possible of anything you wanted it to be, a world where anything was achievable, so long as you put your mind to it. Mr. Penny rubbed his steely-grey eyes, then spread his arms out elastically till all sleepiness was gone, but nowadays he was more like an old rubber-band that was outstretched and worn. He collected his shaving things and took his old bones in the direction of the bathroom, unaware that outside his wrought-iron gate was left another child, who thankfully was blissfully ignorant of any future adventures.

The Dreams and Hopes Orphanage was residence to limitless unwanted children. Over the years it became a home that many would remember as a happy and loving place. Not the regular type of surroundings most of us can picture, especially when you have to share a bedroom with at least twenty others. At least it was a bedroom and not a cold street you had to sleep in. As for brothers and sisters, well, you had plenty and plenty was a lot.

I thought I may take a moment and name but a few of the children who lived at the orphanage, there's the girl called Marmalade Peel. When she was found she was only one year old, carefully wrapped in blankets and placed inside an orange box that was left on the steps of the local church. Did you know that chunky-preserve orange boxes were very hard to come by? Children on the other hand, seemed to be ten-a-penny.

Then there's the boy who at only three years of age, simply and without announcement, walked straight through the orphanage doors wearing a torn t-shirt and dirty shorts. A letter found crumpled in his tiny hand simply read he had nowhere to live. He couldn't talk, not even a single word. He wasn't deaf, he just refused to talk. He did however, have a grubby sticking-plaster on his knee and another on his toe. The one on his toe could be seen quite easily, as he wasn't wearing any shoes at the time. The one on his knee was hiding under his oversized shorts. This little boy became known as Tony Plaster.

There's also little Helen Earth, she was so much trouble as a baby, and she really was hell on earth. I won't mention anything about little Helen, it's just too awful to say, but let me tell you if it wasn't for all the kindness she receives at the Dreams and Hopes, I doubt she would ever grow up to be a proper little lady. Kindness does seem to go a long way in helping others.

Another I must tell you about is a sweet little girl who sang one nursery rhyme all the time. She had very blonde hair and deep blue eyes, you'd think being such a sweet thing as that, she would have a lovely name wouldn't you, but you see, this little girl was found sitting all alone in the middle of no-where, in what is often referred to as waste-land. She was surrounded by bushes and young growing trees in a place known to the locals as 'Little scrub-wood'. When she was discovered by a hand-in-hand romantic walking couple, she was singing the lines of a particular verse about a cat. 'Ding dong bell, pussy's in the well' she sang. So they named her Belle. Yes, that's quite nice, but this poor unfortunate girl's last name became Scrubwood. Not a very nice surname for a two-year-old is it, especially when they nicknamed her Scrubby? Not a nice name for any girl of any age, when you come to think of it.

I think you can gather that a child with no name was to be given one by the orphanage. It was Mr. Penny who named them in accordance with their circumstances. So if you think you have a funny name, maybe you should think again. Would you like to be called Scrubby Scrubwood or Marmalade Peel? At least, Tony Plaster sounds a normal name, doesn't it?

\*

Outside, loud screams could be heard:

"MR. PENNY! MR. PENNY!"

There was a clatter of an opening and closing iron gate, a running and scrunching of pebbles underfoot and a slam of the large wooden front doors.

"MR. PENNY! MR. PENNY!" boomed the echoing calls of Mrs. Tidy again.

Mrs. Tidy was the house-keeper. She was a lovely woman, all hustle and bustle. There was a thing about Mrs. Tidy I should mention, it was her tendency to get over-excited with the new children. Yet despite all this fussy enthusiasm for the newest arrival, all the children still loved her. She was big and round and jolly, and always wore dresses covered in a print of tiny flowers. Somehow, she always seemed to smell of chocolate. A big cuddle from a big, cuddly woman like Mrs. Tidy was all you needed to start you on your day, a bit like a good breakfast.

"ANOTHER CHILD," she bellowed in the hall, "WE'VE BEEN LEFT ANOTHER POOR, UNFORTUNATE CHILD."

Mr. Penny almost swallowed his toothbrush when he heard the shouting. He coughed and spluttered toothpaste all over the bathroom mirror. Still in his night clothes and clutching in his frustrated hands a bent toothbrush, he came marching down the wide oak tread stairs. If there was one thing he hated, it was being disturbed as he was getting ready for the day; with a displeased look, he approached Mrs. Tidy.

"There's no need to shout, Mrs. Tidy," Mr. Penny grunted, through toothpaste-gritted teeth. "ANOTHER!" he said loudly, when he saw who Mrs. Tidy was holding. "Don't people like children?"

Now of course they do, but sometimes things happen. There are a multitude of reasons why such things happen, it is not for the likes of us to question the actions of others. Unusual circumstances call for unusual actions, even when there seems to be no love involved, it is often love that has brought these actions. But some things just have to be, and a child without parents is one of them.

In the arms of Mrs. Tidy was a baby all curled up, snug as a bug in a rug, or in this case, in a little white blanket.

"It's a bit on the thin side," she said, looking down into wide-open, exploring green peepers. "That's not a problem, is it?" She gave the first big cuddle of the day. "We'll look after you. There's not a single thing for you to worry about, is there

Coochy-coo?” Then she tweaked a little cheek. Mrs. Tidy would call all children Coochy-coo until she knew their name.

Mr. Penny’s steely-blue eyes were also looking at this newly-found bundle.

“I find it remarkable that you give so much love to every child we take through our doors, Mrs. Tidy,” he said, bewildered by her ability to open her heart and bring another child into her affections.

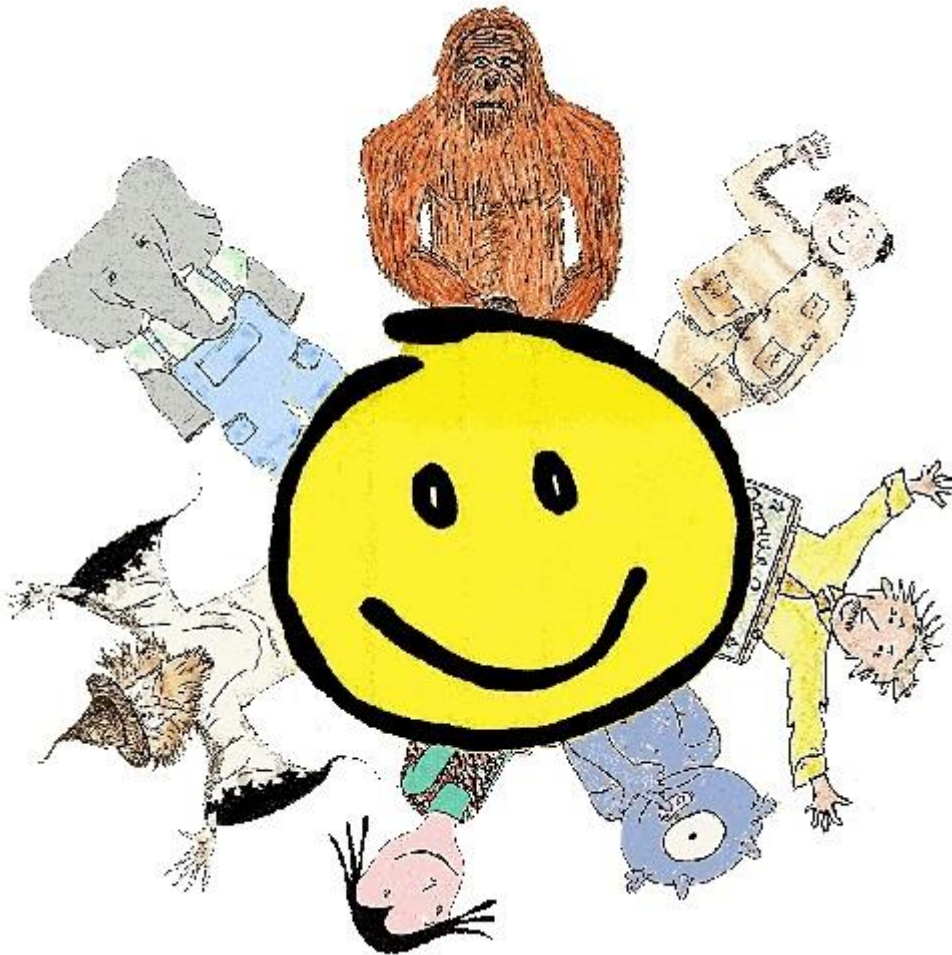
“I have a heart big enough for all children,” said Mrs. Tidy, demonstrating so by expanding her enormous bosom.

“Yes I think you have, Mrs. Tidy, I really think you have,” said Mr. Penny in total agreement, trying to remove his eyes from expanding printed flowers. “Now I’m going to get dressed, so I’ll see you in the kitchen soon and we’ll see about giving this child a name.” Then he quickly strode off, heading back up the oak tread stairs.

\*

“Oh my poor dear,” murmured Mrs. Tidy, to her little bundle of smiles. “I wonder what unfortunate name he’s going to give you?”

Off Mrs. Tidy went to see Mrs. McDuffie the cook, who incidentally, could make the most scrumptious, soffee ticky, boiled puddings in the whole world.



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[Helen Alexander](#)



Helen Alexander is a writer and digital artist living in San Francisco, California. After graduating from the Academy of Art University, Helen worked as a video game artist in San Diego and Los Angeles. Currently she is back in San Francisco, at work on several new projects, including a comic book, a children's book and a dark fantasy/horror novel. You can visit Helen at [helenalexander.weebly.com](http://helenalexander.weebly.com) for updates, interviews and previews of new stories and works in progress

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Synopsis and excerpt from *Otherplanet*, a science fiction/fantasy story

[http://www.amazon.com/Otherplanet-Helen-Alexander-ebook/dp/B00K8HDX86/ref=la\\_B00IXVDYNS\\_1\\_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077537&sr=1-3](http://www.amazon.com/Otherplanet-Helen-Alexander-ebook/dp/B00K8HDX86/ref=la_B00IXVDYNS_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077537&sr=1-3)



*Legend surrounds the Stella Mars, a mysterious flower from Otherplanet, rumored to grant supernatural powers and bring love and happiness to whoever owns it. Alias Kingman, a deeply unhappy business tycoon, has tried to buy it many times from the Templomuseum where it is kept under guard, but the enchanted flower is not for sale.*

*Two con artists, Dr. Grabengon and his friend, Eagle, spend their days wandering from town to town, selling magic potions to gullible citizens. When they hear about the Stella Mars from a passing peddler of non-toxic perfumes, they decide to steal it in hopes of getting a reward from Kingman.*

*However, things don't go according to plan, as they soon find they aren't the only ones in pursuit of the enigmatic flower.*

Dr. Grabengon had only one solace, and that was drinking. When he wasn't drunk, he was miserable and had splitting headaches, during which he mostly saw pink elephants.

The elephants were not very menacing in their behavior and never threatened him directly, but they liked to dance in circles, tapping their feet all around Dr. Grabengon, which intensified his headaches to an intolerable degree.

Therefore, to avoid the dancing pink elephants, he frequently resorted to drinking Gravat, an especially strong kind of drink that was also illegal. His friend Eagle took care of the supply for him as a favor, for they were very good friends.

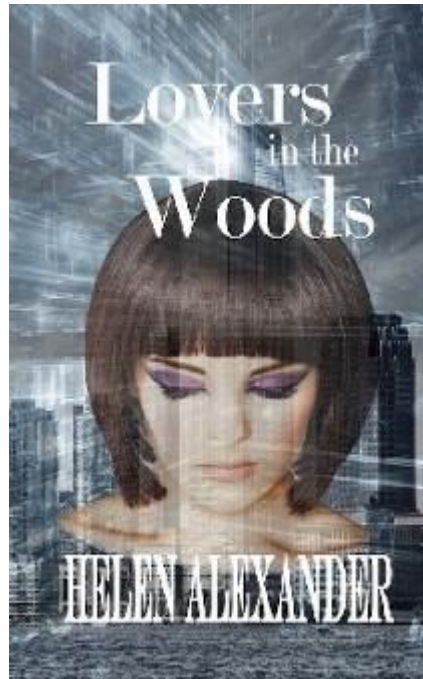
Dr. Grabengon was a doctor by training, and a charlatan by profession. He traveled from town to town, selling strange potions to the more gullible citizens. The potions had some merit, because he used some of his knowledge and skill in crafting them, but they sometimes had unpredictable effects on their users, or were outright dangerous. One time, Dr. Grabengon very nearly escaped an attack by what he thought were monstrous creatures, only to discover that they were his own customers. They had grown tentacles and spines as a result of drinking one of his potions, and chased him for two hours straight all over town, until he accidentally stumbled and fell into a large ditch by the side of the road.

Fortunately, the monstrous customers did not notice him lying there, and ran right past him, waving their tentacles and shouting bad things.

Synopsis and excerpt from ***Lovers In The Woods***, a Science Fiction novel.

[http://www.amazon.com/Lovers-Woods-Helen-Alexander-ebook/dp/B00IJYENYS/ref=la\\_B00IXVDYNS\\_1\\_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077537&sr=1-2](http://www.amazon.com/Lovers-Woods-Helen-Alexander-ebook/dp/B00IJYENYS/ref=la_B00IXVDYNS_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077537&sr=1-2)





*They called her Sleeping Beauty back at the lab.*

*Nina has been asleep for a long time. Two hundred and fifty years, to be exact. She doesn't change, and she doesn't die. She's always fifteen. All she wants to do is to wake up, but she can't. Something - or someone - is keeping her in a perpetual dream state.*

*Leon is a programmer working for a security systems company in the Metro Palisade. His life is fairly ordinary and uneventful. But one day, things change. He begins to see a strange girl in his dreams. He knows she needs his help, but he doesn't know who she is - or if she's even real. Leon is willing to risk a lot to find out, and his curiosity finally gets the best of him. The mystery that surrounds Nina is greater than Leon had imagined, however: soon he's on the run from the company he worked for, the police, the secret service and the criminal underworld.*

*All Leon wants is to save Nina from her endless sleep, but the price of that rescue could be a terrible one. Somehow, Nina is connected with the fabric of reality itself, and there are many dubious people chasing after the legendary Sleeping Beauty in the hopes of wielding ultimate power. When the world begins to fall apart with the sudden, inexplicable outbreak of war, only Leon holds the key to saving everything from complete annihilation - but, unless he can rescue Nina, it may already be too late.*

Above them, the sky was blue and covered with slowly curling, drifting white clouds. The artificial sun shone down upon the great ocean sparkling below, which lapped like a giant silver wing just below the railing of the balcony. Seagulls cruised idly overhead, occasionally screeching unpleasantly when they spotted aerial passersby. This was the simulation. Lucky was intently watching his face.

"Wanna see something amazing?" she said.

"Such as?"

"Close your eyes."

She pulled on a switch in the entrance panel, a courtesy display plaque above which read, "Please leave simulation running." Suddenly, the sky became black, and Leon could see the glass covered view of the real sky above the dome. It was also covered with clouds, but they were heavy, almost solid, and dark violet.

Lucky did not take her eyes off his face now. Leon peered over the railing: there was nothing below. Just a grey, endless-looking wasteland. Thin ant-like tracks radiated from the base of the dome. On a microscopic scale, Leon could see some Mop machines tilling the ground, going in perpetual circles - they were digging up the encrusted upper layer of the radon-contaminated ground and carrying it off to be decontaminated. Their silvery, thin power cables radiated from the central magnet like cords from a swinging merry-go-round. Smaller shiny, green haulers called Locusts took the rubble away in small batches to be detoxed back at the hub.

He stood for a while with both hands on the railing, until Lucky called him.

"Listen, I'm sorry," she said, taking off her shades and folding them down into her pocket.

Leon looked at her. "Is that...everything?"

### ***Robot Planet***

[http://www.amazon.com/RobotPlanet-Story-James-Helen-Alexander-ebook/dp/B00KRIPULO/ref=la\\_B00IXVDYNS\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077537&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/RobotPlanet-Story-James-Helen-Alexander-ebook/dp/B00KRIPULO/ref=la_B00IXVDYNS_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077537&sr=1-1)



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### **John L. Barnett, cover artist**



John L. Barnett is the author and illustrator of *Meet the Bumbles*. In addition he has illustrated the following books:

*Terrific Tales of Trembling Tim the Two Tone Tiger*

[http://www.amazon.com/Terrific-Tales-Trembling-Tim-Two-tone/dp/1500308854/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078868&sr=1-4&keywords=john+ld+barnett](http://www.amazon.com/Terrific-Tales-Trembling-Tim-Two-tone/dp/1500308854/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078868&sr=1-4&keywords=john+ld+barnett)

*Legend of Tim Turpin* [http://www.amazon.com/Legend-Tim-Turpin-Peter-Bernfeld-](http://www.amazon.com/Legend-Tim-Turpin-Peter-Bernfeld-ebook/dp/B00IX9IWLE/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078868&sr=1-3&keywords=john+ld+barnett)

[ebook/dp/B00IX9IWLE/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078868&sr=1-3&keywords=john+ld+barnett](http://www.amazon.com/Legend-Tim-Turpin-Peter-Bernfeld-ebook/dp/B00IX9IWLE/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078868&sr=1-3&keywords=john+ld+barnett)

Written by [Peter Bernfeld](#), published by Solstice;

*If I Were a Crocodile*

*If I Were a Mermaid*

*If I Were a Fly*

*If I Were a Dog*

*If I Were a Skunk*

*If I Were a Super Hero*

*If I Were a Giant*

*If I Were a Dinosaur*

*If I Were a Butterfly*

*If I Were Invisible*

Written by Molly Hill, published by Sarah Book Publishing, USA;

*Bucky Berrott*,

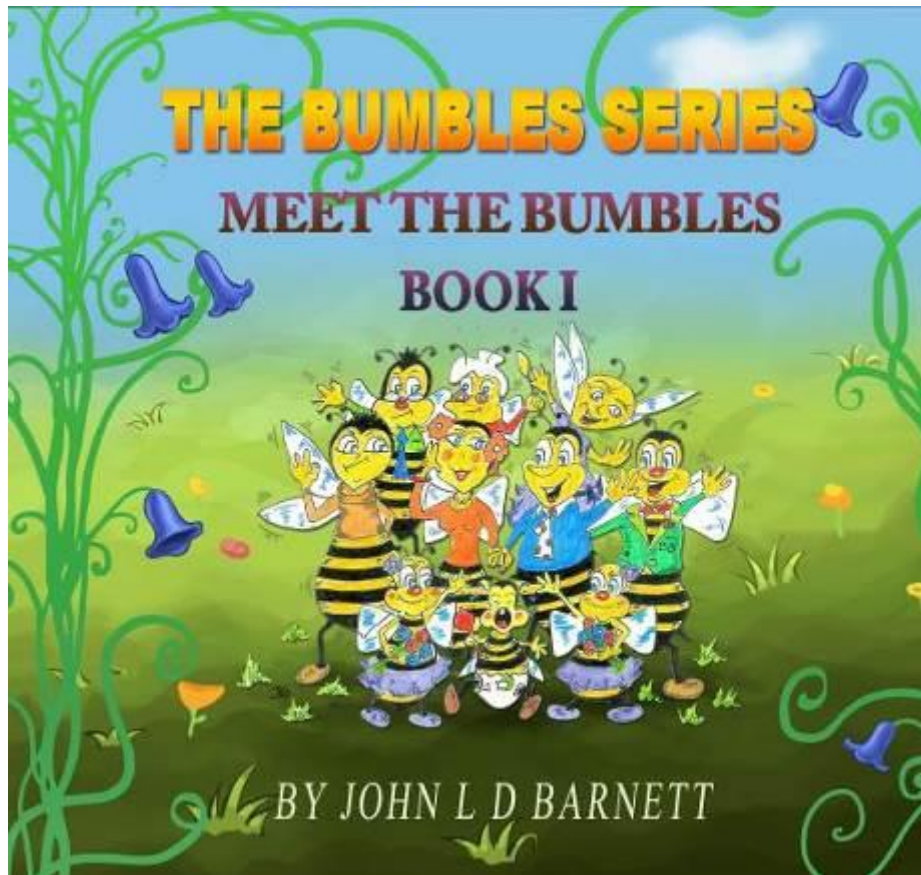
Written by George E. Lander, published by Sarah Book Publishing, USA

Illustrated book cover for *Children's Anthology* [GLODWYN'S TREASURE CHEST](#) published by Crimson Cloak Publishing.

Synopsis and excerpt from *Meet the Bumbles*, published by Crimson Cloak Publishing.

[http://www.amazon.com/Meet-Bumbles-John-Barnett-ebook/dp/B00MUW6H2G/ref=sr\\_1\\_19?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077729&sr=1-19&keywords=john+l+barnett](http://www.amazon.com/Meet-Bumbles-John-Barnett-ebook/dp/B00MUW6H2G/ref=sr_1_19?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077729&sr=1-19&keywords=john+l+barnett)

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Meet-Bumbles-John-Barnett-ebook/dp/B00MUW6H2G/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409322713&sr=1-4](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Meet-Bumbles-John-Barnett-ebook/dp/B00MUW6H2G/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409322713&sr=1-4)



*The Bumble family members Grandad and Grandma Bumble, their son, Fred Bumble, his wife Honey Bee, and their six children, Billy, Buzz, Bluebell, the twins Rose and Tulip, and last but not least, Baby Bumble, all live in the Bumble Hive at the edge of Willow Woods. Billy Bumble is the eldest son and a Worker Bee who gets up to all sorts of mischief and finds himself in hot water on more than one occasion.*

## **Chapter One**

### **Meet the Bumbles**

It was dusk and the sun was just going down behind the horizon by the time Billy, and his brother Buzz Bumble, were heading home to their Hive, which was situated in a lush green field surrounded by beautiful wildflowers at the very edge of Willow Woods.

Billy and Buzz were both worker bees; well I say both were worker bees, actually Billy did all the work whilst his lazy brother Buzz lay on a dandelion leaf sunning himself all day. Although nearer to the end of the day, Buzz would make the effort to visit at least two flowers to collect enough pollen to impress his mother and father, Fred and Honey Bee Bumble, to make it look as if he had been working hard all day.

His brother Billy however didn't mind too much because if Buzz did any work at all he would follow Billy around all the flowers and just get in the way all the time, so it made perfect sense to leave his brother lazing around whilst Billy carried on with his work without being bothered by his brother all day long.

Just as they were flying home past the old barn at the side of Applegate farm, Billy spotted Wagglepuss, the old tomcat. Unfortunately, Billy was the mischievous bee of the family and managed to get into all sorts of scrapes. This always left him in the bad books with his Grandma and Grandad, Grace and Arthur Bumble.

Billy loved to buzz around Wagglepuss the old ginger tom cat, and found it great fun annoying the poor old cat, who try as he may could never manage to catch Billy Bumble and always finished up running around in circles chasing his tail. Today was no exception, Billy left the poor old cat sitting in a pool of water licking his wounds, and dripping wet, which Billy found great fun, just before buzzing off and heading for home.

Billy flew down and stopped to talk to his next-door neighbour Wendy Wasp, who was sweeping the path to her front door, before flying across the way to the beehive. Billy had a soft spot for Wendy because she always made him laugh, and always offered him a cup of sugar water every time he called in to see her.

However, he did not care much for her husband Willy Wasp, who never seemed to have a smile on his face, and had a tendency to borrow tools from his father's workshop, but always failed to return them. Apart from the fact that he also thought Billy was a bit of a 'silly bee.'

Fortunately, Wendy's husband Willy Wasp was out visiting the wild flowers when Billy called in to see her, so he had time for a good chat and a cup of Wendy's wonderful sugar water before heading home to the hive for his tea.

His Lazy brother Buzz had arrived home well before Billy, telling tales of how hard he'd been working out in the surrounding flower beds, and handing over some of the precious pollen which Billy had given him to carry back to the hive whilst he spent time chatting to Wendy Wasp.

Billy gave his brother Buzz a stern look before sitting down at the family table for tea, and whispered a warning in his ear about telling lies to his mother, whilst the twins, Rose and Tulip, sat listening and giggling under the table.

His father, however, had been hard at work all day with a team of worker bees from the hive next door, securing the outer timber structure to the bee hive before the winter rain and snow crept in. He was exhausted by the time he, too, sat down to tea with the family.

Grandma and Grandad Bumble came in from the garden just in time to join the rest of the family for tea, which Grandad Bumble would not have missed for the World because tonight his daughter Honey Bee had made his favourite meal of Honeycomb pie, with Honey crumble and cream for pudding.

Just as his mother, Honey Bee sat down for her tea, Baby Bumble started to cry out at the top of his voice which made all the Bumble family jump to their feet to see what was wrong, but of course it was left to his mother to see to the baby's needs again, as always.

Bluebell Bumble arrived home just in time to help her mother feed Baby Bumble, but received a sharp telling off from her father Fred for coming in late and not joining everyone for tea. "This will have to stop, Bluebell," grumbled her father. "You're coming home far too late and staying out far too long with that honey bee from the big Hive in Willow Woods."

Bluebell decided it was better to just say nothing rather than upset her father further, so she pretended not to listen and just carried on feeding the baby.

After tea, Fred Bumble settled down in his comfortable armchair with a nice cup of honey dew tea to read his favourite newspaper, The Hive Daily Telegraph, which cheered him up no end, to the great relief of his wife Honey Bee Bumble.

It was Sunday morning when the Bumble family awoke with the dawn, but it didn't really matter what day it was because every day was a working day for the Bumbles. They had to collect as much pollen as possible through the summer time so that the females of the family could turn it into honey and store it over the long winter



period. Honey Bee Bumble required plenty of provisions of honey to feed the family through the cold winter months or the family would have to go hungry, until the flowers all grew again in the following Spring time.

Fred Bumble always woke the family at 6 o' clock every morning so they could have a good breakfast of toast and honey before setting off to work out in the surrounding countryside flower beds. All the females of the family, of course, stayed around the hive making honey out of the pollen which had been collected in sacks attached to the legs of all the male worker bees of the Bumble family.

"Right," said Fred, "time to go to work." However, as he looked around the hive his son Buzz was nowhere to be found. "Where's Buzz?" said his father sternly to his son Billy. "Not sure, dad, I think he may still be in his bed fast asleep," said Billy to his father.

"That son of mine is a no good lazy layabout, and needs to be taught a lesson in hard work," said his father crossly. With that he stormed off to the bedroom carrying a bucket of cold water to throw over his son Buzz to wake him up.

Buzz was still coughing and spluttering from the cold water his father had thrown over him as he struggled to fly out over the flower beds still shivering with his wings not quite dry.

Buzz did his best all morning to keep out of his father's way, but sat down at every opportunity to talk to a friendly caterpillar that had been playing football on the open grass.

Meanwhile Billy Bumble, who by this time was in his father's good books, had filled his leg pouches to capacity with pollen from the open wild flowers that were swaying in the breeze out in the open meadow, and he was now ready to fly home.

"That's it for today," cried out his father Fred, "Let's all fly back to the hive for dinner and take the rest of the afternoon off, seeing as we have all worked so hard today, boys." This was music to his lazy son's ears, who just couldn't wait to pack up and go home. He much preferred to be out collecting pollen with his brother Billy who didn't tell him off all the time for lying down on the job, unlike his unforgiving father Fred.

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### [Veronica Castle](#)

Veronica Castle lives in the High Pennines of northern England. She is the illustrator of *The Traveller*, and *The Magic World of Bracken Lea* by [Esma Race](#), published by Solstice Horizons.





[http://www.amazon.com/Magic-World-Bracken-Lea-ebook/dp/B00FY3YMWU/ref=sr\\_1\\_fkmr0\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076594&sr=1-1-fkmr0&keywords=bracken+lea+wood](http://www.amazon.com/Magic-World-Bracken-Lea-ebook/dp/B00FY3YMWU/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076594&sr=1-1-fkmr0&keywords=bracken+lea+wood)

*Links to more information:*

<http://raceesma.wix.com/esma-race#!veronica-castle/c1tpe>

<http://www.farcourt.co.uk/ge/zentangle.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/esmarace>

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/veronicacastle>

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### [Janice Lewis Clark](#)



Janice Clark lives in the Pacific Northwest, where the morning fog drifting over the coastal hills could easily conceal dragons or other magical creatures. She is the author the Hall of Doors children's series, and is currently working on a YA novel series in which Teeka, a street orphan who has become an apprentice healer, is the catalyst to bring at least a tentative peace to her warring planet

<http://www.janiceclark.net>

<http://www.teawiththeblackdragon.blogspot.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/PrincessButtermilkBiscuit>

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/JanClark>

**The *Hall of Doors* series:**



*Book one, **The Mountains of the Moon:***

[http://www.amazon.com/Hall-Doors-Janice-Clark-ebook/dp/B00J86RBXQ/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077909&sr=1-3&keywords=janice+clark](http://www.amazon.com/Hall-Doors-Janice-Clark-ebook/dp/B00J86RBXQ/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077909&sr=1-3&keywords=janice+clark)

*Sammy's worried. Her cat has disappeared again. No one knows where Princess Buttermilk Biscuit goes on full-moon nights. Will she come back this time?*

*When Sammy follows her cat up a moonbeam to a world of mist and moonlight, she meets Selena, who lives in a beautiful fairy-tale castle. Sammy is fascinated by the Hall of Doors with its magical portals to other worlds. But the dreamlike adventure turns into a nightmare when Sammy is faced with the hardest decision of her life. Will she have the courage to make the right choice?*



*Book two, **The Door in the Sky:** Sammy learns that love and friendship are stronger than fear, as she and Selena take a dragon ride and open a perilous spellbound treasure box.*



Book three, ***The Mirror Door***: Sammy faces one challenge after another, including fire-spitting jabberwocks, carnivorous “humpties,” and an aggressive dandelion. Can she solve the mystery that threatens to start a war? Most important of all, can she keep her temper?



Book four, ***The Secret Door***: . [http://www.amazon.com/Secret-Door-Hall-Doors-Book-ebook/dp/B00MFX4TH0/ref=sr\\_1\\_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077909&sr=1-5&keywords=janice+clark](http://www.amazon.com/Secret-Door-Hall-Doors-Book-ebook/dp/B00MFX4TH0/ref=sr_1_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077909&sr=1-5&keywords=janice+clark)

Sammy takes advantage of what may be her last chance to tell BFF Kerri about her secret adventures in the other worlds. The girls join shape-changing unicorn/elves on a mission to rescue Princess Buttermilk Biscuit and a group of refugees. When they meet the Kizzees, nomadic dragon-hunters who look like koalas, the already hazardous mission gets a little too exciting. The Kizzees and unicorns are sworn enemies. Can the girls prevent a battle and keep the mission on track?

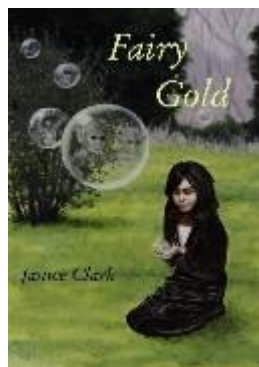


Book five, **The Water Door**: [http://www.amazon.com/Water-Door-Hall-Doors-Book-ebook/dp/B00MFX598S/ref=sr\\_1\\_6?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077909&sr=1-6&keywords=janice+clark](http://www.amazon.com/Water-Door-Hall-Doors-Book-ebook/dp/B00MFX598S/ref=sr_1_6?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077909&sr=1-6&keywords=janice+clark)

*A letter from Sammy's long-absent father sparks feelings of anger and betrayal. How can she trust him again? After helping a fairy child cross an angry sea to negotiate peace between two warring factions, Sammy learns that forgiving and forgetting are not the same thing, and maybe trust can be rebuilt, if both parties are willing to work at it.*

*Sammy's young cousin, Maggie, plays a major part in this adventure, when she follows the dancing bees to rescue a fairy child. Other helpers include a world-hopping seagull, a mermaid, a dolphin, a young sea dragon and his mother, and a very patient python.*

Other publications include:



**Fairy Gold**: [http://www.amazon.com/Fairy-Gold-Janice-Clark-ebook/dp/B00KGHSBJE/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077909&sr=1-4&keywords=janice+clark](http://www.amazon.com/Fairy-Gold-Janice-Clark-ebook/dp/B00KGHSBJE/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077909&sr=1-4&keywords=janice+clark)

*Angelina already has a gift. She can sometimes make herself invisible, or at least cause people not to notice her. But the gillys, the semi-mythical little people who befriend her, can do so much more. Angelina is certain she'll attain true happiness if only her "fairy" friends will give her one of their "magic stones." As in most fairy tales, the results are not as expected, but one can't really blame the gillys.*

*Adventure, true love, a dastardly villain, broken hearts and a seed of hope*

*This is a "prequel" to the story of Teeka, Angelina's daughter, in the **Apprentice Healer** series. The first chapter of **To Heal a Broken Planet** is included. Publication of that novel, and its sequel, **Into the Unknown**, is pending.*



### ***A Brave Doll***

*The neighbor's dog has damaged Nancy's doll. There's stuffing everywhere. No one has time to help, so Nancy, like the Little Red Hen, figures out a way to do it herself. The picture book includes illustrated step-by-step instructions for a young child to make a knot for sewing. Download a free PDF from my website.*

Other free materials on the website include "extra scenes" for the first three Hall of Doors books and an assortment of short material.

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### **Penny Estelle**



Penny Estelle was an elementary school secretary for 21 years. She promised herself that when she retired she would write stories about kids that got under her skin – in a good way.

She is retired and lives with her husband on a fifty-four acre ranch in NW Arizona.

Her book *Hike Up Devil's Mountain* is a MG/tweens fantasy.

[https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5820078.Penny\\_Estelle](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5820078.Penny_Estelle)

<https://www.linkedin.com/pub/penny-estelle/39/491/461>

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/pennystelle>

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/pennystales>

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/bumpedbackintime>

<http://www.pennystales.com>

<http://pennyestelle.blogspot.com>

[https://museituppublishing.com/bookstore2/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=146&Itemid=82](https://museituppublishing.com/bookstore2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=146&Itemid=82)

[http://www.amazon.com/Penny-Estelle/e/B006S62XBY/ref=ntt\\_athr\\_dp\\_pel\\_pop\\_1](http://www.amazon.com/Penny-Estelle/e/B006S62XBY/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_pop_1)

There is a total of five short stories in *The Wickware Sagas*.

*Billy Cooper's Awesome Nightmare* (book 1) [http://www.amazon.com/Billy-Coopers-Awesome-Nightmare-Wickware-ebook/dp/B0088HTJ9U/ref=sr\\_1\\_7?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-7&keywords=penny+estelle](http://www.amazon.com/Billy-Coopers-Awesome-Nightmare-Wickware-ebook/dp/B0088HTJ9U/ref=sr_1_7?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-7&keywords=penny+estelle)

*Ride of a Lifetime* (book 2) [http://www.amazon.com/Ride-Lifetime-Wickware-Sagas-Book-ebook/dp/B00D91Z1JM/ref=sr\\_1\\_6?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-6&keywords=penny+estelle](http://www.amazon.com/Ride-Lifetime-Wickware-Sagas-Book-ebook/dp/B00D91Z1JM/ref=sr_1_6?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-6&keywords=penny+estelle)

*Flash to the Past* (book 3) [http://www.amazon.com/Flash-Past-Wickware-Sagas-Book-ebook/dp/B00E0WUSBK/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-4&keywords=penny+estelle](http://www.amazon.com/Flash-Past-Wickware-Sagas-Book-ebook/dp/B00E0WUSBK/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-4&keywords=penny+estelle)

*Bumped Back in Time* (book 4) [http://www.amazon.com/Bumped-Back-Time-Wickware-Sagas-ebook/dp/B00FGDS9MM/ref=sr\\_1\\_12?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-12&keywords=penny+estelle](http://www.amazon.com/Bumped-Back-Time-Wickware-Sagas-ebook/dp/B00FGDS9MM/ref=sr_1_12?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-12&keywords=penny+estelle)

*Rags to Riches* (book 5) [http://www.amazon.com/Riches-Rags-Wickware-Sagas-Book-ebook/dp/B00G5ZXXYY/ref=sr\\_1\\_10?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-10&keywords=penny+estelle](http://www.amazon.com/Riches-Rags-Wickware-Sagas-Book-ebook/dp/B00G5ZXXYY/ref=sr_1_10?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-10&keywords=penny+estelle)



[http://www.amazon.com/Wickware-Sagas-Penny-Estelle/dp/1499179502/ref=sr\\_1\\_11?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-11&keywords=penny+estelle](http://www.amazon.com/Wickware-Sagas-Penny-Estelle/dp/1499179502/ref=sr_1_11?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078256&sr=1-11&keywords=penny+estelle)

*Something is just not right in old lady Wickware's seventh grade history class. Weird things are happening and rumors are flying. Students are finding themselves back in time, face to face, with some famous legends and heroes.*



*Word on the street points to Miss Wickware, herself! Is she a witch with magical powers? An alien with a grudge against kids? Or just a sweet old lady with a few tricks up her sleeve?*

*The million dollar question is how do kids of today end up in centuries gone by, and more to the point, how do they get home?*

Synopsis and excerpt from ***Hike Up Devil's Mountain***



[http://www.amazon.com/Hike-Devils-Mountain-Penny-Estelle-ebook/dp/B0058DE9YC/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078189&sr=1-1&keywords=penny+estelle](http://www.amazon.com/Hike-Devils-Mountain-Penny-Estelle-ebook/dp/B0058DE9YC/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078189&sr=1-1&keywords=penny+estelle)

*Ten-year old Andy Thompson disobeys his mother and sneaks into the basement of an old abandoned house that's due for demolition. He stumbles upon a mysterious box under an old cabinet. And his troubles begin when he looks inside.*

*The Crew brothers, twelve-year old Jason, and ten-year old Danny, also find their way to the basement. New to town, Jason has established himself as the school bully. A struggle ensues between Andy and Jason and the bully ends up as a toad.*

*Somehow, the boys must reverse the magical spell. And that means hiking up the dread mountain: fast pace, fast action and just a few scares and surprises on the way! The lives of all three boys seem destined to change forever, if they survive...*

### **Chapter 1**

Andy Thompson's hand was shaking as he reached for the dirty, tarnished doorknob. He stopped, took a step back, and glanced around for the hundredth time. His heart was pounding so hard, he was sure his chest was actually moving with each thud.

In all his ten years, Andy had never disobeyed his parents. Until today. On a scale of one to ten, this was an easy nine. He could still hear his mother last night at dinner: "Nobody has been in that house for three years. No telling what kind of shape it's in. The walls are probably termite ridden and ready to crumble, if they haven't already. It's dangerous and you have no business being there. You could get seriously hurt. I, for one, think it's about time they tear that eyesore down. You stay clear of that place!" Blah . . . blah . . . blah . . . blah . . . blah.

The company that was to tear down the old abandoned house the very next morning had placed a ten-foot high chain link fence around the house. It didn't take him very long at all to get inside that. He now stood in front of the slanted, cellar doors, which were rough wood, weathered, and ridden with bugs. Andy remembered a time when they were white as snow, but now they had only traces of paint here and



there. He wondered if, with a little pressure, the doors might just splinter with a good kick.

Taking a deep breath, Andy grabbed the doorknob, placed his foot on the other door and pulled with all his might. He gave a surprised yelp when the rotted wood surrounding the knob gave way, and he tumbled and fell flat on his back. He regained his feet, massaged his sore pelvis and saw one door now hung on a single hinge.

He was breathing hard when he finished muscling the broken door open.

All he had to do now was dig up some courage to take those rickety steps down to that dark, spooky basement. On one side of the steps was a cement wall that disappeared into darkness. On the other side was gray nothing. There wasn't even a railing to hold on to.

The urge to run for his bike and get home was strong, but a nagging voice told him that he'd never get this chance again. He felt bad that, after tomorrow, this house would be history.

Since the weather outside was perfect for bike riding, he'd put on a striped, cereal-stained, short-sleeved T-shirt, and a pair of well-worn Levi's, with his knees trying to peek through a few threadbare spots. But dressed as he was, he now felt a chill, and goose bumps covered his body as he crossed the wooden steps. He found a light switch to the left. Even as Andy tried it, he knew there'd be no lights coming on. He tried it anyway, several times. Up, down, up, down, up, down. After all, you just never know, and he wanted to be sure!

The eerie creak that accompanied each step was like a thunderclap in Andy's ears. He reached the cement floor. He stood still, listening, but for what?

Silence was all he heard.

Rays of light filtered in through four small, dirty basement windows. Dust particles made the air hazy, like smoke floating up by the ceiling. Thanks to that small amount of light, Andy could see most of the large room, though the corners were still shrouded in darkness.

Swallowing hard, Andy ventured farther into the room. He tripped over a small broken cement step that had been part of a shower stall at one time. He saw the big, black furnace against the far wall. Andy had forgotten about that awful furnace. Its door lay on the floor, leaving a gaping black hole. It looked like a monster, ready to suck up anything that came close. Andy shivered. He didn't feel the need to explore over by that particular wall.

Old wooden cabinets lined another wall. Doors were open, revealing glass jars, some broken, and lots of candles of different shapes and colors, some partially burned. Seeing all those candles made him smile. Now he could almost smell the vanilla or cinnamon in the air. Next to the cabinets, he saw several stacks of boxes, but a few were turned upside down and tossed here and there. One box must have held nothing but magazines, because ripped pages covered the gray cement floor; while another was overturned, and old Christmas decorations were lying about. Had somebody been in here and dumped them? Maybe an animal had gotten inside? Andy didn't like either of those possibilities, as he glanced into the still dark corners, staring again at the open furnace.

He ventured over to the steps that led up deep inside the house and wondered if that door might be unlocked. "No way," he muttered, but moved to check it out. He was halfway up when a mouse ran over the toe of his blue tennis shoe.

Andy never knew he could scream so loud.

In his hurry to get off the steps, he tripped over his own feet and fell down the last two steps.

Bringing his hands up to break his fall, he landed on the scattered magazines, and slid into the box full of old Christmas stuff. Andy found himself covered in Christmas lights, old tinsel, and broken ornaments.

Something caught his eye as he struggled to untangle himself. He scrambled to his feet and hurried over to peek under a cabinet where a piece of molding had come loose. Something shiny was in there.

Andy slowly reached in and pulled a long skinny box from its hiding place. It was gold and looked brand new. “Wow,” he whispered, staring. There was no latch on this box. No matter which way he turned it or how he shook it, the box wouldn’t open. “Open, you dumb box,” Andy shouted.

The box became almost transparent and whatever was inside glowed a brilliant red.

As if burned, Andy dropped the box.

When the box hit the floor, it fell open. Inside, lying on a bed of red velvet, was a stick of some kind. It was that glowed like fire. Andy gave the box a tiny nudge with his toe. Nothing happened.

The stick just kept glowing.

He knelt down to examine it a little closer. He took a magazine, rolled it up, and touched it. After all, if it was hot, he didn’t want to get burned.

Again, nothing happened.

Andy touched it. There was no pain—no smell of burning skin.

Removing the stick, Andy got to his feet. Now what?

“Well, if it isn’t Andy Pandy.”

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### [Mary Filmer](#)

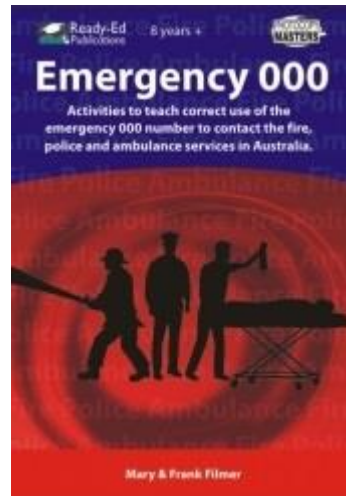


Author Mary Filmer lives with her husband in Western Australia. She is successfully in remission from cancer and is positive and motivated in her writings. She has over the years won many awards for her work with children. She was the inaugural award winner of the Fire Person of the Year while working as an educational officer for the Fire Service in Western Australia and received congratulations from the then Minister assisting the Minister of Women’s Interests. (Dr. Judith Watson,MLA).

Mary wrote the Juvenile Arson Programme and many other Fire Safety educational programmes for children. She has won awards for her Art and Craft work

at shows and has written a children's column for a newspaper for two years. She is the author of the following books:

***Emergency 000:***



***Mystique of Billydine. (Out of Print)***

***Fire Fighter Pat colouring in book (Out of print.)***

And the children's fantasy series published by Solstice Horizons:

***Mary Sumeridge Beginnings, and***

***Mary Sumeridge and the Golden Locket.***

<http://www.maryfilmer.com/>

[http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/4182259.Mary\\_Filmer](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/4182259.Mary_Filmer)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mary-Filmer/193327687457737>

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/maryfilmer>

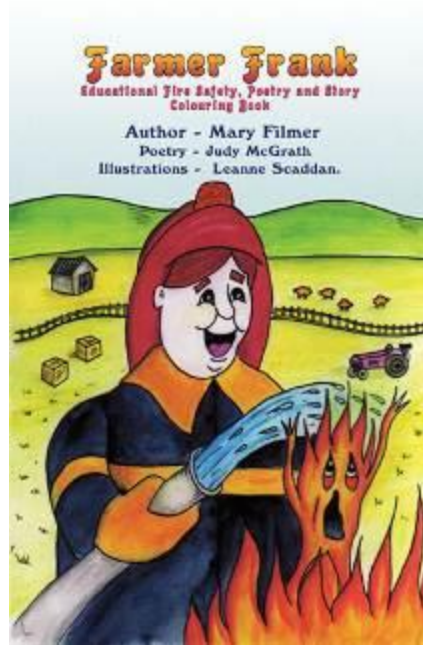
<http://meridianamagazine.org/20130905/intervista-alla-scrittrice-mary-filmer-il-mio-mondo-di-fantasy/>

Synopsis of ***Farmer Frank, the Volunteer Firefighter***

[http://www.amazon.com/Farmer-Frank-Educational-Safety-Colouring/dp/1609117212/ref=la\\_B00IZ7TEMA\\_1\\_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076106&sr=1-3](http://www.amazon.com/Farmer-Frank-Educational-Safety-Colouring/dp/1609117212/ref=la_B00IZ7TEMA_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076106&sr=1-3)

[http://www.amazon.com/Farmer-Frank-Educational-Safety-Colouring/dp/1609117212/ref=la\\_B00IZ7TEMA\\_1\\_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076106&sr=1-3](http://www.amazon.com/Farmer-Frank-Educational-Safety-Colouring/dp/1609117212/ref=la_B00IZ7TEMA_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076106&sr=1-3)

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/8819251-farmer-frank>



*This creative and educational book allows children to learn fire safety in a fun and enjoyable way.*

*Farmer Frank is a volunteer fire fighter who receives an emergency alert from a little bird, telling him that Mrs. Jones's house is on fire. Mrs. Jones has already phoned the Fire Brigade on the emergency number and was told that the Fire Service is on the way. Fireman Frank learns when he gets to the fire that Penny the kitten is trapped inside the house.*

*Though entertaining and full of adventure, Farmer Frank is a vital tool that teaches children how to prepare a plan in case of a fire and also notes how important it is for everyone to know the local emergency phone numbers.*

Synopsis and excerpt from **Mary Sumeridge Beginnings:**

<http://www.amazon.com/Mary-Sumeridge-Beginnings-Filmer/dp/1490910565>

<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/18194271-mary-sumeridge>



*All through time children of all ages and adults have fantasised about the magical worlds of fairies, witches and dragons. Just to name a few of these wonderful enchanting places.*

*In this lovely story, you will be taken to a place where some of these magical folk live. You the reader, whether old or young, will be able to use your imagination and visit along with Mary Sumeridge a new and exciting world.*

*You will be taken to a magical place where you will meet dragon people, who are no bigger than the largest of red roses. You will meet a tiny Troll named Poppy, who gets around by flying on the back of a seagull.*

*Granny Ann can change into a tiny bird to help save the life of her granddaughter, and a boy named Frank, who can fly.*

*Mary Sumeridge is a little girl, who has a heart much bigger than her little friend Poppy. Mary has to fight a wicked witch and save a ghost as well as find a treasure, which is like no other and one which is precious.*

## **Chapter 1**

### ***Boga-Duck Weather***

The little troll only stood as high as the sugar bowl on the kitchen table. He was dressed in a little waistcoat, which appeared to be made out of brown felt. His pants were far too big for his little body, as they seemed to be sliding down and were only held up by his bottom. He wore no shoes, for his feet were far too big and hairy. He had only three toes on each foot, and three fingers and a thumb on each hand. His straight, long, wiry hair was white as snow and stuck out in all directions as it fell around his little shoulders. His head looked twice the size that it should be, and his ears, which were pointed at the top and straight as a bone, seemed to cover the full length of his head. His eyes were piercing blue, and gleamed and sparkled like the sun on a warm, sunny day.

He stood looking at the old lady, and as the pink lips around his large mouth turned into a smile, his wrinkled face glowed with total love for her.

“Poppy, you will be careful? You mustn’t let anyone see you. Stay just out of sight at all times, until the time is right. Just take good care of her and make sure she is safe. I wish I were well enough to travel with you, but I know I will be in a few days. Then I will come and help you.” The old woman sat down on a chair as she spoke, finished tying the little reins around the seagull’s neck, and then handed them to the little troll.

Poppy the Troll just stood there scratching and nodding his rather large, hairy head as if he were taking in every word that she said. But the truth is, he was rather worried about the journey that he and Willy were about to take. He really hated flying.

“Now don’t you be worrying, Granny Ann. My family has been looking after your family for hundreds of years, and I have taken good care of you for over sixty years, haven’t I? I will make sure our little human girl Mary, is safe, and Willy here will return to you just as soon as I am at the house. You don’t have to tell me to stay out of sight, even though I would like nothing better than to strangle that thief who stole my black eye patch,” said the little troll while he tried to make himself as comfortable as he could on the seagull’s back.

Willy the seagull was quite wet, as he had not properly dried out all of his feathers. He had been sitting by the fire, but it had been a long flight to Granny Ann’s home. It was very hard for Poppy to climb onto his slippery back, but somehow Poppy managed to tuck his hairy feet behind the seagull’s wings. His hooded brown cloak covered his whole body and he clung to the bird, holding the little string reins as tightly as he could in his enormous hairy hands.

Poppy was not the bravest of trolls, and flying was something he had never really gotten the hang of. He really could not understand why anyone would want to fly in the first place. However, since it was the only way he could cover so much land and arrive at Mary's home before morning, he held his breath and closed his large eyes in anticipation of what was to come.

"Your feet are tickling me, Poppy; do try and stay as close to me as you can. The wind is very strong and we have a long way to travel tonight. It will be far easier for me if you can move with my body. Hang on and let's get started," said the bird as he stood up and spread out his wings ready to fly.

But Granny Ann had so much more to say before they were to begin their long journey. She was worried they would not hear her, so she shouted the last minute instructions as she sat down on a chair near the kitchen table. She suddenly found herself feeling quite weak and could hardly stop herself from falling over. "Try and keep your head covered, Poppy my dear; we don't want you coming down with a cold now, do we? Make sure you keep that key safely strapped to your body. I don't know what we would do if that were to get lost."

Granny Ann wrapped a little sandwich and the smallest cupcake, which was no bigger than a thimble, and placed them into a small plastic bag. She quickly tied it around the little troll's neck with a double knot so it would not slide off.

"I think we had better be off, Willy, before Granny Ann thinks of anything else we must do," Poppy whispered into the seagull's ear. He held onto the little reins for dear life with his eyes closed tightly.

Willy flapped his wings, and with an enormous jump, he flew into the air and headed straight through the open window. It was not long before he was up in the cold night air heading in the direction of Mary Sumeridge's house.

Granny Ann wiped her eyes as tears streamed down her wrinkled white face. She did not like the thought of sending Poppy and Willy out in Boga-duck weather, but she had no choice. If only she were feeling a little better, she would have gone with them. Oh well, I had better get myself well if I am to be of any good to them, she said to herself as she threw another log on the fire.

The rain was pelting down on the little cottage roof, and with every drop of rain that fell Granny Ann became sadder. Oh, this won't do. I will just have to go. She summoned the strength to rise, but as she stood up, she fell back against the kitchen table weakly.

"Just how far do you think you are going to travel like that?" asked a tiny voice from behind her.

Even though Granny Ann was wracked with worry about Poppy, Willy, and Mary, she managed to turn her wrinkled white face into a slight smile. Her sad, old eyes seemed to speak for themselves as she stood looking at the little face of the mouse, which was peeping through the smallest hole in the wall on the floor near the kitchen cupboard.

The mouse was wearing a tiny hat, which was made of the same cloth as its pretty pink dress, and it wore the prettiest matching pink shoes that anyone had ever seen. Its glasses were made out of tiny glass buttons and golden wire. It was not the smallest of mice, as it was really quite round and had a very large, fat tummy, which seemed to bounce up and down as the little creature talked. It also had fairly long, grey, curly locks of hair protruding from under the little hat it wore on its head.

"Well now, if it isn't my furry little friend Patty the mouse," Granny Ann sighed. "I'm worried about Poppy and Willy. I wish I had sent them before the rain, but I was

hoping I would be much better by now. So you see, it really is my fault they are out in this thunderstorm tonight.”

The mouse stood there looking around the room with eyes as wide as saucepans, scanning the whole kitchen floor. It never stopped wiping its little black nose on a small, white, lacy handkerchief. “What a lot of bumble weed, Granny Ann. It will not help anyone, especially not Mary, if you are not well enough to travel. So why don’t you make one of those spells of yours and make me a little larger? I will help you while that ugly, fat, hairy troll who chases me around this kitchen is away. I am sure we will have you ready to travel in a few days,” said the Mouse.

“Is Poppy still chasing you, Patty?” said Granny Ann as she moved closer to the mouse. “I will have to make sure I have another word with him. I really would like a little help if you don’t mind, my dear friend. I am feeling a little frail at the moment.”

“Well, there is no time like the present. I am ready and waiting,” said Patty.

“Thank you, my friend,” answered Granny Ann. She waved her arms in front of her, mumbling a few magical words at the same time. Patty seemed to glow and glimmer at the same time as she grew taller than the height of the table. She stretched her arms and legs and straightened her back as she opened her eyes and smiled at Granny Ann.

“I can’t say I like being this size, as it is really quite awkward to get around. I really can’t understand why you lot like being this size,” said Patty as she raced around the kitchen doing three or four things all at the same time. For it seemed she had not lost the speed she had had as a small mouse. She was chopping up carrots and onions and throwing them into the pot to make a soup, and at the same time, she was beating some eggs, milk, and flour into a batter.

“Out of my way, Granny Ann, no time to spare, no need to worry, no one in their right mind will call on us in this weather. I will make a good old pot of chicken soup and dumplings, too. You will be right as rain in no time, Granny Ann, with me looking after you,” said Patty the mouse in a squeaky voice. She tied one of Granny Ann’s aprons around her quite large, furry, brown bouncing stomach. The apron covered Patty from top to bottom, as she was a great deal shorter than Granny Ann.

“Thank you, my little friend. I really do have to travel within the next two days, so any help you can give me will be wonderful,” said Granny Ann as she sat down on a kitchen chair near the wooden cooker.

Granny Ann twinkled her fingers in the air, and all of a sudden, things started to move in a wave as if a giant’s hand had waved a fan through the air. A cup and saucer immediately sprouted wings and flew onto the table, followed closely by a teapot, which was having tea leaves dropping into it like snowflakes out of midair. The teapot then had boiling water pouring into it from the kettle, which had flown from the top of the wooden stove. Next came the milk jug doing a little dance as it poured a little milk into the cup, before it bowed and danced away to the middle of the table. It was followed closely by the sugar bowl, which seemed to find its own set of legs.

Next, a skipping teaspoon filled itself with sugar from the sugar bowl and jumped into the teacup quick as a wink. Granny Ann smiled and nodded to thank them, and picked up the cup from the table.

“I will just go and lie down for a while if you don’t mind, Patty,” said Granny Ann as she started to walk out of the kitchen carrying her cup of magical tea.

“Magic can’t beat a good old Patty soup,” laughed Patty out loud. Granny Ann turned to look at her before she left the kitchen.

“That it surely cannot do, Patty,” answered Granny Ann in a very frail voice. As she walked from the room, her heart was sinking, for she was sure that Poppy and



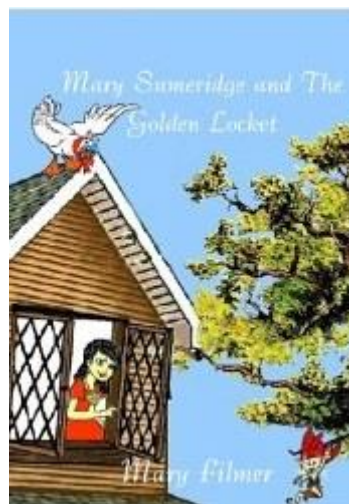
Mary would be in great danger with the coming of the eclipse of the moon. Who knew what plans the evil witch Anillig had in store for them? With every tick of the old clock, time was running out, for the eclipse of the moon was coming and the witch Anillig had been waiting for so long for little Mary.

Granny Ann dreaded what terrible things the evil witch had waiting for her granddaughter on the island, and she would not let her or Poppy face them without her by their side. She had to be well enough to travel in the morning, as she feared what was in store for them without her help.

“Anillig, you wicked witch, what are you planning?” Granny Ann mumbled to herself.

Synopsis of *Mary Sumeridge and the Golden Locket*

[http://www.amazon.com/Mary-Sumeridge-Golden-Locket-Filmer-ebook/dp/B00K0O8JN6/ref=la\\_B00IZ7TEMA\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076106&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Mary-Sumeridge-Golden-Locket-Filmer-ebook/dp/B00K0O8JN6/ref=la_B00IZ7TEMA_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076106&sr=1-1)  
<http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/433490>



*There is a kingdom, known to few humans, which dwells on the edge of our reality. This mighty kingdom is home to a race of magical creatures often misunderstood by humans who have learnt over the centuries to stay hidden.*

*Until now...*

*Poppy woke up to a loud crashing sound coming from the direction of his kitchen.*

*Oh no, he thought, she's back again*

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[Elizabeth Grace](#)



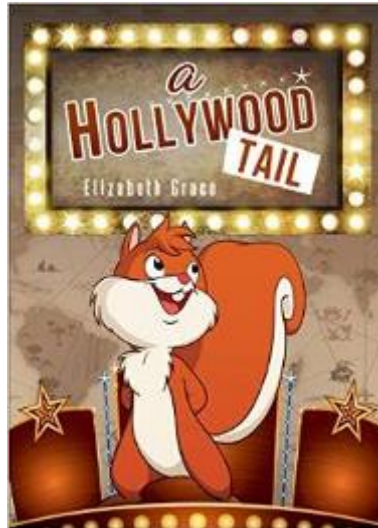
### “Lizzy the Writer”

Elizabeth Grace was born and raised in Minnesota where she spent most of her time either exploring the woods or finding new pets to adopt. Her love of animals and adventure is what has inspired both her children's book "A Hollywood Tail" and has created in her a love of travel. Moving to Miami, Elizabeth spent weekends exploring all that the nature side of South Florida had to offer. From the Everglades to Key West to hidden gems throughout Miami, her adventures have now become a travel book "24 Hours Miami." Elizabeth invites you to join her in her journeys and to connect with her on her blog.

Website/blog: <http://www.lizzythewriter.com/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/authorelizabethgrace>  
<https://twitter.com/lizzythewriter>  
<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/ElizabethGraceProspera>  
[http://www.amazon.com/Elizabeth-Grace/e/B00IK6FKDS/ref=sr\\_tc\\_2\\_0?qid=undefined&sr=1-2-ent](http://www.amazon.com/Elizabeth-Grace/e/B00IK6FKDS/ref=sr_tc_2_0?qid=undefined&sr=1-2-ent)

Author of *24 Hours Miami* [http://www.amazon.com/24-HOURS-MIAMI-Hundreds-Suggestions-ebook/dp/B00IHPL1T4/ref=sr\\_tc\\_2\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1409078630&sr=1-2-ent](http://www.amazon.com/24-HOURS-MIAMI-Hundreds-Suggestions-ebook/dp/B00IHPL1T4/ref=sr_tc_2_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1409078630&sr=1-2-ent);  
*A Hollywood Tail* (Tate Publishing);  
*24 Hours Hong Kong* coming soon.

Synopsis of *A Hollywood Tail*  
[http://www.amazon.com/Hollywood-Tail-Elizabeth-Grace/dp/1631221329/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=undefined&sr=1-1&keywords=hollywood+tail](http://www.amazon.com/Hollywood-Tail-Elizabeth-Grace/dp/1631221329/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=undefined&sr=1-1&keywords=hollywood+tail)



*Jerry McIntyre McGregory Jacobs has one dream. He wants to become famous. The problem? He's a squirrel! Being famous is a people's job so Jerry decides to run away from home in order to pursue his dream. Along the way, Jerry meets new friends including a duck named Ben and an iguana named Lizzy that help him on the journey to stardom, which mostly means saving him from one tricky situation after the next. Jerry realizes that becoming famous is hard work and that true friendships are more important than a paw print on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. A Hollywood Tail is a humor-filled story about one squirrel's journey to fame and his realization that being famous isn't all it's cracked up to be, and is available through Tate Publishing.*

#### Synopsis of **Patches**



*Patches was a good cat. She never clawed the furniture or messed up the carpet, so when she is abandoned it comes as quite the shock. Having never been outside - or without a kitty litter box – Patches must rely on new friends, Whiskers, Tiger, Leah and a handful of others, as she learns to survive as in an unfamiliar terrain.*

*After determining that she can't hunt rats like the other cats (partly out of fear but mostly because she is declawed), Patches comes up with a plan that forces cats and rats to work together. It's something that cats have never thought of before but Spike, the leader of the short hair cats, decides to use her plan and with good success. However, by working with the rats, the short hairs have accidentally violated their*

*agreement with the long hairs! The long hairs declare war on the short hairs and Patches is taken captive.*

*After new friends help her escape, Patches must step in and prove that cats are cats, no matter their hair length.*

*Patches is a Middle Grade novel that is fun, fresh and filled with quirky humor that children will enjoy. It also addresses important topics such as how to be a good friend, acceptance, and making the best out of difficult situations. Patches will be available in August 2014 and is published through Christine F. Anderson Publishing & Media*

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### [Vincent and Celestial Noot](#)



Vincent Noot studied Illustration and Graphics in Belgium. He has professional experience in both the Netherlands and several other countries in Europe, Asia, and North America, and lives in Utah with his wife Celestial. Together they wrote and developed the illustrated book series ***Find the Cutes***.

***Find the Cutes (Playtime)*** is the first in the Find the Cutes series.

<http://findthecutes.com/>

<http://www.findthecutes.blogspot.co.uk/>

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Video: [http://findthecutes.com/?page\\_id=1694](http://findthecutes.com/?page_id=1694)

<http://www.pinterest.com/vinnie1982/find-the-cutes-childrens-activity-book-wwwfindthec/>

<http://vinnie1982.deviantart.com/gallery/>

<https://twitter.com/vincentnoot>

<http://vinnie1982.tumblr.com/>

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/92560380/find-the-cutes-playtime>

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/22874259-find-the-cutes---playtime?ac=1>

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/Vinnie1982>

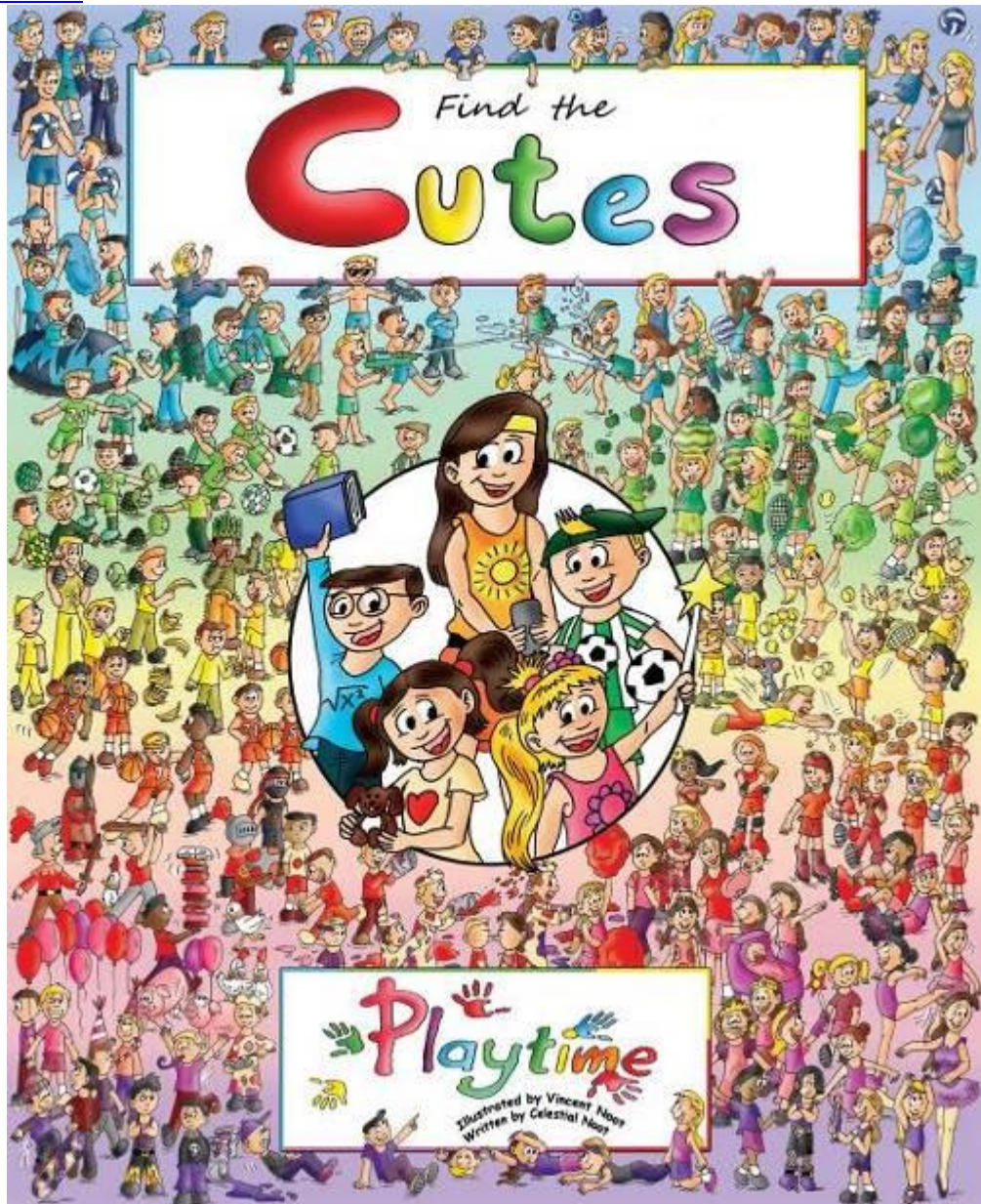
[http://www.amazon.com/Celestial-](http://www.amazon.com/Celestial-Noot/e/B00LV7MRR0/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_1?qid=undefined&sr=1-1)

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***Find the Cutes***



[http://www.amazon.com/Find-Cutes-Playtime-Celestial-Noot/dp/0991441508/ref=la\\_B00LV7MRR0\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078765&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Find-Cutes-Playtime-Celestial-Noot/dp/0991441508/ref=la_B00LV7MRR0_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409078765&sr=1-1)



*Children's book for ages 5 and older. Enjoy searching for the characters and their items- Find the Cutes - Playtime, a fun activity book for children, good for hours of fun! - An intriguing story. - Suitable for all ages. - 4,785 hand-drawn characters. - More than 1,500 hours of artwork. - The first in a series of 10 books.*

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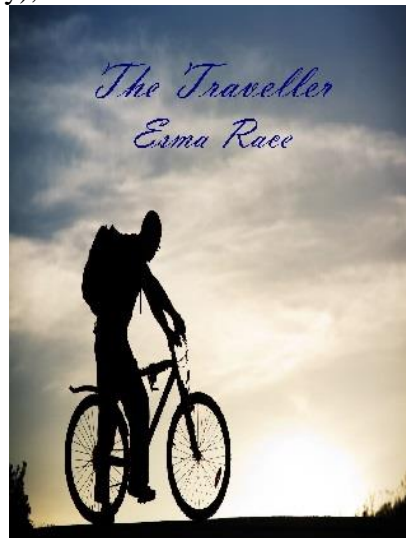
[Esma Race](#)



Esma Race was born and raised in the small Cheshire village of Weaverham. She has a great love for the natural world, and has always been able to sense the nature spirits which feature in her stories. She is very interested in natural healing, and is a practising reflexologist in the North of England, where she now lives with Geoff, her husband of 45 years. She is a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and enjoys reading, walking, travelling, gardening, and English history.

She is the author of:

***The Traveller*** (short story),



published by Solstice, and

***The Magic World of Bracken Lea***, published by Solstice Horizons.



[http://www.amazon.com/Magic-World-Bracken-Lea-ebook/dp/B00FY3YMWU/ref=sr\\_1\\_fkmr0\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076594&sr=1-1-fkmr0&keywords=bracken+lea+wood](http://www.amazon.com/Magic-World-Bracken-Lea-ebook/dp/B00FY3YMWU/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076594&sr=1-1-fkmr0&keywords=bracken+lea+wood)

*"Discovering the Magic World of Bracken Lea was a treat"*

-- Long and Short Reviewer

*" ... adorable ... After two stories I was hooked."*

-- OnlineBookClub Reviewer

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[Race/e/B00GX99ZQM/ref=sr\\_tc\\_2\\_0?qid=1409076875&sr=1-2-ent](http://www.amazon.com/Esma-Race/e/B00GX99ZQM/ref=sr_tc_2_0?qid=1409076875&sr=1-2-ent)

*Some story Titles from the next book in the Bracken Lea Wood series:*

The Celtic Princess

The Custard-Coloured Car

A Horse Called Magic

Croft Cottage

The Painting

Synopsis and excerpt from ***The Magic World of Bracken Lea:***

*A series of ten short stories featuring the Fairy Folk of Bracken Lea Wood: a tale of Nature Spirits for humans of all ages.*

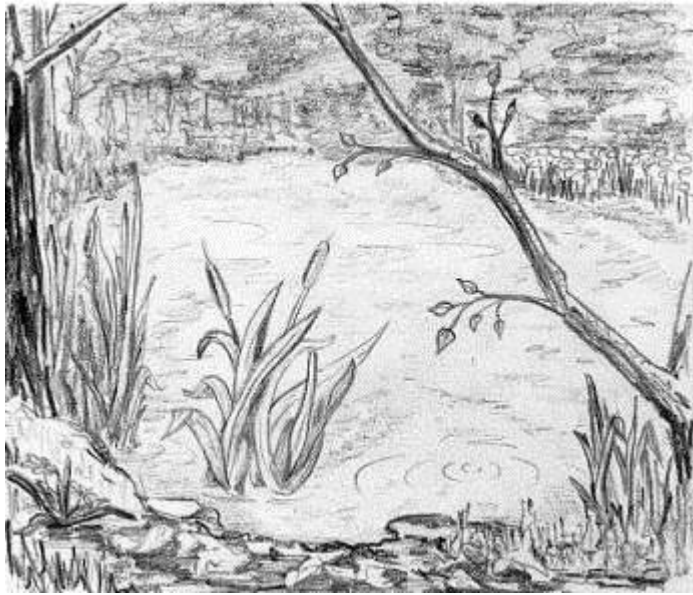
*Welcome to the magic world of GLODWYN the Gnome. His friends include other gnomes, flower fairies, a Twisted Tree, Astrid the Fairy Queen, and the birds and animals who also live in the wood.*

*Glodwyn the gnome is a bit of a rebel. He lives and works in the ancient woodland. He is unusual amongst the Fairy Folk in enjoying the company of humans. His good-natured interest in their world seen through the eyes of his unknowing "friend", Walter the Stacker Truck Driver at the local factory, leads him to interfere in their affairs, with interesting results both for the Fairy Folk and humans. With his help, the Fairy Folk rescue a little boy from drowning, save the life of an injured cat and later that of a confused old lady who collapses in the Wood.*

*The Fairy Folk raise the alarm when a baby's mother is taken ill, and later prevent disaster at the baby's Christening, when a bad fairy threatens the child's happiness. They help a Leprechaun find his way home, and get a lost engagement ring back to its owner. Both unwitting humans and Fairy Folk work together to save nearby woodland from development. From arranging a litter-pick in the woods to finding a new wand for the Fairy Queen, it is a busy life for the Fairy Folk.*

## **CHAPTER 1: GLODWYN THE GNOME**





The factory car park overlooked Bracken Lea Wood, separated by a low wall. Once over the wall it was possible to slip and slide down the slope between the trees to the woods proper, or walk alongside the wall until the land became flatter, and it was easier to follow the pathways deep into the heart of the ancient woodland.

Too small to be called a forest, Bracken Lea is, nonetheless, a fair sized wood, with a character all of its own. "A place of Magic", thought Glodwyn, the elemental, as he sat beneath the Silver Birch; "but I'm losing my touch ...". His job was to care for the earth, but he had got too involved with the world of humans, spending too much time playing tricks in the factory.

Only this morning, the Green Lady and the Fairy Queen had spoken to him about it. The Green Lady had threatened him with the Green Man. They were both earth elementals like himself.

However, the Fairy Queen Astrid was of the element Air, and really Glodwyn didn't much like her. "Floating around up there," he thought, "instead of getting on with things ...".

She had got involved with his misbehaviour, because the Elements all had to work together for the good of all, and Glodwyn neglecting his duties had been brought to her attention by the Foxglove Fairy, who thought herself very important anyway.

Celandine, Glodwyn's best friend, was a Flower Fairy, and landed beside him, interrupting his daydream.

"You" she said, turning her little pert face up to him "will end up working below ground, if you don't buck up, and what on earth do you do all day in that human place?"

"I've got a human friend," said Glodwyn, much to Celandine's amazement. "He's called Walter, and he drives a stacker truck. I sit on his shoulder and put ideas into his head."

"What sort of ideas? Daft ones, I suppose!" retorted Celandine.

"WHAT ON EARTH!" exclaimed Glodwyn, jumping to his feet, whilst Celandine hovered just below the branches of the Silver Birch.

Mayhem had come to Bracken Lea Wood, with all the birds creating an enormous racket.

Blackbird was the loudest. "Human children! Human children! Trouble! Trouble! Trouble!"



Tommy Slade should have been at school, not stomping around the woods, flattening the buttercups, giving the Buttercup Fairies a headache and frightening poor Mrs. Hedgehog to death.

The pond in the middle of the woods was one of two. Tommy Slade was drawn to the still deep water, just as small boys have been drawn to water since time began.

After time spent throwing stones into the water, Tommy decided to make a raft.

Glodwyn and Celandine arrived just as disaster struck. The improvised raft floundered and the small boy was flung into the water.

On the orders of the Fairy Queen, the heron, who was under her control as part of the air Element, splashed down into the pond, flapping around until he managed to get a floating branch close enough for the boy to grasp.



The Green Lady was concerned. She knew a dead human would bring other humans tramping through her domain. There were few if any water elementals in Bracken Lea's ponds. They much preferred clear running water and waterfalls to dank still ponds. "Even otters won't live here" she thought in disgust. No help there, then.

"I'm going to get Walter!" Glodwyn yelled to Celandine. "Get the birds to keep making a fuss!"

"How can you get a human, you idiot?" replied the Fairy.

"Just do as I say and keep the birds noisy!" As he spoke, Glodwyn vanished from view.

---

Walter was eating a sandwich, sitting on the car park wall, swinging his legs, because he wasn't very tall.

Glodwyn whispered in Walter's ear over and over again: "A boy in trouble in the woods!"

Walter didn't know what made him look over his shoulder into the woods, or why he felt compelled to go there. The noise the birds were making drew him towards the pond, and soon he heard the boy's cries for help.

---

Tommy Slade was soon home again, safe and sound, and excited by his relieved father's promise to take him for swimming lessons.

Glodwyn helped the Buttercup Fairies to straighten up their flowers.

Celandine curled up and went to sleep. She had had enough excitement for one day.

Heron roosted by the nearby canal, keeping a low profile. "I'm too old for all this rescuing, give me a peaceful life any day" were his sentiments.

The Green Lady wondered why the Green Man was never around when he was needed.

Astrid the Fairy Queen sat on her throne of moss and wood sorrel and tried to look beautiful.

Walter went back to work on his stacker truck, and had no time to finish his sandwich.



The End

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[Wesley Tallant](#)

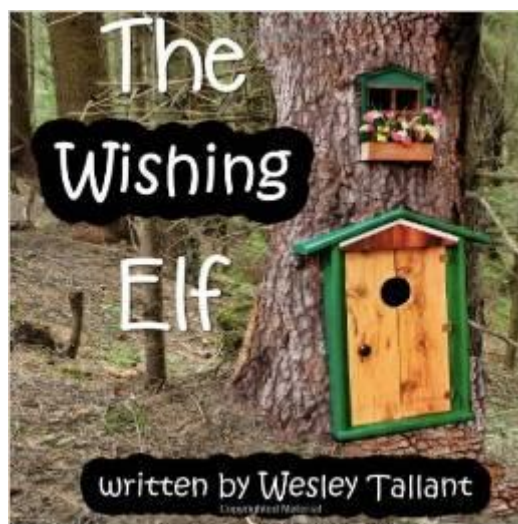


Wesley Tallant is a retired firefighter from Blossom, Texas. He writes novels of the American West, and is the author of “*The Wishing Elf*”, illustrated by Jonathan Paul Conder, and “*Little Big Toe*” which he illustrated himself.

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Wesley-Tallants-Author-Page/484791544922209?fref=ts>

<https://www.linkedin.com/pub/wesley-tallant/55/2a8/704>

<http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/wesleytallant>



***The Wishing Elf:***

[http://www.amazon.com/Wishing-Elf-Wesley-Tallant-ebook/dp/B00C8UX76E/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076647&sr=1-2&keywords=wesley+tallant](http://www.amazon.com/Wishing-Elf-Wesley-Tallant-ebook/dp/B00C8UX76E/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076647&sr=1-2&keywords=wesley+tallant)

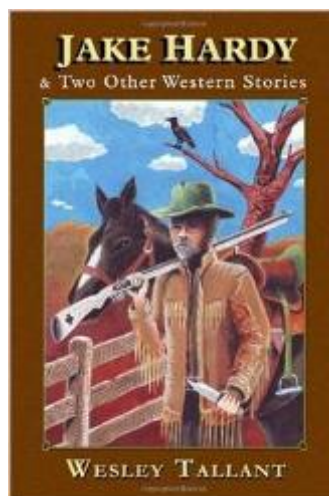
*Little Andrea is on her way to meet her grandfather for the first time. While visiting him, she is told a story of a magical tree that grows in grandpa's front yard. The tree is the home of the Wishing Elves. An elf named Peter lives there and she spends her entire visit searching for him. But she has to leave before she finds him. A bad accident befalls Andrea on the way home and it is Grandpa who needs a wish granted.*



### ***Little Big Toe***

[http://www.amazon.com/Little-Big-Toe-Wesley-Tallant-ebook/dp/B00G4MM1NM/ref=sr\\_1\\_7?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076647&sr=1-7&keywords=wesley+tallant](http://www.amazon.com/Little-Big-Toe-Wesley-Tallant-ebook/dp/B00G4MM1NM/ref=sr_1_7?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076647&sr=1-7&keywords=wesley+tallant)

*The story of an Indian boy who is pure hearted and called upon to be the guardian of the secluded valley where his village lies. Little Big Toe lives in a secluded valley with his tribe. With the peaceful surroundings, he leads a wonderful life. One day Little Wolf, the village story teller, approaches Little Big Toe and tells him it is time. Little Big Toe is being called upon to fulfil his destiny, a deed that will assure his tribe continuing peace and prosperity.*



### ***Jake Hardy***

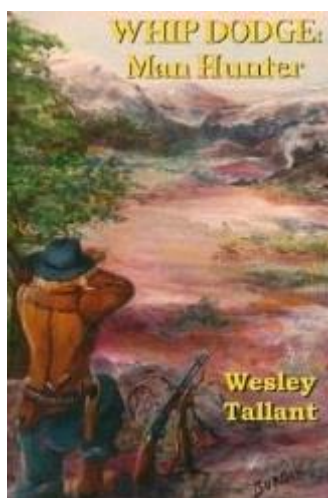
[http://www.amazon.com/Jake-Hardy-Barnes-Adventure-Begins/dp/160563784X/ref=sr\\_1\\_8?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076647&sr=1-8&keywords=wesley+tallant](http://www.amazon.com/Jake-Hardy-Barnes-Adventure-Begins/dp/160563784X/ref=sr_1_8?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076647&sr=1-8&keywords=wesley+tallant)

Review by Debbie Hocking:

*"Jake is dying of cancer. This book is about his journey to where he would like to die. Wesley Tallant wrote this book as an uplifting memoir of a brave, and honorable cowboy, a great rendition of the True Cowboy. He meets many different characters on his journey. His Indian friends, soldiers, women and children are all interesting characters and the action is good. I loved the ending and the epilogue. I finished the book a little sad but joyful at the same time at the peace he had and the good lives his friends continued to live.*



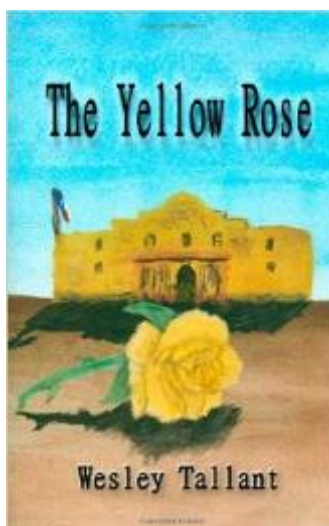
*"I recommend this book for all ages. It is a wonderful story of life in the old west."*



***Whip Dodge: Man Hunter***

[http://www.amazon.com/Whip-Dodge-Hunter-Wesley-Tallant-ebook/dp/B004HKJ7VC/ref=sr\\_1\\_10?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076647&sr=1-10&keywords=wesley+tallant](http://www.amazon.com/Whip-Dodge-Hunter-Wesley-Tallant-ebook/dp/B004HKJ7VC/ref=sr_1_10?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076647&sr=1-10&keywords=wesley+tallant)

*Idaho Territory. A bank robbery and murder in the town of Eagle Rock prompts the town marshal to request the assistance of the legendary bounty hunter, Whip Dodge. A trek across the desert brings the murdering bank robbers to justice, but Whip soon finds that there is more afoot than just robbery and murder. An old enemy has surfaced and is trying to take over the valley for himself.*



***The Yellow Rose***

[http://www.amazon.com/Yellow-Rose-Wesley-Tallant-ebook/dp/B00D50MYC4/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076647&sr=1-4&keywords=wesley+tallant](http://www.amazon.com/Yellow-Rose-Wesley-Tallant-ebook/dp/B00D50MYC4/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076647&sr=1-4&keywords=wesley+tallant)

*In 1886, Bexar County rancher Mike Callahan goes for his yearly pilgrimage to honor the father he lost in the battle of the Alamo. While he is there on the fiftieth anniversary of the fall of the Alamo, his wife Rose is kidnapped. He leads a posse of men, including the county sheriff, in an attempt to rescue her. He is killed but questions soon arise as to who shot him. Intrigue and family betrayal follow Rose as*

she and her foreman, Dusty Hayes, strive to keep the ranch that Mike named after her, running.

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### **Michael Thal**



*The Legend of Koolura* was Michael's debut novel. This was shortly followed by *Goodbye Tchaikovsky*, the story of a deaf violinist. Two years later, *Koolura and the Mystery at Camp Saddleback* was published. What began as an impromptu story for his daughter blossomed into the Koolura Series, published by Solstice. He's currently working on the third instalment, *Koolura and the Mayans*.

Michael has master's degrees in Education from Washington University, St. Louis and California State University, Northridge. Previously a middle school teacher, after suffering from a severe hearing loss leaving him near deaf, Michael redefined himself to become an award winning writer

<http://www.michaelthal.com/>

[https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/1092108.Michael\\_Thal](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/1092108.Michael_Thal)

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<http://www.amazon.com/Michael->

[Thal/e/B003YSKCDK/ref=sr\\_tc\\_2\\_0?qid=1409077040&sr=1-2-ent](http://www.amazon.com/Michael-Thal/e/B003YSKCDK/ref=sr_tc_2_0?qid=1409077040&sr=1-2-ent)

### ***The Abduction of Joshua Bloom***

[http://www.amazon.com/Abduction-Joshua-Bloom-Michael-Thal-](http://www.amazon.com/Abduction-Joshua-Bloom-Michael-Thal-ebook/dp/B00KO2JCSU/ref=la_B003YSKCDK_1_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077153&sr=1-5)

[ebook/dp/B00KO2JCSU/ref=la\\_B003YSKCDK\\_1\\_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077153&sr=1-5](http://www.amazon.com/Abduction-Joshua-Bloom-Michael-Thal-ebook/dp/B00KO2JCSU/ref=la_B003YSKCDK_1_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077153&sr=1-5)





*A high school track star is abducted by aliens, explores strange worlds, uncovers genocide on a planetary scale, and is thrust into extraterrestrial politics that decides the fate of an Earth on the brink of war or unification.*

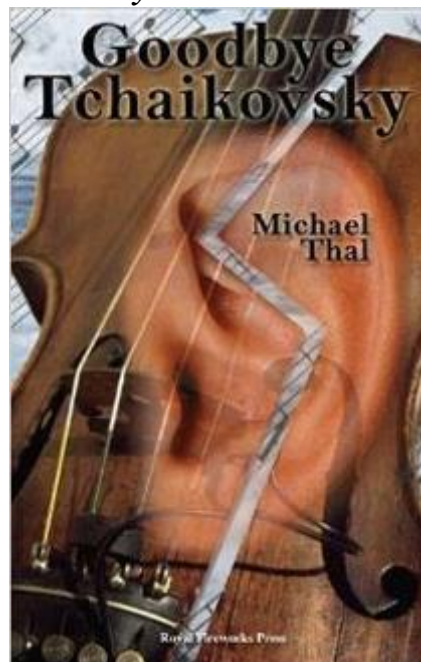
*The Abduction of Joshua Bloom tells the story of a teen abduction by an alien race who justifies their act in an attempt to save their people. Joshua finds himself in a world dominated by women, and men are subjugated to their whims. He travels to a dinosaur world, visits a water planet, and the alien home world doomed by a star about to nova.*

***Koolura and the Mystery at Camp Saddleback***

(book trailer <http://bit.ly/1jKliYg>)

[http://www.amazon.com/Koolura-Mystery-Camp-Saddleback-Book-ebook/dp/B00I0DQBBG/ref=la\\_B003YSKCDK\\_1\\_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077153&sr=1-3](http://www.amazon.com/Koolura-Mystery-Camp-Saddleback-Book-ebook/dp/B00I0DQBBG/ref=la_B003YSKCDK_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077153&sr=1-3)

Synopsis from ***Goodbye Tchaikovsky***:



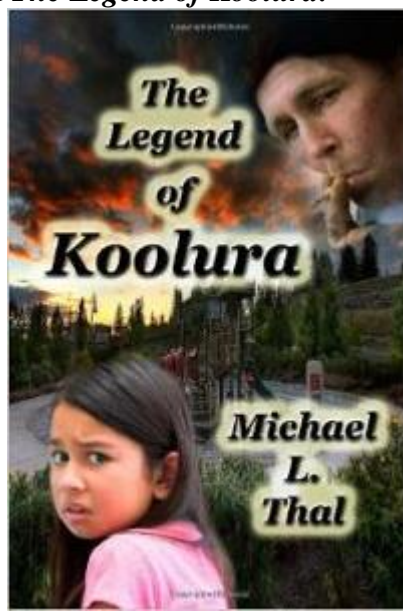
*David Rothman is an adolescent boy who had his future plotted out like a road map. As a violinist, he was one of the best in the world. One morning he wakes up deaf due to a genetic disorder. How will this 11 year-old boy cope with this silent disability? How will he communicate with his friends? What can he do about school?*

Video Trailer: <http://tinyurl.com/a8uc6tx>

<http://tinyurl.com/bh95ht7>

[http://www.amazon.com/Goodbye-Tchaikovsky-Novel-Michael-Thal/dp/0880924691/ref=la\\_B003YSKCDK\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077045&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Goodbye-Tchaikovsky-Novel-Michael-Thal/dp/0880924691/ref=la_B003YSKCDK_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077045&sr=1-1)

Synopsis and Excerpt from *The Legend of Koolura*:



*Koolura isn't an ordinary girl. She has what every child dreams. She has the COOL. Koolura has doubts about herself. She and her father have relocated so often she has few community ties. Here, at her new school, for the first time in her life she feels right at home. Koolura is a sixth grade Armenian girl and this story tells how she obtained the cool powers and gradually learns to use them. She has the ability to dematerialize at will and reappear where she chooses. She can move objects with her mind and she can even defy gravity! But will these powers be of any use in stopping a stalker intent on the destruction of Koolura and her friends? He's determined to retrieve Koolura's unrealized cool powers with the mysterious decoolerizer. The hour approaches for her final confrontation with her nemesis, the stalker believed to be responsible for her mother's death.*

Book Trailer: <http://tinyurl.com/a69ysgp>  
[http://www.amazon.com/Legend-Koolura-Michael-L-Thal-ebook/dp/B00I10USLW/ref=la\\_B003YSKCDK\\_1\\_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077153&sr=1-2](http://www.amazon.com/Legend-Koolura-Michael-L-Thal-ebook/dp/B00I10USLW/ref=la_B003YSKCDK_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409077153&sr=1-2)

### **Chapter One** **The Decoolerizer**

Neb shuffled past a middle school and into a wooded area. Relief from the noon sun by a canopy of trees strengthened his pace. Car horns honking along nearby US Route 44 drove him deeper into the darkening forest. A faint pulsating light drew him toward a huge oak tree knotted with age.

As Neb grew closer, he noticed a figure lying next to the tree. His head rested against roots bulging from the ground. He held a device resembling a small toy gun with a flare-ended barrel like the ones the Pilgrims had used. Neb approached carefully and squatted next to the man taking a closer peek. A grating inside the barrel covered the source of light he had seen from afar.

Neb scanned the sleeping figure. He looked more like a bag of bones than a human being. His paper white skin stretched over a body withered with age. Suddenly, eyelids popped open revealing the reddest eyes he'd ever seen.

*Those eyes are more blood shot than my worst hangover.*

The man raised his head to whisper, "This gun, it's evil." He rasped a cough of green phlegm. Then he continued in a more desperate voice. "Destroy it before it destroys you."

"Why? What does it do?" Neb asked.

"Decoolerizer. Takes a man's power... Makes empty shells."

Without blinking, the man's hollow eyes stared at Neb. He said: "Saps a man of all his Cool." After more explanation about the gun, the old man's eyes closed and his labored breathing stopped.

Neb grabbed the decoolerizer, stuffed it in his pant pocket, and walked toward Harmony, Rhode Island.

Every person I see that thinks he is so cool will be mine. He laughed.

Neb's first victim was a young businessman wearing an Armani suit crossing Harmony Boulevard.

He thinks he's so sophisticated sporting a fancy briefcase with matching leather shoes. All these rich guys are the same.

Hidden behind a white birch, Neb spit on the ground. Then he took the decoolerizer from his pocket and eyed it closely. The device had two triggers. The red trigger pulled Cool from its victim. The green one emptied the Cool into the body of a worthy soul. Whoever received a gun full of Cool would have unbelievable power. At least that was what Neb figured from the dying man's final words.

The drifter pointed the gun at the Armani guy. When Neb pulled the red trigger, the decoolerizer vibrated in his hand. A maroon beam pulsated from the gun. The light enveloped its victim, squeezing him like a sponge, then retracted its glow into the gun. After the Cool was absorbed, the man, looking like a zombie, collapsed in a puddle at the curb of the road.

Neb moved on. His next victim was a high school cheerleader dancing with pom-poms and yelling some ridiculous cheer as three friends looked on at a picnic bench in Waterman Park. After draining her, she was but a lifeless lump of flesh.

Her friends screamed, backing away in terror.

Neb laughed.

He stole Cool from a high school football star, a visiting celebrity, and owners of Beamers, Porsches, and other cool sports cars. Eventually a crowd formed pointing fingers in his direction as Neb crossed Harmony Blvd.

As the mob hurried after him, Neb huffed and puffed past boutiques, coffee shops, and fancy restaurants. He was determined to disappear back into the woods, but the weight of the gun slowed him down.

Who knew Cool could weigh so much? Gotta unload.

Fearful of using himself as the guinea pig, he decides to find a helpless victim. So when he passed Harmony Memorial Hospital, he got a brilliant idea.

I'll crawl through that side window, unload the Cool into a patient, and then come back later to pick it up.

He lifted the window, placed the decoolerizer onto the radiator, and then boosted himself through the open space and onto the linoleum floor.

On a nearby bed lay a woman smiling at her infant daughter. Hearing the commotion, she looked up, and screamed at the unkempt man before her.

Neb grabbed the gun and engaged the red trigger. Like his other victims, her body withered and died when drained of Cool. Then, he pointed the gun at the baby, who stared at him with innocent brown eyes.

Neb pulled the green trigger.

Turquoise light flowed from the decoolerizer and swaddled the infant. The light pulsed and bathed the baby tickling her while she cooed happily.

After the gun was drained, the baby stared at Neb, this time with shining green eyes. Her brow knitted and her eyes narrowed.

Neb stepped back.

What kind of monster have I created?

He couldn't wait around to find out. From the open window, the noise of the mob had grown louder. He thrust the now lighter decoolerizer into his back pocket, and escaped the room, fleeing down the hospital corridor.

Out the backdoor of the building, he slipped in a puddle and sprawled onto his butt.

Crack!

He pulled a damaged decoolerizer from his pocket.

Damn.

The approaching footsteps rattled his nerves. Back on his feet, he scooted behind the garbage dump, around the hospital rear, and into a wooded area.

Eleven years later, Neb hid behind another building as a beautiful child with green eyes walked across Glendale Ave holding her father's hand.

*Now it's time I get back what is rightfully mine.*

## ***Chapter Two***

### ***The Deception***

Crack! Wood collided with rawhide. Sixth grader, Koolura Akopyan, turned at the sound.

A boy wearing a blue Dodger cap called out, "Hey, Koolura, what's up?"

She raised her arm and slapped the brisk autumn air. "Hey, Stephan."

It was a beautiful Saturday morning in Glendale's Oceanview Park. Koolura inhaled the scent of pine trees and scanned the area. Bike paths twisted and looped around the low growing trees and smooth boulders. She liked this view. It overlooked Bethune Elementary, her new school. To the west, the usual yellow smog hung over Santa Monica Beach.

Keli, a black Labrador, trotted next to her. Sunlight flickered through the trees and warmed the dog's shiny black coat. The maroon nylon leash slackened between the pair as they sauntered along the pavement. Linda and her gang hadn't arrived.

The canopy of leaves blocked the daylight as Koolura and Keli walked along the path. "Linda said she'd meet me here, girl," Koolura said to her dog. "I just wish I knew why. She certainly didn't seem too happy when she bumped into me in the cafeteria yesterday at lunch. Spilled all my food then ran off laughing."

Keli pulled the leash taut and growled as they walked by dead trees. A crow cawed from a leafless branch that reached toward her like the bony fingers of a witch.

A chill ran down Koolura's neck. "Come on, girl, let's get out of here. This place gives me the creeps." Koolura glanced over her shoulder and quickened her steps as if Jason from the Halloween movies was chasing her.

Suddenly, from behind the shrubbery leaped three girls, about Koolura's age. Keli barked and yanked at her leash. Koolura stumbled and fell on the concrete. Blood spilled from a gash in her knee.

Keli barked again. Her bared teeth dripped saliva.

Koolura got to her feet, her face red with anger and embarrassment. "Are you guys crazy? This dog could rip you to shreds."

"Sorry." Linda brushed her hair indifferently from her brown eyes and twisted her lips in a sneer. "Can't you take a joke?"

"Is that what this is all about?" Koolura glared at Linda. "Trying to make me the butt of your jokes in front of your friends?"

The shorter of the two girls blushed bright pink and fixed her eyes at her tennis shoes. The taller one tugged on the edges of her tight shorts, a leather purse hung over her shoulder.

Linda's hands balled into fists beside her cutoff jeans. "Stop trying to take over all the kids in school."

"You go, girl," the tall girl goaded.

"Come on. Ani, Margaret, let's go."

The trio ran, swinging their arms in the air as if they were on a roller coaster at Magic Mountain. Their laughter sounded like primates at Griffith Park Zoo.

Koolura watched, mouth agape. She pulled her hair into a tight braid and let go. Nasty little monkeys.

Keli's leash slackened as they plodded toward the incline. Koolura's shoulders slumped and her hair hung across her face. Keli's tail dragged behind her.

Standing near the southwest corner of the park was a yellow bulldozer. A sign on a chain-link fence read: Doggie Park Opening This Spring.

"See, girl. A park just for you." Keli's tail swished through the air creating a breeze that floated by Koolura's tanned legs.

The pair walked the path around the park. Her school sprawled to her right like toy building blocks. It seemed small from up high.

"You know what, Keli? I like this place a lot better than San Jose. The only thing I don't like is Linda and her friends." She breathed the scent of freshly mowed grass.

A loud shrill noise came from around the bend. Koolura looked up to see Ani and Margaret racing across the field screaming for help.

A tingling sensation scampered down Koolura's spine. In her mind she could see Linda had fallen over the edge of the cliff and now clung precariously to a small bush growing out from the side of the cliff.

Koolura ran to the cement wall and looked over the ledge to see Linda holding on for dear life and whimpering.

"Keli, stay." She unclipped the dog's leash and tied it to the post of a chest-high fence lining the steep embankment.

She threw the leash to Linda. "Catch."

It didn't reach. Short by four inches.

Linda cried, "I'm gonna fall."

Koolura grabbed the nylon leash and slowly lowered herself to Linda's shrub. She breathed through her mouth to avoid the dust and smell of dirt. Then she looked down. Her vision swam and her stomach went into freefall. She took another deep breath. I can do this.

With one hand grasping the leash and her feet planted in the dirt, Koolura extended her arm. "Grab my hand."

"I'm afraid," Linda said.

"So am I. But grab it anyway."

As Linda tugged at the bush, its roots began to pull free from the dirt.

"Oh my God." Tears streamed from Linda's eyes.

*Please don't let her die.* Koolura extended her hand and said, "Grab it, Linda. Now!"

Linda let go of the bush and seized Koolura's hand.

*Give me the strength to help her.*

She wrenched on Linda's arm as if she were a rag doll and heaved her onto the ledge.

Sweat poured from Koolura's brow and into her eyes as she dragged herself back up onto level ground. She embraced the course fence, crawled under it, and toppled onto the grass.

Koolura leaned against the fencepost. Salty sweat fell from her nose onto her mouth.

Nearby, Linda curled up in a ball. Tears slid down her reddened cheeks. Her chest heaved.

Koolura arched her neck. A man with huge biceps stretching his white T-shirt strode quickly toward them followed by Ani and Margaret.

"What happened here?" He took off his cap and wiped his forehead with a white handkerchief pulled from his jeans.

Koolura told the man the story as she gazed at the shamed expression on Linda's face. She knew she was wrong. The embarrassment was real. *I think there's hope for her yet.* As she rattled on with the story, it was like watching a movie she'd seen. She couldn't believe what had just happened. Where did I get the strength to toss her like that?

The man looked at Koolura, smiled and said, "You're a very brave girl." Nodding toward Linda, he continued, "I still don't understand how you fell over the fence."

Linda said, "I wanted to show Ani and Margaret how brave I was. How I could walk on the fence without falling."

"Pretty reckless thing to do, little girl." The man's tanned face wrinkled into a frown as he spoke to Linda. "I hope you learned your lesson."

Linda nodded. With a weak voice she said, "I'll never do that again."

"I hope not." The man turned and strolled back toward the ball field.

Koolura brushed dirt from her jeans and top and retrieved Keli's leash from the post. She followed Linda and her friends as they walked away from the edge of the cliff.

"You saved my life, Koolura," Linda said. "Why did you do it after I was so mean to you?"

Koolura answered with a shrug.

"I was so terrible to you."

"Yes, you were," Koolura agreed. "But that doesn't mean I can't hope you'll be my friend."

The three girls looked at each other, and glanced at Keli, who stopped to scratch her ear. Margaret, the tallest girl, and Linda, bent to pet the dog.

Finally, Ani whispered, "The other kids were right."

Koolura examined Ani. Her skin was like hers, the color of milk and coffee. It glowed in the late morning sunlight. "About what?" she asked.

“You really are cool.”

The girls rounded the corner to Rutland Road and Keli discovered some cigarette butts drilled into the earth.

“Who would smoke so much?” Koolura asked taking a butt from Keli’s mouth.

“Gross!” the girls screeched.

Suddenly, Koolura became dizzy as a shadowy image of a vagrant loomed in her mind. He was a tall, thin man with a scraggly beard, long greasy hair, and he wore ratty clothes.

Koolura gasped. She knew who this man was. He had stalked her all her life. The man her father feared more than death itself. And he was right here in Glendale.

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## **B. Well**



Bridget was born and raised on the Jersey Shore, and her love of the ocean inspired her writing from a very young age. She also loves traveling, exploring, English novels, and live music. She began writing *The Sandcastle People* after spending a summer helping children develop better reading skills, and continues in the same line of work today.

<http://bridgetwell.weebly.com/>

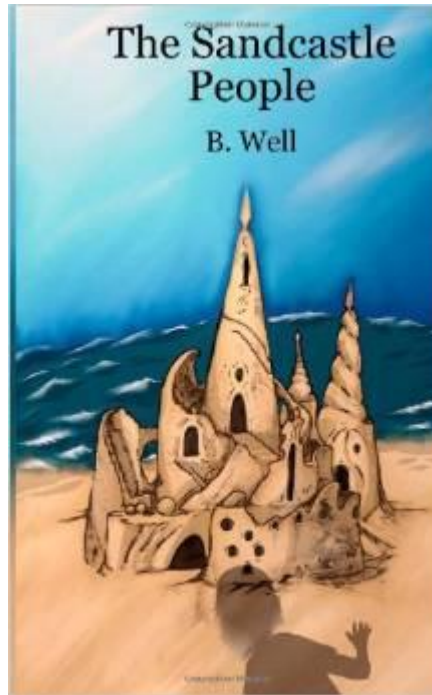
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### Synopsis of *The Sandcastle People*

*Even though Melody Dover has always wanted a house, she is not excited about moving to a new state to get one. But when she stumbles across an extraordinary sandcastle on the beach near her home, everything changes. Built by people who sail around the world building such places, the sandcastle gives Melody a chance to see a world unlike anything she has ever known. Accidentally shrunk down to size by a young apprentice, she is quickly welcomed by the builders, and is enchanted by their carefree, almost magical ways and strange way of seeing the world. When a storm approaches and the castle faces inevitable doom, Melody chooses to join them on their ship bound for new lands. The fierce waves and dangerous games the people play on the water, including chasing sharks, make Melody feel a little uneasy about her decision. But as she grows more homesick, she also faces the difficult decision of which home is really hers: the one with her family, or the familiar one she left behind. Filled with adventure, danger, and magic, “The Sandcastle People” will take young readers on an unforgettable voyage through the unfamiliar, from a magnificent sandcastle to the treacherous oceans, all the way up to the stars.*

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[Gary Winstead](#)



Gary Winstead, the youngest of eleven children, was born in 1948 and grew up in Pontiac, Illinois, an obscure farm town in the middle of the Illinois Corn Belt. At the age of eighteen, he joined the United States Marine Corps and served for four years, rising to the rank of corporal (E-4) before earning his honorable discharge. He went on to receive a bachelor's degree in physical education, a master's in educational administration from California State University, Fullerton and a PhD in Veterinary Science. He has been married to Faye, the love of his life, for forty-five years and has three stepchildren, all grown, and four grandchildren.

He is the author of **So You Want to be a Marine**.

<http://savingliteracy.blogspot.com/>

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/gwinstead>

[http://www.amazon.com/So-You-Want-Be-Marine-ebook/dp/B00KVIV780/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076320&sr=1-1&keywords=gary+winstead](http://www.amazon.com/So-You-Want-Be-Marine-ebook/dp/B00KVIV780/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1409076320&sr=1-1&keywords=gary+winstead)

#### Review and excerpt from **So You Want to be A Marine**



Amazon Reviewer:

*"As a female, I hesitated at the thought of reading a book that talks about Marine life. What I found was an amazingly well written, captivating, true story about a young boy's journey into manhood. All those wives, sisters and mothers who wondered what their husband, brother(s), or son(s) have experienced will now know first hand, the trials and tribulations that they had to endure to be a part of the Marine Corps. Have you ever wondered if they treated your loved one fairly? Did you ever consider the personalities of those in charge? Could you even imagine the*

*inequities, and unjustified punishments that may have occurred? The conversational tone of this anecdotal book is easy to draw you in as if you were sitting next to Gary having a cup of coffee. Each chapter makes you want to read the next one.*

*"From the viewpoint of an older woman, the only knowledge we have of the military is what we see from the advertisements on television. Gary opens our eyes to tell all about how it really is, and spares no kindnesses where they weren't deserved. Gary tells the story of what he had to endure from Boot Camp to the many destinations in which he was deployed. Along the way, his own personality is revealed, along with his personal life experiences that would make any female love the romantic side of him. He shares with us the finding of the love of his life, which adds another dimension of interest to his story. This is a great read for any woman who has a loved one in the military."*

Pontiac is an obscure farm town in the middle of the Illinois Corn Belt. The town, really just a few buildings surrounded by corn, is also the county seat and has a population of around 10,000, including the prison. It also holds the distinction of being the third largest county in the state. Its other minor claim to fame: a movie named "Grandview USA" starring Jamie Lee Curtis was filmed there.

Two events stood out which were the highlight of life in this minimal spotlight, desperate town. The duck races on the Vermillion River held every summer using plastic ducks, and the Threshermen's Reunion.

Local towns folk would show up with their favorite bathtub toy, agree the weather was lousy, and the water too rough. Then the race would start with everyone throwing their ducks in the water and jumping into their dust covered battered trucks and rusted out cars. They would speed over the bridge to the old folk's home down river, and applaud with glee as their favorite duck made it to shore.

The Threshermen's Reunion always started with a Labor Day Parade up Mill Street. It was called Mill Street, well, because a mill at one time ground corn using the water power from the dam. It was that dam, and a flood, which almost drowned me at age five, saved by one Tommy Greenwood, but then a future Marine is hard to kill, yes?

Not to be confused with the small dam near the Palomar restaurant, this was the big dam, and the water was so high, a newcomer would not have known a ten foot drop off was normal there. With my dear oldest sister Tara's nose buried in a book (she was charged with watching me), I slipped off and walked the mile to the dam. The turbulent, swirling froth was so mesmerizing I took an unceremonious nose dive, having been unsupervised, into the water and it was Tommy who mustered the courage to wade in and pull me to safety.

The old timers, most all of whom were farmers, would crank up the old steam engines and rattle up the two lane boulevard from Reynolds Street to the intersection of Mill and Main. Every now and then they would pull on the steam whistle and everyone would cheer. They always reminded me of steel dinosaurs on the prowl looking for sustenance, as they rumbled north.

After the parade they would hold four days of shows in combination with the local FFA and 4-H Clubs, at the 4-H Park situated on Airport Rd. My brother, the highway patrolman, would fly his radar plane off the grass covered runway next door. It was summer; the furnaces were off, and not in need of stoking, so Pappy and I would haul four hundred pound blocks of ice we loaded on a truck at the Pontiac Ice and Fuel Company, to the venders located in the Park. The parade is still called the Threshermen's, and it is a reunion but it is now held on its own Central States

Threshermen's Park off Route 23, a few miles north of I-55, next to the Pontiac landfill.

Sometimes Pappy would give me thirty minutes to wander up and down the three aisles of homemade bread and livestock pens, before heading back to the ice house to pull out more human sized blocks of frozen water. To say the least, life was boring to the point of tears. Just how much fishing and hunting could I do during the four months of decent weather? Corn and soybeans were the predominant crop and the land was as flat as my cousin Tootie's chest, except for the Cayuga Ridge crest, which just served to frustrate the citizen band radio operators of the day.

The lone high school was Pontiac Township and we were then, (and still are), the Pontiac Indians of, yep, you guessed it, the Corn Belt Conference.

Excerpt from new story *Diablo Blanco*

Larry and Cutter, the farriers, had just finished the second of a dozen head they had planned to work their magic on one Saturday morning. The mist of the coastal marine layer was slowing burning off to expose a typical California summer day. The two friends had arrived at dawn to beat the crowds and heat of summer in the land of perpetual sunshine and hippies.

The early morning California mist had found them at the gates of the Irvine Ranch Stables tucked strategically between the Pacific Ocean and the Five Freeway. After the attendant waved the duo through, they set up in their usual spot in the designated shoers-only working area.

The Irvine ranch was just that: a large functioning cattle ranch that had once been the center of Orange County living for over a century. The managers of Irvine saw the value in establishing a working relationship with the local townsfolk as civilization gobbled up the land around the ranch, so a partnership had been formed. The city ran the stables on land unusable for livestock or commercial flora, donated by the Irvine Company.

The stable had flourished in the white bread community of Irvine and with the horses came jobs, one of which was keeping owners' horses shod. The quiet of the morning would soon be breached by the arrival of a pleasant looking lady in a brand new two horse rig equipped with the best money could buy.

Larry and Cutter were traditionalists in the farrier community. They had a hand-cranked forge capable of turning cold steel into white hot lava when it was necessary to weld a bar shoe. Both took pride in the fact they were the last of a breed that still made their own shoes.

Prudence and economics allowed them to buy bar stock from the local racing plate company; manufacturer of racing plates for the track. The stock was precut to length, saving them the arduous task of cutting the ten foot long stock into usable bars. When a shoe was needed they would heat up the bar stock, turn it and punch the holes, finally cutting it to fit the horse's foot, not the other way as some shoers were known to do. Today's Farriers use pre-made shoes mostly from Japan and have replaced the bituminous coal in favor of propane stoves, eliminating at least thirty minutes from the shoeing time.

Larry was hand cranking the forge with black smoke billowing skyward as the shiny new truck and trailer pulled to a stop a few feet away. The lady that stepped out reeked of money and privilege and Cutter just knew the day was not going to end well.

"You boys have a moment to help me" - this was a statement not a question.

"How can we help you?" Larry asked

“My daughter’s horse threw its front shoe and we have a jumping competition at Lake Forrest this morning. I was hoping you had time to put it on for me.”

Not suspecting anything untoward Larry nodded and told the lady to bring the horse over to the shoeing area.

The Mrs. unloaded a white skinned pink eyed muscular gelding standing about sixteen and a half hands. The shoers were young, the morning quiet and the lady elegant, in a deceptive sort of way, so they both missed the signs. The first tip should have been why the lady would stop here to have a shoe replaced when there would be an on-call farrier at the horse show she was currently attending. Another was the pink eyes of the horse. Normally pink eyes mean trouble from a cowboy’s perspective and today would be no different.

Mrs. Elegant stood by holding the lead rope as Larry walked up, shoeing box in hand, and reached for the gelding’s left front leg. It would prove to be fortuitous this was a front foot and not a back one this day. As Larry squeezed the sensory ligament running the length of the cannon bone the white gelding reared up on both hind feet and pawed the air.

A good shoer is always cautious around a new horse and it was this caution that saved Larry from harm. As the horse reared, Larry stepped to the side and out of the reach of the striking horse. The owner holding the lead let it slide to its full ten foot length and stepped aside as well, as if knowing what was coming.

“Anything you want to tell us about your horse, Lady?” Larry said with a pinch of anger in his voice and a pinched smile on his lips.

“Well, he does tend to be just a little difficult to shoe sometimes.”

Larry shook his head and reached in to grab the leg a second time. The white horse reared and struck the air with an even more violent stroke as if to say, touch me and die.

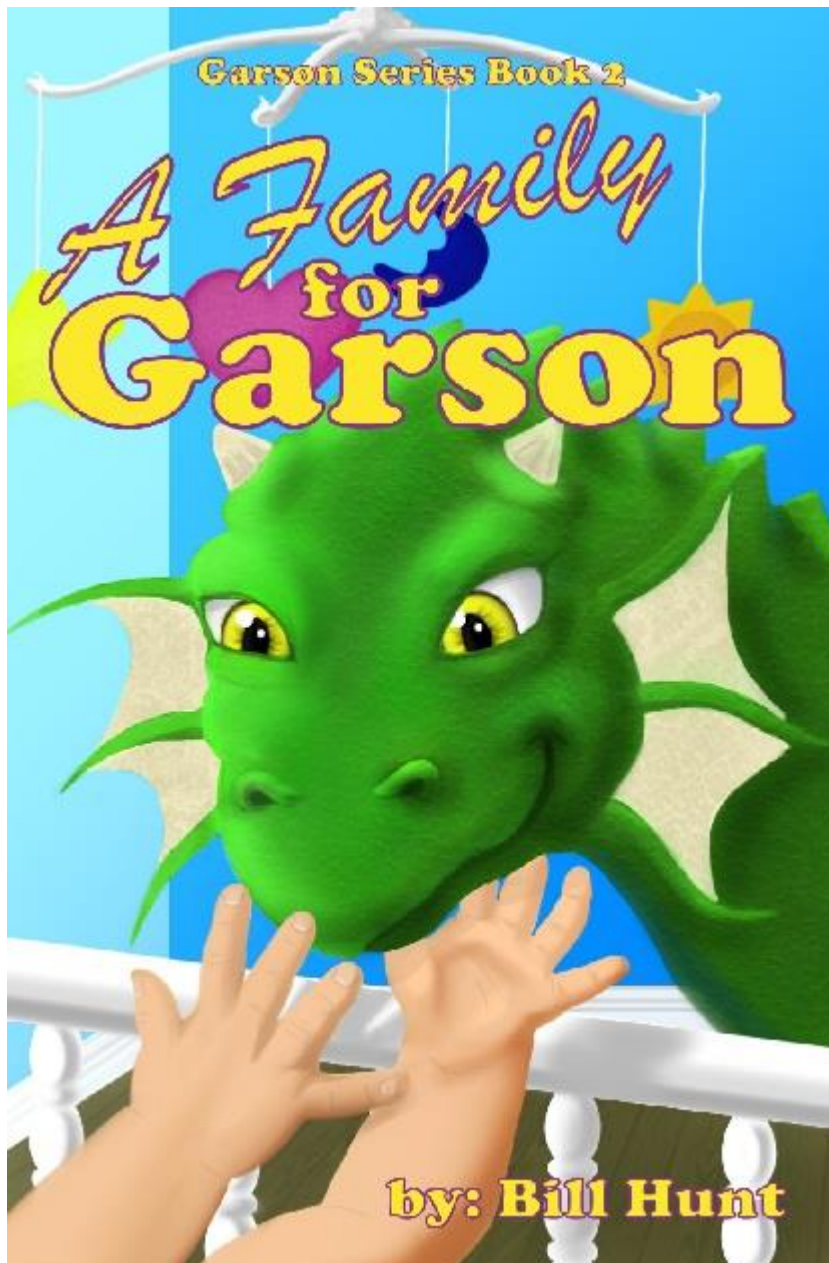
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Synopsis and excerpt From: ***A FAMILY FOR GARSON***

By [Bill Hunt](#)

Published by Crimson Cloak Publishing



*Garson, the mischievous, wish-granting dragon is back: along with friends Richard, Nan, Debbie and Tina. But all is not well in Garson's world! The villainous Dr. David Simpson is still lurking about; and when a second pair of prying eyes enter the picture, Garson's world is forever changed! New laughs and adventures await you in **A Family for Garson**, book 2 in the Garson Series by Bill Hunt*

### **Chapter Five**

*Richard's Journal: January 6*

Dear diary: I finally have a few minutes to sit down and write something! Things have been extremely busy around here since Christmas.

First of all, Debbie and I came down with the flu a few days after Christmas. We were both confined to our houses for several days. Then, just as we were getting better, Nan came down with the bug. That would have been bad enough by itself; but the flu quickly progressed into pneumonia and Nan had to be hospitalized.

She was cleared to be released from the hospital the afternoon of Sunday the fourth, but ended up having to stay one more day because of a snowstorm. A full

twelve inches of the white stuff fell, starting late Saturday night. By Sunday afternoon, even the main roads were impassable.

We were finally able to get Nan back to her place on Monday. She was still pretty weak. Debbie and I helped her upstairs to her bedroom. Debbie stayed the night, just in case Nan needed anything, and I promised to be back early on the sixth to help Debbie take down the Christmas decorations.

We were on the sun porch Tuesday morning, taking down the tree, when Debbie suddenly stopped.

"What's that?" she asked, pointing at something behind me.

I turned around to look.

"It's a door," I said, chuckling. "It has been there for years. Are you just now noticing it?"

Debbie frowned. "Not the door, silly. I mean what is that on the door?"

I took another glance.

"I don't see anything," I said.

"Not on the big door," Debbie said, growing frustrated. "What is that piece of paper there on the storm door?"

That is when I saw it: a glossy, multicolored flyer taped to the storm door glass.

"I have no idea," I said while walking over to take a closer look. "Better find out, though."

Nan rarely uses the sun porch entrance; all of her friends know to come to the back door.

Wind-blown snow from the recent storm had piled up against the base of the storm door. I had to shove hard to push the door open even a few inches to allow me to reach around and retrieve the paper. I then pulled the storm door back and locked it again.

I took a few seconds to scan the paper.

"It's just a flyer for the Trail Troopers' annual candy sale," I said, handing the paper to Debbie.

The Trail Troopers are an organization for young girls between the ages of 8 and 16. As the name implies, they spend a great deal of time outdoors doing things like hiking and camping. The annual candy sale is their big fund raiser. Right after the calendar turns the page into the New Year, you can count on a Trail Trooper to ring your doorbell pushing pre-packaged sweets. It's as dependable as clockwork. I, personally, have a weakness for their Turtle Nut Surprise treats. Yummy!

"Hang on to that paper," I told Debbie. "I may want to order something when we're done with this tree."

Debbie ignored me, continuing to read the paper.

"Richard," she said after a moment or two, "listen to this. 'My name is Amanda Barber and I'm with Trail Trooper Troop 403. Would the person who lives here please call me as soon as possible at the number listed below? It is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT that you call me.'"

"Yeah, so what?" I said, putting a hand-crafted ornament carefully into a box. "The kid wants to sell candy."

Debbie glared at me, her hands on her hips. "Richard, isn't it possible that she saw something? Something she was not supposed to see?"

"Like what?" I asked.

"Like that!" Debbie shouted, pointing to the nest where both Tina and Garson were curled up, watching our tree dis-assembling show.



I shook my head. "Not a chance, Deb. It took three years before Garson let me see him. You can bet your life that as soon as those dragons heard that kid coming up the steps, they went invisible."

Debbie should have been a lawyer: her mind worked quickly and with devastating logic.

"Richard, there is a foot of snow on the ground. The sidewalk, steps and outside floor are made out of stone. The dragons would not have heard her coming!"

I had not thought of that. Weakly, I tried to object to Debbie's reasoning. "But, they would have disappeared when she knocked."

"And what if she didn't knock?" Debbie asked flatly.

"But Trail Troopers always knock," I whimpered.

"Normally, yes, they do. But suppose, just suppose, she walked up those steps, undetected; looked through the window and saw Garson and Tina?"

I was speechless.

"You're going to have to call her, Richard."

"Yeah," I said, reaching for my cell phone. "I suppose you're right."

"Not now!" Debbie said, shaking her head. "It's a school day. You are going to have to wait until later this afternoon."

Wait till later this afternoon. I looked at my watch: it was 10:30. I had about 5 ½ hours before I could reasonably expect to speak to Ms. Barber. That is a very long time to wait; especially when you are afraid of what you might learn.

We finished taking down the tree around noon and stored it away in the attic along with the rest of the decorations. Nan met us at the bottom of the attic stairs when we finished.

"I think I'm well enough to go downstairs today if you will give me a little assistance," she said.

Before I could say a word, Debbie spoke up. "You might feel sick all over again when we tell you what we found this morning, Nan." Then she told her about the Trail Trooper find.

Surprisingly, Nan took the news calmly.

"Well, no use worrying about it until we find out what the young lady knows." With that, she turned and headed for the stairway. Debbie directed me to go down the stairs ahead of Nan. "That way, if she falls, she'll land on something soft!"

When we reached the bottom of the stairs I tried to steer Nan toward the kitchen, but she pulled away.

"I'm going to the sun porch. I haven't seen Garson, or Tina, for almost a week. I've never been away from him that long in my life."

"But it's cold out there on the porch," I objected.

"So turn the heat up, or get me a blanket; but I am going out to the sun porch!"

"I'll get the afghan from the living room," Debbie said. "When you get to the porch, help Nan onto the couch. Don't let her sit in one of those cold, plastic chairs."

The dragons heard us talking and they both waddled out to greet us. Garson spread his wings, as if he intended to fly up on to Nan's shoulders; but I stopped him.

"Please, don't do it, Garson," I said, holding up my right hand. "Nan's still a little weak."

Garson obediently folded his wings and crawled over to us. He rubbed his small, scaly head against Nan's leg.

Nan reached down and patted Garson's side. "I missed you, too, Garson. And how are you, Tina?"

Tina raised her head and made a sound similar to that of a cooing dove. Nan smiled. "Glad to hear it! Shall we all go back to the sun porch?"

The dragons turned and led the way. Once on the porch, I eased Nan onto the couch. As soon as she was seated, the dragons jumped up onto the couch with her. Garson sat at her right side; Tina sat in her lap.

Nan smiled contentedly. "This is better than any medicine they gave me in that hospital," she said.

Debbie brought the afghan. "You'll have to move, Tina. I want to put this on Nan's legs."

"Tina's fine just where she is," Nan said firmly. "Put that thing around my shoulders, I'll be fine."

Debbie did as she was instructed.

"Now," Nan said, "let me see that paper you found."

I retrieved the flyer and handed it to Nan. She studied it carefully for several minutes.

"Well, there really is only one thing to do," she said, handing the paper back to me.

"What's that," I asked anxiously.

"Put me down for four boxes of Mini Mints. Garson loves those things."

I was dumbfounded. "No, Nan! What about the note?"

"I already told you there is no sense in worrying about that until we find out what the young lady knows! If she didn't see anything, you will have spent the whole day worrying about nothing!"

"But what if she did see them?" I asked, pointing to the dragons.

Nan shrugged. "I guess we'll have to figure out something. Until then, I'm not going to worry about it. Debbie, is there any soup in the pantry? I do believe I finally have an appetite again!"

I was glad to see Nan returning to her old self. That eased the knot in my stomach a little bit. A little bit, but not much. Time plodded by slowly. I finally readied to make the call a little after 4 p.m.

"Here goes," I said to Nan and Debbie. "Let's hope for the best." I dialed the number. I heard it ring three times, and then:

"Hello?"

"Um, yes, I'm trying to reach Amanda Barber?"

"This is Amanda."

"Hi, Amanda. My name is Richard Peterson. I found one of your Trail Trooper flyers on my door with a note saying that it was 'extremely important' that I call you."

"Do you live in that big, yellow house out in the country?" she asked.

"Yes, I do," I answered. (Technically, we had not moved in yet, but there was no sense in bringing that up just now.)

There was silence on the other end of the phone. Normally, I would have thought this 'awkward', but right now it was the greatest sound in the world! No questions about dragons!

"Listen, Amanda: I would like to order some candy if I can do that over the phone."

"Sure," I heard her say. "Let me get my order form and a pencil."

I could hear her rummaging through a drawer in search of the needed items. I decided to keep the conversation going. "So, how long have you been in the Trail Troopers?"

"This is my first year. I'm a fifth grader at Licking Heights Elementary School. The person who sells the most candy in our Troop gets a badge and a new sleeping bag! Right now I'm in 2nd place."

I was feeling better about this conversation with each passing minute!

"Well, Amanda, let's see if we can get you a little closer to those prizes! Do you have your order form yet?"

"Yep. I'm ready when you are!"

"Great! I'd like 2 boxes of Turtle Nut Surprise; 4 boxes of Mini Mints; and 2 boxes of Pecan Truffles."

"Let's see," I heard Amanda say. "That's a total of 8 boxes so far. If you add 2 more boxes, I can knock a dollar off the total price."

I was feeling positively euphoric by now. "Why not?" I said generously. "Give me two more boxes of Turtle Nut Surprise."

"Thank you, Mr. Peterson. This will take just a few more minutes. Would you please give me your full address and a phone number where I can reach you?"

I gave her the requested information.

"Thank you, sir! Now, let me get your total for you."

I heard her mumbling to herself as she worked out the calculations.

"O.K. Your total is going to be \$29.00. The candy is three dollars a box; you bought ten boxes, and I took off a dollar: that equals \$29.00."

"Sounds good to me," I said. "When will my order be ready?"

"Well," Amanda said, "the candy sale goes thru the second week of February. We should be ready to distribute the orders by the first or second week of March."

"That will be great," I said. "Is there anything else?"

"No, that's pretty much it. Oh, wait! There is one other thing."

"What's that?" I asked happily.

"Where did you get the dragons?"

My heart skipped two full beats.

"Hello? Mr. Peterson? Are you still there?"

"I'm here," I managed to croak in reply.

"I said where did you get the dragons?"

"What dragons?" I asked in a voice that would not have fooled a toddler.

"The two dragons that were on your sun porch. One of them was lying down in a Christmas wreath and the other one was under the Christmas tree."

My mind was racing. "Come on, Amanda! You know dragons aren't real," I offered, unconvincingly.

"I've got 6 pictures and a video on my cell phone that say that they are real, Mr. Peterson. I was getting ready to knock on your door when I saw the one in the wreath. 'That's a cool toy!' I thought. Then it moved and I realized it was alive. So I took some pictures and a video. When I finally did knock, they both disappeared. Nobody came to the door, so I left the note. I'm glad you called."

Dreading the answer, I asked, "How many people have you showed the pictures to, Amanda?"

"I haven't showed them to anyone."

I could not believe my ears. "What did you say?"

"I said I haven't showed them to anyone, Mr. Peterson. I don't really have many friends. I like science, so a lot of the kids at school think I'm weird. Mom started this Trail Trooper group hoping that would help, but it really hasn't worked out too well so far. Now, with her job, she doesn't have time for it anymore. We're disbanding after the candy drive."

“And you haven’t showed the pictures to your parents?”

“There are just me and Mom,” Amanda replied. “Like I said, Mom is always busy with her job and she usually asks me not to bother her. So I haven’t showed the pictures to anybody. Besides, I don’t want anybody else to know about the dragons: I just want to meet them.”

I could not believe what I was hearing. Here was a child who did not want to betray our secret; she just wanted in on it!

“How old are you, Amanda?” I asked.

“Twelve.”

“And what does your mother do for a living?”

“She’s a real estate agent.”

Things were starting to look up! “Amanda, I think we may be able to work something out. I need two things from you: I need your Mom’s phone number and I need your solemn promise that you won’t show those pictures to anyone.”

“Will I get to meet the dragons, then?” she asked.

“If you’ll do those two things I promise I will introduce you to the dragons.”

“Deal!” Amanda said. Then she gave me her mother’s cell number.

“Give me a day or two, Amanda, and I promise to get back to you.”

“Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Can I ask what their names are?”

“The male’s name is Garson and the female’s name is Tina.”

“You have a boy AND a girl dragon?” Amanda asked breathlessly.

“Yes I do.”

“That is SO cool!”

I smiled. “Yes it is, Amanda. It really is.”

Read more about Garson in the full copy of the book ‘A Family for Garson’ available via eBook and soft cover print ([www.crimsoncloakpublishing.com](http://www.crimsoncloakpublishing.com)).

*A Family for Garson* is book #2 in the Garson Series. Book One, *A Guardian for Garson*, will be available soon!

### **Bill Hunt**

Bill Hunt lives in Ohio with his wife Linda where he has been the Minister of the Rosehill Church of Christ in Reynoldsburg since 1992. They have two married daughters.

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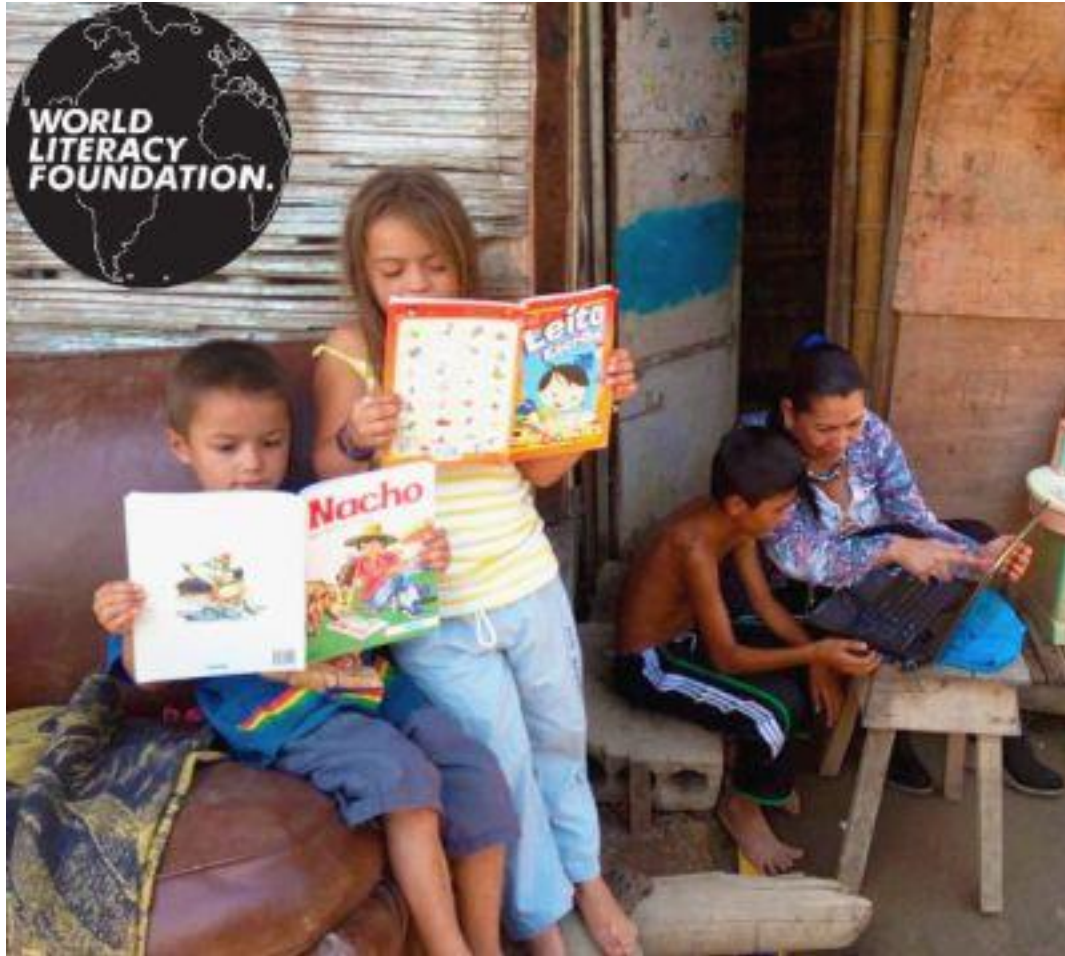
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## **The World Literacy Foundation**

The World Literacy Foundation (WLF) is a global charity that was founded in 2003. It has worked on eradicating illiteracy around the globe by using innovative

programs and wide reaching literacy initiatives in needy communities. We are committed to using the latest digital technologies to reach the one billion people in the world who cannot read or write.



In 2009, the Foundation built an online literacy/e-learning platform for Indigenous children in Australia. In 2011, the WLF established a partnership with Rehan Schools to use mobile phone technology in Pakistan to help children to learn to read. In 2012, the WLF organized the World Literacy Summit in Oxford UK. Further to this we have established many programs in Africa and Latin America that focus on improving literacy levels through more traditional methods. With our partnerships, we reach an estimated 800,000 people each year with literacy education services in 32 countries.

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