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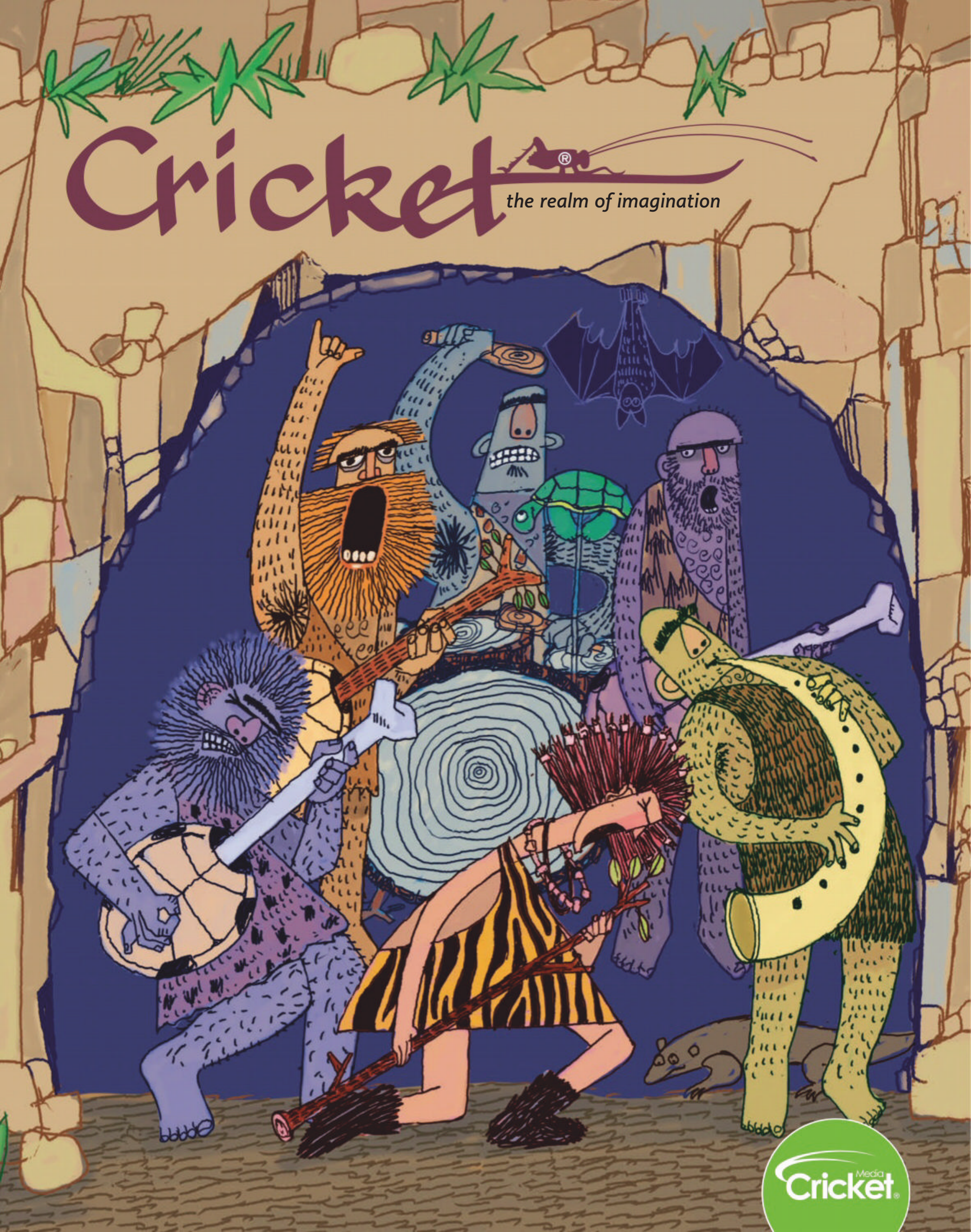
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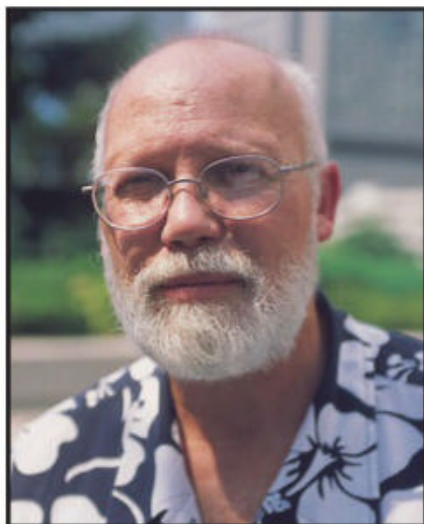


PHOTO BY MARK MITCHELL

COVER AND BORDER

by Robert Meganck
“The First Rock Band”
Digital

Robert Meganck is Professor Emeritus of Communication Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University. He is currently working on his fourth book with author Leslie Bulion for Peachtree Publishing Company, *Spi-ku: A Clutter of Short Verse on Eight Legs*. His previous three books with the same author and publisher are *Leaf Litter Critters*, *Superlative Birds*, and *Amphibian Acrobats*. As related to this cover, it should be noted that Robert loves all things “Rock and Roll.”

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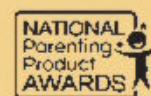


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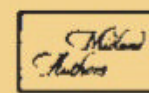


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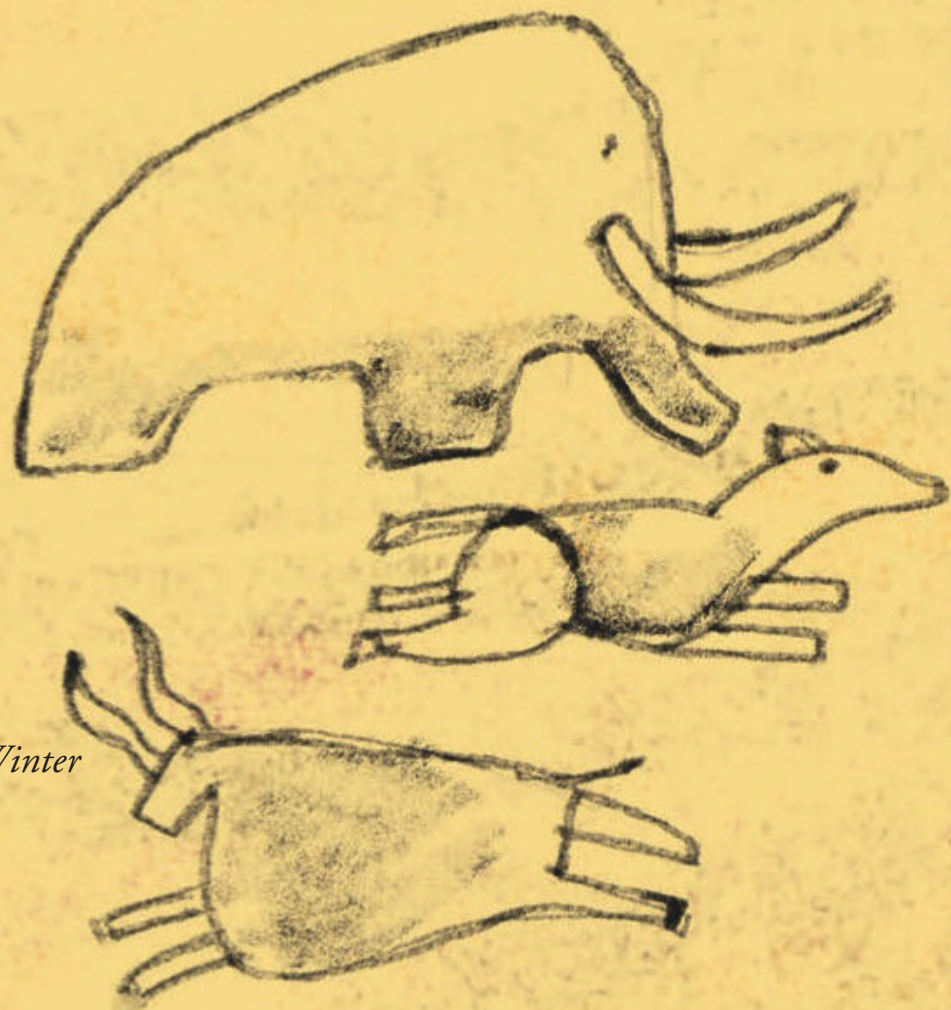
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ROCK
CONCERT
TONIGHT





Dear Cricket,

Hello! I absolutely love the one and only *Cricket* magazine. My little sister gets them, and I like to read them to her. I've always wanted to publish a story in your magazine, but my older sister (I have six) says I'd have to be older.

My favorite buggies are Ladybug and Tater, and my favorite stories are probably "Yuliya's Fawn," "The Magic Seeds," and "Thoko's Gift" (all November/December 2019).

Tashlon Schaueremann, age 10
Snyder, Colorado

Dear Tashlon,

The only place we publish stories by young people is in *Cricket League*. There is a new contest described in each magazine. Look for the current theme and rules on page 47 and at cricketmag-kids.com/contests. Possible categories include story, poetry, and art. We would love to see a story by you in *Cricket League*.

Happy writing,
Old Cricket

Hi, Everybuggy,

This is my first year reading *Cricket*, and I love it! I love to read. I go to public school and love my teachers there! I'm in fifth grade. I have a little brother who's six and obsessed with Marshmello the DJ. I have a little cat named Dessi, but we call her Nugs. I like to ride my bike, play Minecraft, act, sing, and my favorite, dance! I've been dancing since I was three. My favorite color is teal. I love Harry Potter (I'm meant to be in Gryffindor) and make loom bracelets. See you next issue!

Illy, age 10
Malvern, Long Island, New York

I am Kimilene on SailHaven at Kyngdom and I recently went to a feis. A feis is a competition. Here is a thread all about Irish dance! We have levels. I am in the champs class in my school. My dress is black with lots of silver sequins and gems. I also have a big wig.

Inktail
Chirp at Cricket, Chatterbox



Dear Shrew,

Hello! I love *Cricket* magazines. My favorite story is "The Last Kirin" by Miya Hikari (November/December 2019). I can't wait until Part 2 comes. My favorite color is green and my favorite bug is inchworm. Who's yours, shrew?

Tyrnan Schaueremann, age 5
Snyder, Colorado

Dear Tyrnan,

I like all my bug friends, including Marty the inchworm. I'm a pygmy shrew, and my name is Zoot. (It rhymes with cute!)

Love,
Zoot

Dear Ladybug,

Hi. My aunt gave me a subscription to *Cricket* for my eighth birthday. My favorite story is "Yuliya's Fawn." My favorite buggy is you, Ladybug! How many spots do you have on your wings? I have no spots because I'm not a ladybug, but I would like to be one!

Leiren Schaueremann, age 8
Snyder, Colorado

P.S. I've seen lots of ladybugs in my mom's garden, but none are as beautiful as you!

Dear Leiren,

I have a total of six spots. Say hi to those Colorado ladybugs for me!

Love,
Ladybug

Dear Everybuggy,

I love *Cricket*. I have gotten it for almost two years now. To me the best part of the magazine is the Letterbox. My favorite buggy is all of you! My favorite mythical creature is a griffin (which I believe exists). My Hogwarts house is Gryffindor.

I love animals. My top four animals are horses, dogs, lions, and seals. I believe all of these creatures are beautiful and magnificent. I have always

SOMETIMES I EVEN
DRAW MYSELF A
HORSE TO RIDE!



dreamed of running wild with animals. I ride horses and I have a lesson once a week for an hour. I love when I am cantering and I can feel the wind on my face as I ride. I really want my own horse. I would want a black Friesian mare, who I would name Venus. I also like to draw. I like to draw nature and animals the best.

My birthday is August 26, and I love summer! When I grow up, I want to stop animal cruelty and save wild animals.
Animal Lover, age 12
Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York

Dear Everybuggy,

I'm on the fifth Percy Jackson book, and it's so good! Hunter, from the issue with the blue serpent on the cover, (October 2019), you said you were looking for character designs, so here is one. Name: Oswald Jones. Age: 15. Gender: boy. Looks: 5 foot 3 inches, messy black hair, olive skin, gray eyes, and wears a pastel yellow hoodie, jeans, and teal Converse. Personality: quirky, helpful, kind, and brave. Power: If he touches someone else with powers he has, he has that power for ten minutes. I hope you can make somebody out of that.

Does anybody else love drawing weird people, like someone with a giant eye instead of a head? It's fun! I want to start making a small garden with flowers and grass.

Monarch, 132 moons
Small Gardens, Florida

I LIKE
DRAWING
CREATURES,
TOO. DIFFERENT
CREATURES,
WITH EYES AND
STUFF. IT'S FUN



Dear Everybuggy,

Everyone has told you this, but I am going to say it so this can create more of an echo: I really love your magazine! My favorite stories are "The Last Kirin" and "Thoko's Gift." I got a *Cricket* subscription for my birthday from my grandma. I cannot wait to get more *Cricket* magazines throughout the year.

How is Ladybug doing? What did Muffin dress up as for Halloween? Please keep writing this magazine forever. I like it a lot!

Aviv W.
Aliso Viejo, California

Dear Aviv,
I'm fine. Muffin loves horses, so she was a jockey for Halloween.
Love,
Ladybug

I've been getting *Cricket* magazine in the mail for a year or so and I've seen posts from Chatterbox in the Letterbox lots of times, but I've never actually gone to the website before now. I have a dog, a cat, and two dwarf rabbits. I'm a cat person. I play the trumpet and the harmonica. I like pogo sticks. I love to read, write, act, and tell stories. I'm in the National Youth Storytelling Festival this year.

What are some of the things you like to do?
Katherine H., age 12
Utah
Down to Earth, Chatterbox

Happy St. Patrick's Day, Everybuggy!

Did anyworm get pinched because they didn't wear green? I hope not! I only learned about the whole pinching thing last year. Did anybuggy do anything special for St. Patrick's Day? Our mama read us some stuff about St. Patrick. He helped a lot with spreading Christianity.

I really want to go to Ireland! It's really pretty in pictures, and I'm partly Irish on my mama's side. That's probably where I got my slightly orangish hair and freckles.

Hannah, age 14
Georgia

I forgot completely that it was St. Patrick's Day, so I forgot to wear green, and my little brother came in and pinched me. Ha-ha. I've known about the pinching for as long as I can remember. It's fun.

Last year we watched "Darby O'Gill and the Little People." It was about this guy who met the leprechaun king. It was really funny; I liked it a lot. And we played Irish music.

Wolfgirl67, age 12
Down to Earth

I'm learning German and know some Japanese, enough to communicate with my Japanese cousin, who I haven't seen for over a

year. *Konnichiwa! Sayonara!*
swiftly changes to German *Guten Tag! Auf Wiedersehen! Milch und Brot!*
Martia and I are studying German because we want to go to Vienna and learn from all the great musicians there! It's not really that hard. Japanese is a lot harder. When my mom thinks

LANGUAGES ARE FASCINATING! SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS TO SAY THINGS.



YAYYYYYY, POGO STICKS! HOP TO IT!



I'm old enough, she says that I can go and stay with my aunt in Japan for a while!

Jenni T., age 12
Languages, Chirp at Cricket

I like to study the Elvish languages, which J. R. R. Tolkien made up to go with his mythology. Actually, they say he made the languages first and then made up Middle-earth to have somewhere where people spoke them. There's more than one kind of Elvish. I speak Sindarin, as much as it can be spoken. Falmiriel is Elvish. It means *foam jewel*.

Falmiriel
Languages, Chirp at Cricket

So you want to take a trip to Northwest Kyngdom? Wonderful! Pack your bags, grow an extra layer of fur, and hop on to the Badger Express, the high-speed badger-drawn train that will carry you northward.

Travel tip: The Badger Express has a wonderful dining car that serves a creamy, piping-hot soup called Pinesuppe—root vegetables simmered for hours with pine needles and topped off with a rich drizzle of sap.

FAFA Intelligence
Bog & Burrow Inn
A Travel Guide
Kyngdom, Chatterbox

The transport pod orbited around Earth, beaming capsules down to the houses of Chatterboxers. . . . Galaxy reached up to the ceiling of the transport pod and pressed a small yellow button. Her voice boomed out from the speakers of fourteen well-placed capsules. "Greetings and salutations, lucky CBers! You have been chosen for a very exclusive vacation . . . in SPACE!"

Galaxy, Many Moons
The Ever-Expanding Universe
Pudding's Place, Chatterbox

Hello, fellow humans!

I am new to the Chatterbox, so I would like to introduce myself. I am an MK (missionary kid) and I live in Lithuania. (Try to find it on a map.) Originally I am from Greenville, Illinois. (Try to find that on a map, too.) I play piano and am learning violin, which I love. I have three siblings and two adorable cats. My favorite hobbies are music, drawing, reading, and a little writing. I love, love, love *Cricket* mag and I am interested to get into the CB.

Sarah N., age 12
Lithuania

CHIRPS FROM CRICKET'S LETTERBOX AND CHATTERBOX

Even though I am sighted, I've been interested in writing and reading Braille. I haven't had too much trouble with writing, but finding things to read in Braille has been hard.

Amelia
Washington

I do not do Irish dancing, but I do play Irish fiddle music for a few dancers that I know. I used to do the dancing, too, but I could never remember the steps. I love playing for the dancers, though, and I have even been in a few festivals.

Dragon, age 15
The Library, Chirp at Cricket

I'm from Sussex, England. I think I'm the only one from England on the CB, but I'm getting used to it.

Bibi P.
Sussex, England

What languages (other than English, obviously) do people here speak? I speak some French and I'm fluent in Turkish.

Wolfgang, age 13
Languages, Chirp at Cricket

The happiness challenge is where everyone aims to post one thing that makes them happy every day. It can be finishing a good book or anything. The challenge is on!

LilyPad
Happiness Thread!
Down to Earth

I first noticed that the fog from fog machines smells like maple syrup when my class went to the fire department for fire training, and we all got in this tiny model house where they used fake fog as smoke.

CignusMoon, age 156 moons
Random Thoughts, Down to Earth

We always say our cats are terrible for productivity since they'll just curl up and sleep on you. One does not simply *get up* whilst a cat is trying to sleep!

Leeli
Random Thoughts, Down to Earth

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

Visit the Chatterbox at:
cricketmagkids.com/chatterbox



LETTERS MAKE ME HAPPY! ESPECIALLY LETTERS ABOUT HAPPINESS.



NICE MUSIC, ZOOT.

Cricket Country



NEAT LITTLE STAGE SETUP, TOO.

I'M MAKING A VIDEO FOR THE CRICKET COUNTRY'S GOT TALENT CONTEST.

GOOD LUCK, ZOOT! THAT'S A NICE SONG.

A CONTEST? COUNT ME IN!

THANKS! I'VE BEEN PRACTICING.

OF COURSE! BUT YOU'LL HAVE COMPETITION. "NICE" MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH.

BEFORE YOU CAN WIN BIG, YOU HAVE TO BE NOTICED! YOU NEED FLASH, FLAIR, STAGE PRESENCE.

AND A BRILLIANT BEAUTIFUL LEAD SINGER, OF COURSE. (HINT-HINT)

GROAN.



IT'S A BAND? I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A BACKUP SINGER...

ODD! I PLAY A MEAN DRUM SOLO.

TOO MEAN! BRUTAL. I STILL HAVE BRUISES.

BUT-BUT-BUT... NO!! NO BAND. I AM NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THIS.

DON'T WORRY, ZOOT. WE'LL GET YOU FIXED UP.



ZOOT! WOW. UM. ROCK ON.

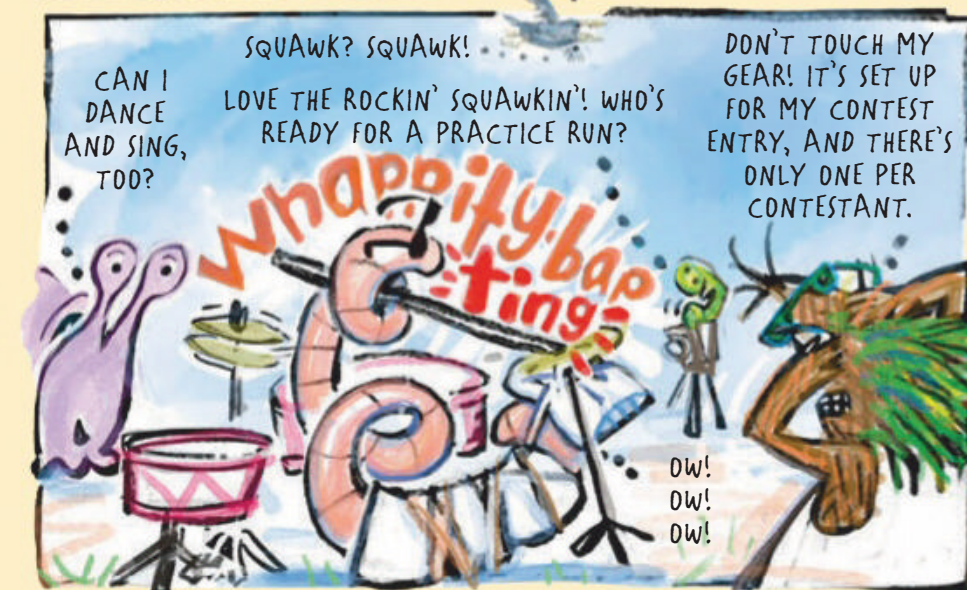
IT'S A LITTLE GLAMOUR, FOR MY BIG DEBUT. HEY, ZOOT! WHERE ARE THE WORDS? A SINGER NEEDS WORDS.

THERE ARE NO WORDS, LADYBUG. IT'S AN INSTRUMENTAL PIECE.

UH-OH. WHERE DID I PUT MY EARPLUGS?

NEVER MIND. I'LL IMPROVISE!

WHAT'S WITH THE WIG, LADYBUG?



CAN I DANCE AND SING, TOO?

SQUAWK? SQUAWK! LOVE THE ROCKIN' SQUAWKIN'! WHO'S READY FOR A PRACTICE RUN?

DON'T TOUCH MY GEAR! IT'S SET UP FOR MY CONTEST ENTRY, AND THERE'S ONLY ONE PER CONTESTANT.

DW! DW! DW!



PRETTY GOOD, RIGHT? YOU KNOW YOU NEED A WORM DRUMMER.

NO! THIS IS NOT WHAT I HAD IN MIND.

LA-LA-TRA-LA-LA! AM I FABULOUS, OR WHAT?

UM, WHAT!?



THAT WAS FUN! LET'S GO AGAIN!

WAIT! I HAVE TO FIX MY PADDING.

SQUAWWWWWWK!

IS SOMEBUGGY STILL PLAYING? WHAT'S THAT NOISE?

MIGHT BE MY EARS RINGING. I NEED BIGGER EARPLUGS.

WHO'S READY FOR ANOTHER SESSION?

NO! NO RECORDING! NOT YET!

1-2-3, GO!



SQUAWKIE AWKIE

UGLY WANTS TO JOIN THE SESSION!

Clatter Clang! C-rash

TRA-LA-LA!

LONG LIVE SQUAWK 'N ROLL!

RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!

THE HUMAN MAP

by Pamela Love

JUST AFTER DAWN, the humans' starboat zoomed away through the clouds. Aliri had expected that, since the humans had arrived on her world just as quickly two months earlier.

What Aliri had not expected was for her younger brother to come running from the village as the starboat's hum faded. "Where are the humans?" Otero panted.

"Gone." Aliri frowned at her brother. Their people almost never ran.

Otero craned his neck, as if he could stretch it to see over the clouds. "Already? They went so quickly."

Aliri returned to picking the berries she was harvesting. "Humans always hurry, rushing around to see this and that. Even their speech is almost too quick to understand."

Otero put his head in his hands. "I thought I had more time."

Aliri had never seen him like this. "We have enough time for everything. Why are you upset?"

"Yesterday, I was watching the humans," Otero began, speaking almost human-quick. "One had a new thing. The human went into the starboat and left it outside. I—I picked up the new thing. I wanted more time to look at it. But the humans have gone before I could return it!"



HUMAN BEANS
ALWAYS SEEM TO
BE IN A RUSH.
GANG WAY!

Illustrated by Dion MBD

text © 2020 by Pamela Love, art © 2020 by Dion MBD



Now Aliri noticed the new thing sticking out of Otero's pack. "Metal!" That was rare on their world. It was as long as her arm, round as a reed, and covered with many small attachments. "Tell Mother."

Their people had no word for "steal." They valued time most of all, which cannot be stolen. But they did have a word meaning "wrong." Mother used it now.

"Son, you must use your time to return the new thing to the humans. Anyone who does wrong must make matters right, however much time that takes." She examined the new thing. "It may have an important function on their starboat. Perhaps they will come back for it."

"Wisdom," said Otero, filled with hope. He carefully placed the new thing where he had found it. But by the next afternoon, the humans had not returned.

"Perhaps they cannot," Mother said. "Perhaps their starboat requires this new thing. You must search for the humans."

"But where?" Otero asked. Their world's heavy cloud cover and thick plant growth made seeing anything at a distance difficult.

Glancing around, hoping to find some clue, Aliri spotted something under a bush. Kneeling, she pulled it out. "This is paper."

The family gathered around her. Paper, like metal, was seldom used by their people. But it did have one important purpose. "Could this be a human map?" Aliri asked.



Otero tilted his head, considering. "It's so different from ours." Their people's maps were beautifully accurate, showing every stream, tree, and stone in detail.

"How else would a human map look?" Mother said. "Humans hurry. They would rush, not taking the time to present a true picture of the land. They only drew tiny lines and—"

"Could this squiggle be a river?" Aliri pointed halfway down the map.

Mother stared as if her daughter had grown wings. Their people had no concept of interrupting.

But before she could correct Aliri, Otero said, "Wisdom. Rivers do go this way and that as they flow. They look like squiggles. There must be a river halfway between us and the humans."

Mother sighed. "You may be right. You may be wrong." She looked toward the setting

sun. "It is late. We will go home now, and try again tomorrow."

But although it was time-of-sleep, Aliri's thoughts tumbled and twisted as she thought of the map's markings. *Humans must think like this. Perhaps to understand how hurrying humans think, we must hurry a little, too.*

Otero could not sleep either. Soon both were curled up with glow moss and the map. "Rivers flow only to our north and south. Look at this mark." Aliri touched a swirl in the upper left corner. It curved around a line, small on top, and large below.

"The starboat resembled this shape," said her brother.

"Wisdom," said Aliri. "Perhaps this shows where the humans started their journey across our land."

Otero laughed with joy. Mother muttered and rolled over, but to their relief, she did not awaken.

"This is fun," Otero whispered. His eyes seemed almost as bright as the glow moss. "So I must go south."

Glad to see him looking more hopeful, Aliri still cautioned, "South is a large place, brother. Now, consider all these short lines with little black ovals on top. There are so many."

"They look like humans, but without arms or legs. Humans rush so much they do not even finish drawing themselves! But why put themselves on a map? Humans move," said Otero.

"Well I know it," Aliri grumbled. "If they had stayed here longer, you could have

returned their new thing and we would be asleep now."

"Then perhaps these markings mean our people?" Otero asked. "Except that we move, too, though not as quickly as humans."

Aliri shook her head. "I believe these are trees. Remember drawing in the mud with sticks when you were little? A circle on top of a rectangle meant a tree to us. Perhaps an oval on top of a line means a tree to them."

Otero said, "Wisdom. Then lines connecting them may be branches, or roots. Perhaps they mean these trees stand close together, as they do in the southern forest. And see how the map shows trees going up and down, up and down? It's hillier in the south, too."

Aliri touched a large oval near the lower right corner of the map. "Then that might be Big Lake." She sighed. "Remember, we cannot be sure that is where the humans went. Perhaps they started at Big Lake and came here. Perhaps they now follow another map, one we do not have. They may even be on another world."

"Wisdom," Otero whispered. "And gratitude for your help, Aliri. I will think of you on my journey to where the humans might be."

Aliri put her hand on his. "Otero, I will come with you. Time spent with my brother is time well spent."

He gripped her fingers. "Gratitude, sister."

With Mother's blessing they set out the next day. They helped each other over rough ground, taking turns carrying the new thing and gathering food to eat. Often they looked

WHERE DO YOU THINK
THE HUMAN BEANS
MIGHT BE?



NOT IN
CRICKET
COUNTRY...



WISDOM!



at the humans' map, trying to puzzle out all of its meaning.

Three days later, they found Big Lake. Beside it were the humans and their starboat. Seeing them, Otero's face was a blend of shame at having taken the new thing and pride at having brought it back, considering all of their troubles with the human map.

Aliri and Otero could understand the humans far better now. The humans were learning from the villagers living by the lake the importance of speaking properly, and not in a rush.

A human called Captain Patel called out, "Doctor Corot!"

Another human, who had been examining a plant growing in the lake, turned. Eyes wide at the sight of what Otero held, the human came running. "You brought me my flute! Gratitude! I had forgotten leaving it outside. Your world has so many wonders to see and learn about that I was distracted. Who knows when I would have learned it was gone?" He paused. "How did you find us? It must have taken you several days to travel from your village."

"My brother and I used your map," said Aliri, handing it over.

Unfolding it, Doctor Corot asked, "What map?"

Patiently, Otero explained. "Here is your starboat . . ."

Captain Patel and Doctor Corot looked at each other. "Treble clef," they said.

So that is their word for starboat, Aliri thought.

"Here are the forested hills."

"Quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes," Doctor Corot said.

Names of different trees. We are learning their language, Aliri thought. *It is good to learn.*

"The river," Otero said.

"Quarter rest," said Doctor Corot.

"And Big Lake." Aliri swung her hand from the map's oval to gesture at the water spread out before them.

"Whole note." Doctor Corot took a deep breath. "You understood this . . . map . . . very well. Please keep it as a gift from our people to yours."

"Gratitude," Aliri and Otero said.

As the brother and sister headed for home, the humans were speaking in their own language. Captain Patel said, "I've heard that music can bring people together."

"In more ways than one, apparently," replied Doctor Corot. 



MUSIC IS
THE KEY
TO LIFE!



PIZZA,
TOD!



WISDOM!



GRATITUDE!



LUNCHTIME!!



MEWY-
MEW!



IGGY FLINT

by Kelsey Sorge

My pet rock's name is Iggy Flint.
I found him at a shelter.
He sat in stony silence
While the pugs ran helter-skelter.

Those other pets with fur and teeth
Play ball or fetch the mail,
But Iggy just sits gneiss and neat
And wags his pebbly shale.

The mailman says that he's a gem.
The vet is complimentary.
He really rocks at sit and stay
Because he's sedimentary.

Although it's true he cannot swim
And isn't good at sports,
I'll never take my pet for granite—
'Cause we're best friends, of quartz!

Illustrated by Evelyn Davididi

text © 2020 by Kelsey Sorge, art © 2020 by Evelyn Davididi

LITHOPHONES: Rocks That Sing

BY LAURA NIELSEN

Everyone knows that rocks can make noise. Toss one in the water—*KERSPLASH!* Drop one on the ground—*THUNK!* Throw a rock through a window—*CRASH! OH NO!*

But some rocks actually make musical sounds when struck with another rock or with a hammer. A general name for any musical rock is lithophone—a combination of the Latin words for *rock* and *sound*. Humans have used lithophones to play “rock music” for thousands of years.

Rock Gongs

In 1955, archeologist Bernard Fagg studied ancient rock paintings in Nigeria. He noticed that some of the rocks were pockmarked where someone had pounded on them over and over again six to eight thousand years ago. Why were ancient people pounding on rocks?

Fagg tried tapping the worn places on the stones. *Ting! Ding!* He produced bell-like sounds. He remembered seeing similarly pockmarked rocks at other sites, so he went back and tested them. Yes, he got the same pretty sounds when he tapped those rocks. Ancient people were pounding on rocks to make music!

Fagg referred to these musical stones as rock gongs (although they look nothing like the metal disk gongs we know today). Once Fagg published an article on his discoveries, others went looking and found more examples of rock gongs in Egypt, India, Africa, and other parts of the world.



Some rock gongs are giant boulders far too heavy to move. People gathered around the rock to make music. Some smaller rock gongs were hauled to temples or family gathering places. Did people use the rock gongs to speak to spirits, or to communicate with people beyond shouting distance, or simply to call everyone for dinner? We don't know. All we know is that the rocks are worn from being pounded over and over again.

A well-pockmarked rock gong in Serengeti National Park, Tanzania





MUSICAL CAVES

In the 1980s French archeologist Lya Dams was studying cave paintings in the Nerja Caves in Spain. Dams saw a painting high on a cave wall and climbed up to get a better look. She found something unexpected.

The rock formed a sort of natural platform that was invisible from below.

Rincón del Órgano (“Organ Corner”) in the Nerja Caves in southern Spain

THE FIRST PORTABLE SOUND SYSTEM

In the 1990s a researcher at the Museum of Natural History in Paris discovered a different sort of lithophone. He was studying a collection of stone tools that had been carved in the Sahara Desert between 8000 and 2500 BC. Ancient people had carefully chipped some stones into long cylinder shapes. Archeologists assumed these thick stone cylinders, some more than a yard long, were pestles used for grinding and pounding grain into flour. But they didn’t show any wear from grinding. Why carefully make a tool and then not use it?

Museum curator Eric Gonthier had another idea. He tapped one of the cylinders with a mallet and heard a musical *ting*. He investigated a number of other so-called pestles from the Sahara. They also made loud and very pleasant musical tones. These weren’t grinding stones. They were musical stones. Ancient people shaped these stones until they sounded just the way they wanted.

We don’t know the exact purpose of the stones. Their sound carries for miles over the desert, so they could have been used for long distance communication. We do know that someone went to a lot of effort to make them sound nice. They were light enough to be carried in one hand. Gonthier called them the first portable sound system.



Paleomusicologist Erik Gonthier rocks out on some ancient lithophones.



Standing on this platform, Dams noticed that the ridges and folds of rock had been hammered on—a lot—in the distant past. Why? She did the obvious thing and hammered on them herself. The stones emitted bell-like sounds as she struck them. They were lithophones.

Looking even more closely, Dams found ancient paint marks between the ridges of rock. Only a person standing up on the platform could see them. She guessed that the

marks were put there to show the person with the hammer which rocks to hit. This might be the earliest known example of someone trying to “write down” music.

Dams named this part of the cave “The Organ.” The sounds echoed beautifully through many connected caverns. It was hard to tell where the sounds were coming from unless a person knew the secret. How magical and mysterious it must have seemed to prehistoric humans listening by torchlight!



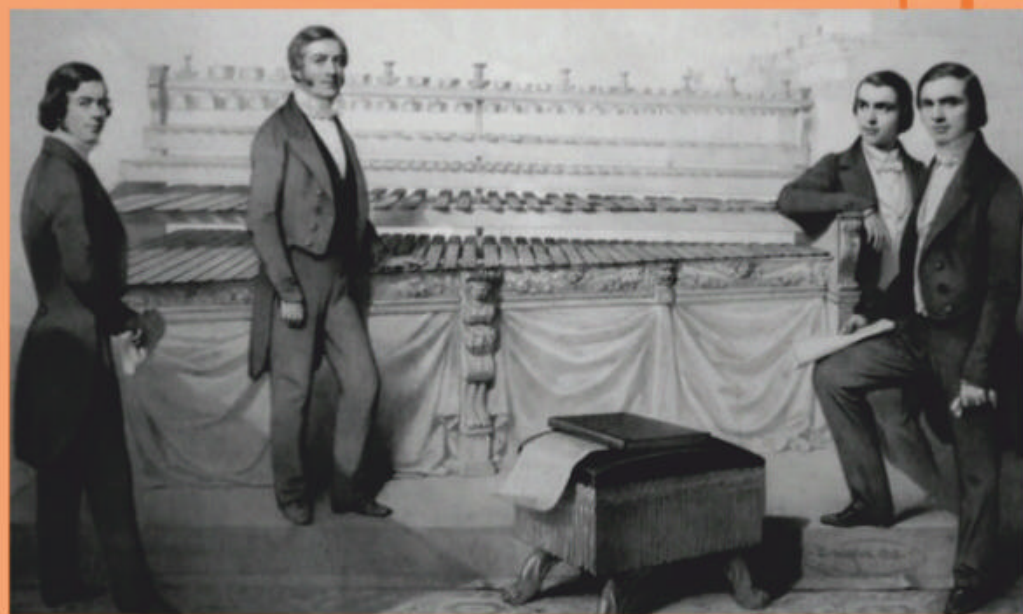
This stone xylophone, or rock harmonicon, wowed audiences in the 1890s.

THE ORIGINAL ROCK BAND

Not all lithophones have been crafted by ancient hands. In 1785, Peter Crosthwaite of Keswick, England, discovered musical stones on Skiddaw, a nearby mountain. In a single day he found six that naturally produced “perfectly tuned” notes. He was so excited that he spent the next six months finding and tuning ten more stones. He ran a museum of local curiosities, and “The Musical Stones of Skiddaw” were his centerpiece. Visitors were fascinated to see him play familiar tunes on ordinary rocks!

A few years later, Joseph Richardson was born in the same area to a family of stone-

masons. He spent thirteen years assembling a five-octave rock xylophone of Skiddaw stones. Richardson and his three sons played this instrument using mallets with heads the size of baseballs. The people of Keswick enjoyed their music so much that Richardson formed the Original Monstre Rock Band and went on tour. In 1848 Queen Victoria invited them to play at Buckingham Palace. The band performed over sixty concerts in London and then toured Europe. Listeners were amazed to hear them play complicated classical music on rocks. The Original Monstre Rock Band became the first international “rock band” sensation!



The Original Monstre Rock Band. Which one's Ringo?

EVERYBUGGY
READY?
A-ONE, AND
A-TWO...!



MY
HEAD IS
RINGING!
IS THAT
GOOD?

I PREFER
THE CELLO,
MYSELF!



WHAT?
SORRY,
CAN'T
HEAR YOU...

THE GREAT STALACTITE ORGAN

In 1954, mathematician Leland Sprinkle came up with the idea of building an organ in Luray Caverns in Virginia. Ordinary organs blow air through pipes to make music. Sprinkle

wanted to make music by tapping different stalactites and stalagmites. He thought it was a new idea. He didn't know that prehistoric people had done something like it thousands of years before.

Sprinkle's Great Stalactite Organ can still be heard today. It plays thirty-seven different notes. Sprinkle took three years to find rock formations of exactly

the right length and thickness for each musical note. They were spread over many parts of the connected chain of caverns. A keyboard sends signals through long wires to rubber mallets. The mallets gently strike the stones. The sounds carry through the caverns and blend together in a single melody. The organ covers three and a half acres, making it the world's largest musical instrument.



The Luray Caverns organ

MODERN LITHOPHONES

Musical stones were used in many places, by many different people. But people also invented other kinds of musical instruments, using wood, animal horns and bones, and metal. These instruments were a lot easier to carry around than rock gongs. In some places, "rock music" was completely forgotten.

But modern musicians are always looking for ways to make their music new and interesting, and they often take inspiration from old, forgotten traditions. Stone musical instruments are so old that suddenly they are new and exciting. Professional musicians from Canada, Europe, Norway, Iceland, and the United States have recently used stone instruments in their recordings.

Modern power tools make it relatively easy to cut and shape stone, and many kinds of stone will make music. Slate roof tiles are usually



The *dan da* lithophone is a traditional musical instrument from the Central Highlands of Vietnam.





Searching for the right sound at Ringing Rocks Park in Pennsylvania

thrown away when an old house gets a new roof. Granite floor tiles can be purchased from the local home improvement store. Both kinds of tiles can make nice sounds when struck with a mallet. People have built impressive stone instruments by trimming these stone pieces to exactly the right size for each note. All it takes is imagination to see rocks in a new way.

There are also several good places where you can look for natural lithophones. One is Ringing Rocks County Park in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. In the middle of a forest is a seven-acre field covered in boulders ten-feet deep. Visitors are invited to scramble over the rocks and bang around with a hammer. Many of the stones just go *THUNK*, but about a third of them ring like a bell.

Ringing Rocks Point of Interest in Jefferson County, Montana, is another musical boulder field that is open to the public. It is reached by a dirt and gravel road, followed by a hike, so it takes determination to get there. Lithophones also can be found in the Bell Rock Range in Western Australia, the

Hill of the Bells (Cerro de las Campanas) in Querétaro, Mexico, and on the Immenhof Guest Farm in Omaruru, Namibia.

WHY ARE SOME ROCKS MUSICAL?

It's interesting that musical rocks can be found in so many different places. But it's even more curious that one rock will *ringgg* when tapped, but the rock right next to it will just go *clunk*. Geologists have theories about the kind of rocks most likely to sing. Crystal structure, metal content in the rock, and weathering patterns on the outside of the rock may influence its sound properties. But that doesn't explain why one stone sings and a nearly identical rock doesn't.

So far, no one has made a careful scientific study of singing rocks. They are still a scientific mystery. But mysteries can be solved. Perhaps some kid playing around with rocks today will grow up to discover the answer. 

ALL RIGHT! LET'S EXAMINE
THE MUSICALITY OF ROCKS,
SCIENTIFICALLY!



MEWZICK!!



HEY, LOOK AT ME, I'M
CARRYING A TUNE!

ALWAYS A FIRST
TIME, EH, SLUGGO!

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

BY JOANNE ROBERTS

McMULLEN WAS A lazy lout. He was hiding out in the mulberry bush one afternoon when he smelled the tarts a-baking. Following his nose to his mother's kitchen, McMullen reached for a warm tart and received a rap on his fingers from Ma's wooden spoon.

"Boy, get on your legs and get to workin' in the fields," said his ma. "Farmer Duffy is always willing to pay a hard worker. Earn some gold, then you can win yourself a sweet-heart, build yourself a house, and be out from under my feet."

"Nay, Mammy," said McMullen, "'tis too hot a day for workin'. I'll take some tarts to tempt the faery folk instead. Then I'll have your wishes for me granted without lifting a finger."

"Hush your nonsense," said his ma, grinning. "Off with you and get the stalls mucked, you foolish lad."

McMullen grabbed the plate of tarts and sauntered toward the cowshed. He nestled the plate in a patch of sunlight and settled onto the hay to wait for the faery folk. Waiting is hungry work. Before long he found himself

A LOUT IS AN
AWKWARD,
CLUMSY DAF.



BUT SOME ARE QUITE
LOVABLE, RIGHT?



eating first one tart, then another and another, though he fell asleep before he had cleaned the platter.

McMullen dreamed of a fine house, a loving wife, and a field of gold, but his dreams were interrupted by a tug on his fingers. He awoke with a start. Someone was stealing the last tart from his grasp.

“Scat, rat!” he hollered. Then his eyes popped, for he realized ’twas no rat but a wee faerie man, who crammed the tart into his mouth before McMullen could snatch it back again.

“Pardon me, little sir,” said McMullen, “but since you’ve eaten my jam tart, you’ll be needing to give me three wishes.”

The faerie grimaced. “’Tis true, I suppose, for you can’t get something for nothing.”

“My mam is harping on me to build a house of my own. Housebuilding is hard work, and I’ve no mind to do it. So if you please, I wish for a fine house in exchange for that tart.”

“Granted,” said the faerie. The bag at his side began to swell bigger than a prize cabbage. The little man plunged his hand

in and drew out a cottage. Beautiful it was, but barely big enough for a spaniel—certainly not for a man.

“What’s this?” cried McMullen.

“’Tis a house, as you wished,” replied the faerie. “Fit for a good hard-workin’ dog, for every man should have a faithful dog at his side, and ’twould do you no good to let him sleep in the rain.”

“I’d meant a house for meself, as I thought was plain as porridge. That one’s a bit small,” said McMullen.

“Fair’s fair,” said the faerie. “It was, after all, a very small tart.”

“Fine, fine. You’ve tricked me out of a proper home, but there’s places cozy enough if you’ll only give me a wife to share it with.”

“You can’t get something for nothing,” said the faerie. “Since you’ve no more tarts, you’ll get no more wishes.”

“I can get you tarts aplenty,” said McMullen. “Only fetch me a wife, sir. Any one will do. I suppose one is as good as another.”

The faerie looked into his bag. “I’ve no wee lass in here,” said the faerie. “Are you sure you’d like me to bring you a wife? You didn’t seem much pleased by the house I gave you.”

McMullen sighed. “Nothing less will satisfy my mam, and wooing and winning take time and hard work. Besides, as you can see, I’m no county prize. You’re like to do better for me than I can for meself.”

McMullen led the way down the lane to the miller’s cottage. Many a day he’d lifted a tart from those cooling on the miller’s





window sill. Sure enough, a lovely plateful perched in the cottage window.

McMullen passed a few tarts to the faerie, who gobbled them up with magical speed. "Granted!" the faerie cried through a mouthful of crumbs and jam.

No sooner had he spoken than McMullen felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Why, McMullen, I've been looking everywhere for you," said a womanly voice.

McMullen nearly jumped out of his stockings. Turning round he came face to face with a red-cheeked woman as old as his ma.

"Do I know you?" he gulped.

"Nay, we've not met, but my husband, Farmer Duffy, sent me to fetch you."

McMullen choked. "Your husband?"

"Aye," said the woman. "He's got a mind to hire you to work the barley fields today."

McMullen cast a dark look at the faerie, who had hidden himself behind the asters. To the farmer's wife he said, "I'll come along to please my mam, though I've important business to finish before the day is through."

The goodwife nodded and bustled ahead toward Farmer Duffy's land. McMullen turned furious eyes on the faerie, who darted in and out among the hedgerows. "When I wished for

a wife, I wasn't asking for someone else's," hissed McMullen in a fierce whisper.

The faerie held up his wee finger. "After all, the tarts were someone else's, too. And you did say one wife was good as another."

McMullen grunted. "Very well, man. Have it your way. But I won't be fooled again. I've thought it out good and proper, and it seems to me all my trials will be over if you grant me a field of gold. You've cheated me

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

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out of my first two wishes, but with a field full of gold I could afford both a wife and a house, and maybe a dog to boot.”

“Yes, well, you can’t get something for nothing,” said the faerie, licking jam from his fingers.

“Just wait a bit. I’ll take me turn in the field and earn the coin to buy you the best tarts in the county. Then you’ll supply me with that field of gold, and no funny business. Proper payment for a proper wish-come-true.”

“As you say,” said the wee man. “I’ll be back when the coins hit your palm.”

McMullen sweated and strained through the day, till he was wrung out like Saturday’s washing. When the sun dipped low, Farmer Duffy appeared among the hired lads, shaking their hands and rewarding them with a few silvers apiece. McMullen stared at the coins, pushing them around his palm. He thought there never was a sweeter sight till he looked up at the plump lass who offered him a cup of cold water and a tart or two. “To tide you over till you reach home, wife, and a decent supper,” she said.

“There’ll be supper at home, sure enough,” said McMullen with a wink, “but it’ll only be me old mammy waiting there for me.”

A smile dimpled the lass’s cheek. “I’m sure me Da would be proud to have a fine hard-workin’ man such as yourself to dine with us this evening.” And she looped her arm in his, leading the dazed and pleased McMullen to Farmer Duffy’s kitchen.

McMullen glanced back over his shoulder in time to see the setting sun turning the barley fields into an ocean of gold. And he thought he heard something on the wind whisper the word, “Granted!”



YOU CAN'T GET SOMETHING
FOR NOTHING, BUT CAN YOU
GET NOTHING FOR SOMETHING?



IT
HAPPENS.

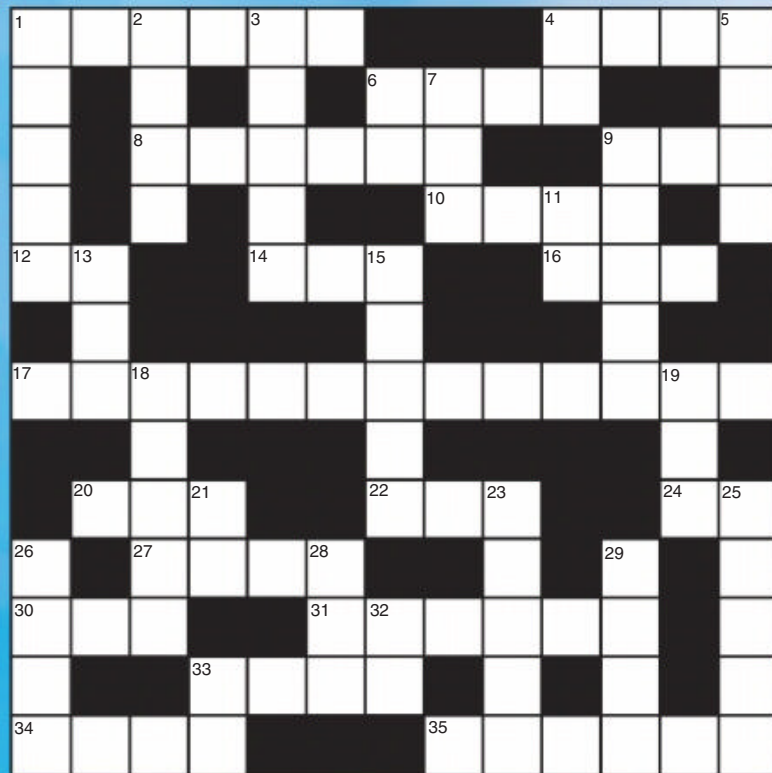
Ugly Bird's Irish Eyes Crossbird Puzzle



Awkin
See Yu...
Caw
Haw
Haw!

Across

1. Irish language
4. _____-leaf clover
6. Bundle of hay
8. A shamrock is this kind of plant
9. Card game: _____ rummy
10. Open wasteland covered with heather
12. Opposite of yes
14. To glide over snow on runners
16. February (abbreviation)
17. Irish holiday (three words)
20. Small Irish pub with lodging
22. Past tense of *hide*
24. Member of Parliament (abbreviation)
27. 1/100 of a dollar
30. Exclamation of disgust
31. Capital of Ireland
33. Plant that grows on rocks and trees
34. "_____ me, I'm Irish!"
35. Reflexive form of *me*



Solution on page 47

Down

1. Leprechaun's favorite color
2. _____ and every one
3. Statues of pagan gods
4. Chemical symbol for *iron*
5. Fairies dance in a fairy _____
6. To exist
7. Upper limb
9. Great desire for a leprechaun's gold
11. Yeats's poem: "I Am _____ Ireland"
13. Opposite of *in*
15. People of Ireland
18. Fruit drink served at parties
19. Goal
21. Compass direction
23. To put off or postpone
25. _____ gold (two words)
26. _____ of the Irish
28. Touchdowns (abbreviation)
29. Leg joint
32. United States (abbreviation)
33. Title of respect for a woman

IRISH EYES
OR NOT,
THEY
AREN'T
SMILING
NOW!



MEW-
EEK!

NOPE.
UGLY SMILES
WITH HIS
TEETH!



By Lucky O'Castellón &
Shamrocks O'Conahan

JACK METCALF: A Blind Boy with Vision

by Joan W. Winter

“HEY JACK, WANT to come bird-nesting with us?” his friends would say. Or “Let’s go raid an apple orchard, Jack. Want to climb and shake the tree for us?” And away Jack would go. He was a lively boy, energetic and strong, but Jack was different from the other boys. He was blind.

John Metcalf, called Jack by his friends, was born in the year 1717 in Knaresborough, a small market town that rises on the slope of a rocky gorge above the River Nidd in Yorkshire, England. A sturdy lad, the son of a laborer, he grew and thrived until age six, when he was stricken with smallpox. He recovered, but the disease had left him totally blind.

As he regained his strength, Jack began to adapt to his blindness. In six months he was able to leave his father’s cottage and find his way along the streets of Knaresborough and back home without a guide. In three years he could go to any part of the town alone. He could find shops and run errands for his mother and father.

Jack lived with his daughter in this house in Yorkshire, not far from Knaresborough, when he retired from roadbuilding.

BIRD-NESTING
MEANS STEALING
BIRDS’ EGGS FROM
THEIR NESTS TO
EAT OR SELL.



SMALLPOX WAS A
TERRIBLE AND OFTEN
FATAL DISEASE THAT HAS
BEEN ELIMINATED WORLD-
WIDE BY VACCINATIONS.
YAY, SCIENCE!



RAMBLES ARE
WANDERING
ADVENTURES.



GENTRY ARE UPPER
CLASS BUT NOT
QUITE NOBILITY.



PEASANTS ARE FARMERS.

A sign above a pub in Knaresborough commemorates Jack as a musician and roadbuilder.



COCKFIGHTING IS SETTING ROOSTERS, CALLED GAMECOCKS, TO FIGHT EACH OTHER TO THE DEATH. IT'S BANNED NOWADAYS FOR CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.



BOWLS IS LAWN
BOWLING.

WHIST IS A CARD
GAME, AN EARLY
FORM OF BRIDGE.



EDDIES ARE SMALL
CURRENTS OR
WHIRLPOOLS.

As he grew, Jack began to make friends and associate with the other boys. He accompanied them on rambles, boating trips, and bird-nesting expeditions. Once, while Jack was shaking a plum tree for his friends, the owner appeared and surprised them all. As the boys fled, Jack fell into a gravel pit and was badly injured. His face was cut, and he lay a long time stunned, but he never gave up his boyish adventures. Soon he was familiar with all the lanes, fields, and woods for two or three miles around Knaresborough.

Jack's father kept horses. Jack learned to ride and in time became a very able horseman. He was taught to play the fiddle, too, as it was thought in those days that the only way a blind person could earn a living was by being a strolling musician. Although he learned to play well, Jack took a more natural interest in hunting. He kept hounds and would often ride to hunt with his friend Mr. Woodburn, the hound master of Knaresborough.

At age fifteen, Jack was brought to the neighboring town of Harrogate to replace an old fiddler, who had died at the age of one hundred and two. Being friendly and outgoing, with a quick wit and ready tongue, Jack was well liked by noblemen, gentry, and peasants alike. He was frequently asked to play at their social gatherings and visit their homes.

Highly competitive and always a sportsman, Jack bought a horse and ran it in races. He was fond of cock-fighting (a popular sport of the time) and kept gamecocks. He became skillful at bowls, often bargaining to have three turns to his opponent's one and bribing scorekeepers to give him hints as to direction by raising or lowering their voices. He could play whist and other games, able to distinguish cards by their feel. He befriended jockeys, went to races, and sharply remembered the names of winning and losing horses. Many times he returned home with a pocketful of money.

As an energetic teen, Jack learned to swim in the River Nidd. Quickly surpassing the skill of his companions, he became a strong, fearless swimmer. When two men fell into the swollen, fast-flowing river and drowned, Jack was sent to dive for the bodies. Deep, swirling eddies pulled

to the bottom anything that came within their sphere of action. After diving four times, Jack succeeded in bringing up one of the bodies. The other was never found.

By the time he was twenty, Jack had acquired more horses. By cleverly exercising some discipline at feeding time, he taught each one to answer his call by neighing when he called its name. He knew his horses so well that he could always select his own horse out of any number.

Jack loved to wager and entered a horse race himself. The other competitors, sure that Blind Jack would lose his way, bet against him. But unknown to them, Jack had posted bell ringers along the route. Jack rode fast, and by staying close to the sound of the bells, he won the race. He also devised a way to stop a runaway horse—and won a bet—by riding it into a bog. It took much effort to get the horse out again, but Jack knew how to do that, too—he had helped a stranger free his horse from the bog a short time before, which had given him the idea.

There seemed to be no limit to Jack's interests, self-reliance, and resourcefulness. Often asked to stay with friends in other parts of England, Jack would make his way home alone on his horse. He rarely got lost, despite the fact that there were very few roads in England at the time—only wild moorland, hills, fields, woods, and rivers. Once, from York to Harrogate, a distance of about twenty miles, he acted as guide to a stranger. So skilled had he become at finding his way that the stranger never found out Jack was blind until after they had reached their destination.

In his twenties, while entertaining at her father's public house, the Royal Oak, in Harrogate, Jack met and fell in love with a girl named Dolly Benson. Mr. and Mrs. Benson did not approve the match, and thought a poor blind fiddler was not a suitable husband for their beloved daughter. Jack and Dolly hid their attachment, writing notes and leaving messages for each other using made-up names to arrange meetings and talk over plans.



An illustration from Jack's biography, published in 1795



Blind Jack Metcalf, on horse-back, supervises the making of a road.



AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE IS WHERE PARENTS OR OTHERS CHOOSE WHO YOU'RE GOING TO MARRY. YIKES!

Secretly, the night before Dolly's arranged marriage to another man, Jack romantically whisked her away. He married Dolly the next day before the disgruntled bridegroom could discover her whereabouts, and they lived a long and happy life together.

After his marriage, Blind Jack gave up racing and gambling and set about providing for his wife and family. Being an excellent judge of horses, he bought and sold them. He still played his violin but also tried other business ventures, such as bringing fish from the coast to sell at inland towns and villages. It was very hard work and not very profitable. Leading horses with loaded panniers—large baskets—strapped to their backs, Jack had to fetch and carry the fish himself and would often ride two nights and one day with no rest. But he was a big man, six feet two inches tall, strong, and blessed with good health

Respected by the neighborhood gentry, in 1745 Jack was asked to recruit some of the local lads to form a military group, the Yorkshire Blues, which was to travel to Scotland with the Duke of Cumberland's army to confront the Jacobite rebellion. Jack accompanied the Blues, and before the Battle of Culloden in 1746, provided rousing marching music and entertainment for the troops with his fiddle. In Aberdeen, he even played for the king's son and his entourage.

After the war, Jack began to import goods from Scotland—cotton, wool-worsted cloth, and Aberdeen stockings—having seen them, if such an expression may be applied to a blind man, while in Scotland the year before. He also traded in contraband (illegal stuff)—tea, rum, and brandy. But after some hair-raising brushes with the law, and because he didn't want to risk losing everything by being thrown in jail, he soon gave it up.

Always looking for ways to earn money to support his family, our hero started a new business in 1754. He set up a stagecoach run between

THE JACOBITE REBELLION WAS A FAILED ATTEMPT TO RESTORE THE DESCENDANTS OF STUART KING JAMES II TO THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH THRONES.



AN ENTOURAGE IS A GROUP OF ATTENDANTS.



YES! I'VE ALWAYS WANTED ONE OF THOSE! MEW!

the city of York and Knaresborough, a distance of about twenty-four miles, driving it himself, twice a week in summer, once in winter. It was hard going, as few roads existed; northern England was still mostly moorland, fields, and forests.

Finally, a turnpike road about three miles long was to be made. Jack bid for the job and negotiated his first contract for building roads. With Jack's usual diligence, thoroughness, and long hours of work, the job was completed early and well. It was the beginning of a new and very successful career for him. For thirty years Blind Jack built roads all over England, one hundred and eighty miles of them. He created ways to go over, not around, swampy areas, using rafts made from bundles of heather and gorse, and he saved money by reusing stones from old Roman roads. He studied measurement so he could accurately estimate materials to be used, and even invented a surveyor's wheel for measuring, called a viameter.

A self-taught civil engineer, Jack became one of the fathers of the modern road. He also built bridges, arches, culverts, and retaining walls. Although Jack made them all heights and sizes, none ever fell down. Many are standing to this day.

When Blind Jack Metcalf died at the age of ninety-three on April 27, 1810, his mind had lost none of its sharpness. His descendants at the time of his death were four children, twenty grandchildren, and ninety great and great-great grandchildren.

Despite his disability, few characters in history have had more vision, or accomplished more in their lifetime, than Blind Jack Metcalf of Knaresborough. 

A CULVERT IS A DRAIN OR DRAINAGE CHANNEL PASSING UNDER A ROAD.



WHAT AN AMAZING GUY!

A TURNPIKE IS A TOLL ROAD NAMED FOR THE BAR, OR PIKE, THAT BLOCKED THE ROAD UNTIL THE TOLL WAS PAID.



DILIGENCE IS PERSISTENT, SUSTAINED EFFORT.

A statue of Jack Metcalf with his viameter in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire





The Penderwicks (series)

by Jeanne Birdsall

The Penderwicks series is full of joy and hope and packed with laugh-out-loud jokes. The series is about four sisters with different personalities and their widowed father. But everything changes when their new neighbors move in. Can the neighbor's sneaky cat change their lives forever? The sisters' and their beloved dog Hound's adventures and secret meetings are fun to follow. Every new book is better than the one before it.

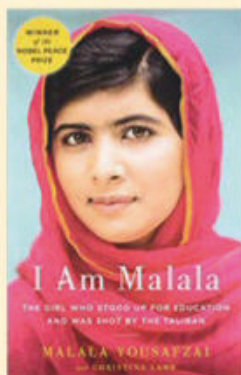
Maddie G., age 10

St. Paul, Minnesota

I Am Malala

by Malala Yousafzai

This is an autobiography about Malala Yousafzai, an advocate for education rights. When she was ten, terrorists bombed her hometown of Mingora, Pakistan, destroyed schools, and threatened to make girls going to school illegal. A year later, Malala started speaking out. Four years after that, the Taliban tracked her down and shot her in the face. She survived.



For speaking out, she won a Nobel Peace Prize when she was seventeen, the youngest person ever!

Naomi T., age 11

Cricket Readers Recommend
cricketmagkids.com

The Lightning Thief

by Rick Riordan

Percy is a teenager who finds out that he is the son of Poseidon, the sea god. His mother drives him to Camp Half-Blood. He is assigned to find a god weapon called the master bolt, because Zeus thinks he stole it. He has to find it before his father and Zeus argue. Will he find the master bolt or will he fail?

Owen Green

Suffern, New York



From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

by E. L. Konigsburg

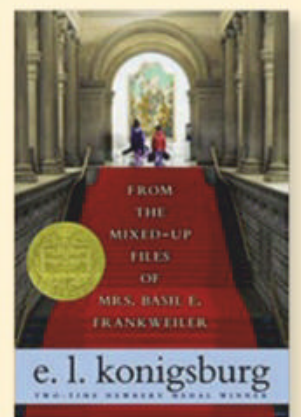
This book is realistic fiction. Claudia and Jamie Kincaid live in Greenwich, Connecticut. They decide to run away to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. They find a statue that everyone thinks was sculpted by Michelangelo. They meet Mrs. Basil E.

Frankweiler. They ask her to tell them who made it so they can tell the museum.

I think the book is really interesting. You'll be surprised at the end.

Nikki Pati, age 8

Birmingham,
Alabama



Wings of Fire (series)

by Tui T. Sutherland

War is raging. Tribes of dragons have each chosen a side, except for the RainWings and the NightWings. Apparently, the NightWings are far too superior to fight, and the RainWings are too peaceful. The NightWings have delivered a prophecy that dragons would be born to end the fight.

As you venture through this captivating tale, you meet fun characters and find out the truth about the prophecy, who wins the war, and about their journey.

Macaw

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Mariam Finds Her Wings

by Elisabeth Greenberg



Mariam's face was just as stormy as the dark clouds tumbling above the black tent. "Please, *Babba*," she begged. "I'll help with the camels, I'll put up the tents, I'll do anything if you just let me go hunting with you." She stretched out her hand to the hooded falcons. Her favorite, *Flyer*, lifted his head alertly. "Please let me go."

Her father looked calmly down at her, his brown eyes set deep above his arched nose. "No, Mariam, it is not suitable. Falcon hunting is for the brave and the strong, not for girls. Hamad will go, and you will stay. We leave within the hour. I want to move out ahead of the sandstorm."

Mariam's eyes filled with tears as she turned away from her beloved father. Her brother, Hamad, stepped in front of her, his head barely up to her chin, his hair ruffling in the breeze that snuck through the opening in the tent. "Mariam," he whispered, "I will watch and remember. As soon as we come home, I will tell you everything that happens."

Mariam's eyes glittered. "I know you will, Hamad." Her voice caught in her throat, and she swallowed a sob. "But it's not the same. I want to be in the desert with the hunters. I hate being cooped up in these tents with the women."

Mariam brushed past her brother and ran outside. Bedouins didn't cry, not even Bedouin girls. Mariam grabbed the tail of her head scarf and pushed it against her burning eyes. She would *not* let those tears flood out. She stumbled through the blowing sand, half blinded by the tears in her eyes and half by the grit whipping through the wind. She

Illustrated by Victor Ambrus



BEDOUINS ARE NOMADS, TRIBAL DESERT WANDERERS. THEY MOVE FROM PLACE TO PLACE THROUGHOUT SAUDI ARABIA AND SURROUNDING COUNTRIES.

A JERBOA IS A LONG-TAILED,
LEAPING DESERT RODENT.



A BUSTARD IS A GROUND-RUNNING
BIRD RELATED TO THE CRANE.

headed straight for the rocky escarpment and her secret retreat under the stone ledge.

The jagged shelf jutted out, and she scrambled underneath the overhang. Inside, it was cool and quiet, although she could still hear the desert wind whistling past outside. Finally alone, she burst into tears. How could her father be so cruel? He knew she loved the falcons. And she understood them, too. She'd been feeding Flyer for weeks, even trapping mice and jerboa to make him hungry for fresh meat. When her father released him to hunt the bustard, the falcon would be eager, even desperate, for the chase.

Mariam imagined her father's strong hands thrusting Flyer into the sky. His brown wings flecked with gold would beat strongly, and he would soar higher than the escarpment above her. She longed to see him circling around and around and around, and then drop faster than the eye could follow to take the bustard. She rubbed her wet cheeks.

Oh, if only her grandfather were still alive. He would take her hunting; she just knew he would.

Mariam caught her breath. Her heart jolted in her chest as she remembered begging Grandfather once for a ride on his horse Wind. Just four years old, she was tired of being tucked in the camel bag next to her mother's knee. The camel was supposed to make her sleep as it rocked back and forth like a living cradle, but her legs were cramped and tight in the bag. She had smiled that day, secretly delighted with her plan. She knew Grandfather loved her. He fed her dates, and

she often sat in his lap when he told stories around the campfire. He'd rest his strong hand on her head, sometimes gently patting it, sometimes giving it a firm rub, and sometimes smoothing her tangled hair.

On that day, when the tribe had begun to move toward the horses and camels after the rest stop, Mariam had wriggled out of her mother's arms and run to Grandfather. She had stood straight and tall, the way he liked to see her. "Beloved Grandfather," she asked, "may your little one ride with you?" He'd laughed and swung her around, and she had thought, Yes, I will ride on the horse! She'd arched her back in delight and stretched her legs as she spun through the air like a ribbon twirled by a dancer. But then Grandfather had placed her firmly back on the ground.

"Mariam, it is not suitable," he said. "Men ride horses, and women ride camels."

Only Mariam's grandmother, her wrist still bound after a fall from a recalcitrant camel, had looked at her with love and understanding.

Mariam felt as trapped and hemmed in now, at twelve years of age, as she had when she was four. Of course, Grandfather would not have let her hunt with the falcons! Grandfather would have said, just like her father, "It is not suitable, Mariam." He would have said it with love, just like Babba, but he would have said it.

Although Mariam wasn't stuck in a bag anymore when the Bedouins shifted camp, she spent her days doing women's work—

RECALCITRANT MEANS
DISOBEDIENT, STUBBORN,
UNMANAGEABLE. SOUNDS
SO FAMILIAR...



OH, REALLY!?



A SHAMAL IS A NORTH WIND THAT
USUALLY BRINGS SANDSTORMS.

tending the fire, following the goats, making cheese. If only her father would let her hunt, she thought, she would bring back dozens of those funny-looking bustards and quick-running rabbits.

Mariam sighed and crawled out of the dark shelter under the ledge. The storm had risen, and the air was thick with yellow sand. Mariam couldn't see her feet below her. She stretched out her hand, and her fingertips melted into the thick yellow haze. She would never find her way back to the family tent in this *shamal*. Retreating into her shelter, she lay quietly. The whistling, howling wind lulled her like the falling and rising cadence of the desert wolves. Drowsily, she stretched and then lay still, fast asleep as the desert storm raged and swirled outside her small shelter.

When Mariam awoke, the wind had dropped, and it was night. With the instincts born of desert living, she went back to sleep, safe under the protecting ledge. Outside, a long-tailed jerboa ventured from his underground burrow, hopped a few feet, then suddenly lost his life to a sand cat on the prowl. A large owl swooped over the cat, and the cat ducked into Mariam's refuge. She sniffed at Mariam's sprawled figure, but the shy creature wasn't interested in big animals, only small ones. The cat crouched hidden until the owl lost interest; then she ventured home to her own snug nest.

The sun rose. A ray of light crept in under the ledge, and Mariam roused. She blinked at the small paw prints in the sand close to her hand. Then realization hit. She'd

A SAND CAT
IS A WILD
CAT WITH
HAIR ON
THE SOLES
OF ITS PAWS
TO HELP IT
CLIMB SAND
DUNES.



been out in the shamal all night. Her mother would be furious! Mariam had ignored the first rule of the desert—stay with the camels and tents in a storm. She rushed out, then turned abruptly as she heard a squawk.

She scanned the desert floor, then lifted her eyes to catch a flutter halfway up the cliff. She heard faint squeaking sounds. Mariam scrambled up the rocks and boulders, her heart beating with hope. The squeaking stilled, but she had marked the spot, and like a homing pigeon, she zeroed in. A small falcon, no larger than her forearm, beat its gold-flecked wing weakly.

All care for her mother floated right out of Mariam's mind as she reached toward the struggling bird. Then she pulled her hand back, sucking the triangular red scar on her forefinger thoughtfully. Once she had been too eager to feed Flyer, and he had attacked. When Babba picked up a wild bird from the net trap, he wrapped it firmly in a light cloth. "When birds' eyes are hidden," he had told Mariam, "they get quiet. Perhaps they think it is time to sleep."

Those poor, silly pigeons tied to the nets and used as lures for the wild falcons had no time for sleep. Without the glory and grace of their high-flying brothers, they frantically fluttered as they tried to escape their fate. They weren't even smart enough to attack fingers. This bird was. It hadn't been caught in a trap, but it was still wild! Perhaps it had been forced into the rock wall by the heavy winds.

Mariam slipped the thin scarf off her head and hooded the bird, catching the scarf firmly behind its neck. The startled falcon

flapped its right wing, but the left wing hung limply. Mariam could see exactly where it drooped. This beautiful falcon would never fly again unless she could fix its broken wing.

Mariam stood quietly holding the bird, humming under her breath until it calmed down and became as still as a bat hanging from the top of a cave. She searched through the stories her grandfather had told of his youth.

"Once," he had said, "a falcon struggled so hard in the pigeon trap that it broke its wing against the net. That fierce creature, I knew it would be a good hunter. I wanted to save it."

Yes, she remembered now. Grandfather had tied the wings flat against the falcon's back until the bones mended.

Mariam frowned. She was forgetting something. Somehow she had to fix the bones in a straight line. Otherwise, the wing would mend as crookedly as Grandmother's wrist had. Suddenly she saw in her mind what Grandfather had described. The wing tips must lie over each other on the centerline of the falcon's back. Oh yes. That broken-winged falcon had healed so perfectly that Grandfather had named him Wind Dancer. Mariam grinned. Babba had called that falcon Rabbit Scourge.

Mariam ran her hand along the sleek head of the falcon. Gently she pulled the scarf off, and the bird stayed still, only its bright eyes darting back and forth. She folded the scarf lengthwise to make a soft bandage, then drew the tips of the wings together along the centerline of the falcon's back. Softly, gently



she secured the wings to the falcon's body. Its heart beat wildly against her palm as she gripped the creature firmly, one hand around the body and one behind the head.

"I'll have you flying in no time," she assured the bird.

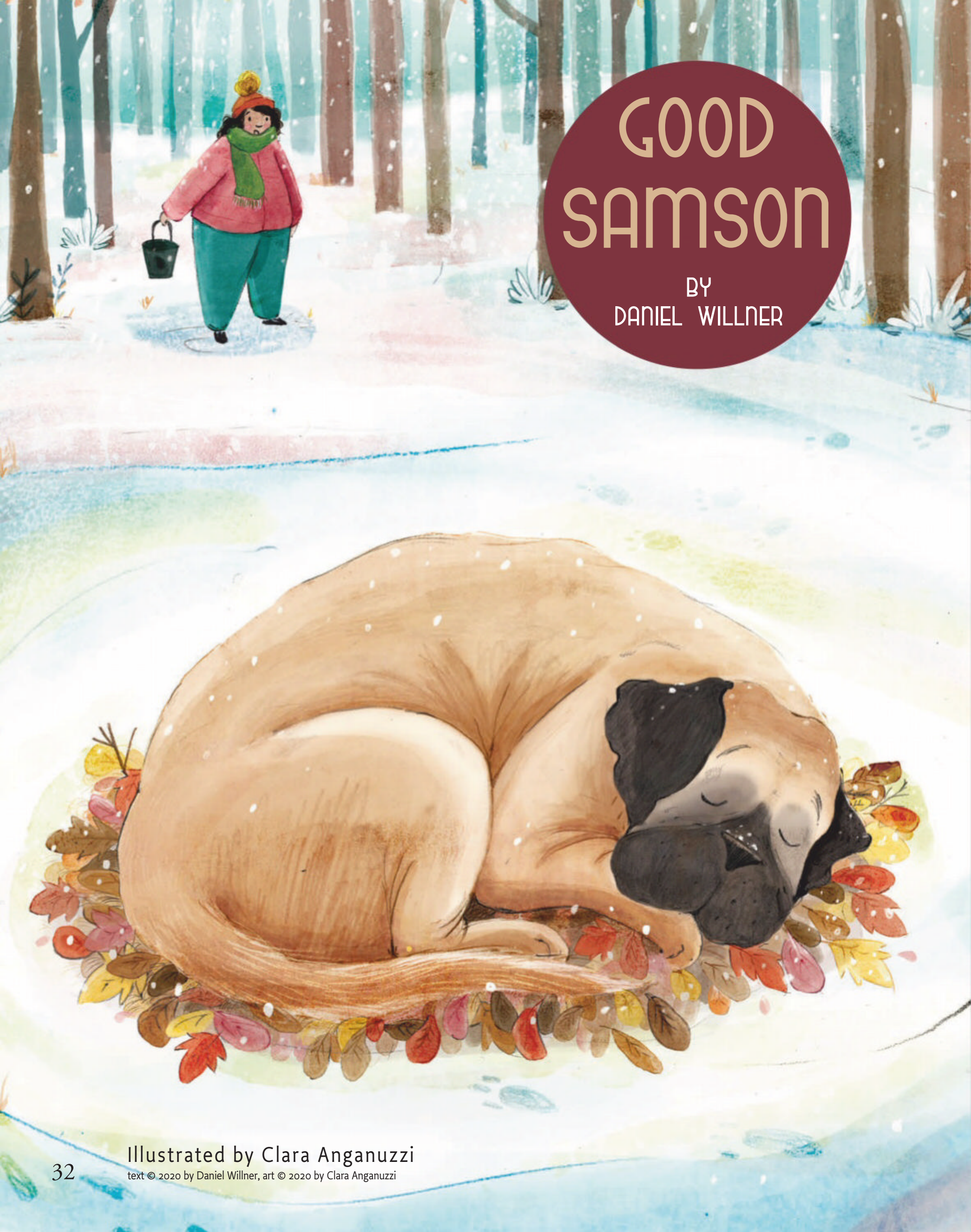
Careful not to jiggle or frighten the wild falcon, she inched down the slope and scurried toward home. As soon as the square black tents came into sight, she called, "Mama, Mama, I'm back! I was safe in my cave during the storm. I'm not hurt."

Her mother burst out of the tent, trembling like a frightened mother camel, and rushed to clasp Mariam to her. Then she saw the beady-eyed falcon. She backed away

suspiciously, folding her arms like armor across her breast. "Mariam," she said in horror, "where did you get that bird?"

Mariam's grandmother peered out of the tent, her crooked wrist pushing the opening wider. She blinked in the bright sun, then smiled in delight at Mariam. "A beauty," she crooned. "A golden beauty." She tottered forward and held Mariam close. "Feed your falcon with camel's milk and cereal," she whispered. "Then give it meat."

She looked her granddaughter straight in the eye and promised, "You are one of the strong and the brave. You will find a way to have your own hunter and make your own hunt!" 



GOOD SAMSON

BY
DANIEL WILLNER

Illustrated by Clara Anganuzzi
text © 2020 by Daniel Willner, art © 2020 by Clara Anganuzzi

SNOW COVERED EVERYTHING.

In the still, silent morning, Edith carried a pail of kitchen scraps from the back door to the compost pile at the edge of the woods. The only noise in the waking world was the creak of the pail handle.

The heat of the compost had melted the snow from the pile, revealing the motley browns of last autumn's leaves. Against this background, the dog's brindle coat almost camouflaged it. The dog huddled on top of the pile. It raised its head, watching her as she approached.

Edith spotted the dog from about ten paces and froze in place. The dog returned her gaze, ears up, brow furrowed. Edith stepped backward.

The dog stood, revealing a star of white fur on its chest. Its head was the size of an anvil. Powerful shoulders bulged above a solidly muscled torso. It stretched, chin to the ground, haunches raised, then padded down the slope of the pile.

The dog sniffed her over, starting with her galoshes and working up. Its hot breath brushed the backs of her fingers. Edith held still, willing herself calm.

The dog sat at her feet, looked up at her and tilted its head to the side, as though awaiting a command.

"Come on, then."

Edith pitched the scraps onto the pile and turned back to the house. The dog followed behind her.

"YOU CANNOT LET it in."

"He's not an it. He's a boy. I saw."

"OK. He's a boy."

"He's friendly."

"You can't know that, sweetheart. He could be dangerous."

"He'll freeze out there!"

Edith's mother watched the dog from the window of the kitchen door. The dog sat in the snow-covered yard, staring back at her. His dark, jowled face was calm.

Edith's mother cracked open the door.

"Come."

The dog trotted to the door.

"Sit."

The dog sat on the doorstep, waiting patiently.

Edith's mother closed the door and put her back against it. Up close, the dog's size was frightening. It easily weighed as much as she.

"We can't, Edith. He's too big. You can't control a dog that big."

"He's friendly, Mom. Look, he comes and sits. He knows people."

"What people? We don't know where he's from, or who he belongs to. There's no one in town who owns a dog like this."

"So? Maybe he's run off. Maybe his people were hurting him. Maybe they abandoned him. They left him to die in the cold!"

Edith's mother raised an eyebrow, regarding her daughter's defiant stance. Then she said something to herself Edith could not hear and opened the door.

"Come on, then."

The dog walked slowly into the warm kitchen, swinging his head to look at Edith and her mother. In the middle of the room, he turned around once in a circle and settled down, his great muzzle on the floor.

Edith hid her smile as she rummaged in the cupboard. The dog lay motionless. Only

MOTLEY MEANS A
VARIETY OF SHADES
AND COLORS.



BRINDLE IS GRAY AND
BROWN WITH DARKER
STREAKS OR SPOTS.



TORSO MEANS THE CHEST AND
MIDDLE PART OF THE BODY.

his eyes moved, following the girl as she packed her lunchbox.

Edith's mother leaned against the counter, considering the dog.

"He's half-starved. You wouldn't know it from his size, but look at his ribs." Each bone was deeply etched beneath his coat.

She pulled the leftovers of a roast chicken from the refrigerator and began shredding the meat from the carcass.

"It's wrong, treating an animal this way. Poor thing." She set the plate before the dog.

Edith's father entered the kitchen, buttoning his shirt.

The dog jumped up, snarling, lips curled to reveal long, sharp canines. Growling deep in his chest, the dog backed up, pushing Edith behind him until they stood in the corner, the dog between Edith and her father.

Edith's father looked at Edith's mother, his hands frozen on the last shirt button. "What is going on here?"

Edith pushed past the dog to stand with her arm around his thick neck. "Don't worry, Poppa. He's a good boy. He just doesn't know you."

"I understand, Edith. But why is this dog in our kitchen?"

"He was outside, freezing. He slept last night on the compost heap."

"Huh. That was smart. It was probably the only warm spot outside for miles."

"He is smart. And he's gentle and he's good. Look! Sit, boy."

The dog settled on his haunches beside Edith, not taking his eyes off her father.

"But where did he come from? Whose dog is this? He looks like some sort of mastiff.

A full-grown dog like this doesn't just appear from nowhere. Where is his collar?"

"He doesn't have one. No one cares for him. He ran away from horrible people, or maybe they abandoned him. Look at him! He's been starved!"

The plate of chicken sat in the middle of the kitchen floor, untouched. Edith's mother picked up the plate and handed it to Edith's father. "You give it to him, so that he knows you are a friend."

Edith's father walked slowly to the middle of the kitchen and placed the plate back on the floor. When he stepped away, the dog trotted forward and ate the chicken in three quick bites. He licked the plate clean, then lay down beside it.

"I wonder what his name is?"

"It's Samson, Poppa."

"How do you know that, sweetheart?"

"Just look at him. He's the strongest dog in the world."

Samson wagged his stubby tail, thumping it against the floor.

Edith's father looked at Edith's mother, then at the dog. "OK. We'll deal with this later. Let's get going, Edith, or you'll be late."

As Edith's father drove her to school, her mother and Samson watched them roll down the long driveway, past the old oak trees bordering the road.

Samson followed Edith's mother back to the kitchen. When she turned from the closet with the broom in her hand, the dog cried out and cowered behind the table.

"Oh, you poor thing. What did they do to you?" Edith's mother put away the broom and sat at the table.

“Come, Samson. Come here. I’m not going to hurt you.”

The dog walked slowly around the table. He rested his massive head in her lap. She stroked his back.

JUST AFTER THREE

o’clock, Samson stationed himself beside the front door. Perhaps he heard Edith from a distance, singing to herself as she walked home. When she came in, he was waiting for her.

Samson stayed by Edith’s side while she did her chores. He rested at her feet as she completed her homework. When the family sat down to supper, Samson kept a respectful distance from the table, his ears cocked as though listening to their conversation. At bedtime, Samson followed Edith into her room and curled up on the floor beside her bed.

Edith’s father clapped his hands. “Come on, Samson. Downstairs. Let’s go.”

Samson curled into a tighter ball and closed his eyes. He sighed deeply.

Edith’s parents looked at each other. They gave her a kiss and wished her good night.

Edith lay awake in bed, listening to Samson’s deep breathing. The wind gathered, whistling around the eaves. Sleet pattered against the darkened windows.

DAWN REVEALED A sky scoured clean of clouds, leaving it a deep, frozen blue.



Edith kicked off the comforter and rolled to her feet. Samson sat beside the bed, waiting. She rested her hand on his broad head. Together they watched the morning sunlight dance across the walls.

After breakfast, Edith’s father placed his hands flat on the table. “Listen. We need to ask around and find out if anyone is looking for this dog. And we need to get him some food. He can’t live on our leftovers.” Samson leaned his shoulder against her father’s thigh. Her father stroked the dog’s back.

“You should take him outside, Edith. I’m sure he needs to go,” her mother said. “And be careful, dear. It’s icy.”

Edith gently tugged Samson’s ear. “Let’s go, boy.” Samson followed eagerly as Edith grabbed her coat and opened the door.

Ice covered everything. The trees creaked in the wind as Edith and Samson stepped carefully down the driveway, boots and paws skating on the glazed surface.

At the foot of the driveway, Samson suddenly stopped and spun around, his paws scrabbling to grip the ice. He charged into Edith, hitting her full in the chest. She flew backward, bumping her head on the frozen asphalt. The world exploded.

Edith awoke a moment later. Samson stood above her, looking down, his jowls drooping comically. When Edith's eyes focused on his, he snuffled her, nose to nose, then dragged his tongue across her cheek.

Edith pushed up on her elbows, wiping off the slobber, and looked past Samson. Shards of wood and ice littered the yard. An enormous oak branch, frozen and weighted heavily with ice, had crashed onto the driveway where she had stood a moment ago, shattering like glass.

Edith looked again at Samson. One of his back legs hung limp. Blood oozed where the falling limb had scored his flank.

Edith rose unsteadily to her knees and wrapped her arms around Samson's neck. She buried her face in his fur, crying.

"Good boy! Good boy! Good Samson." 



I Think of My Dog When It Rains

by Margaret M. Rodeheaver

I think of my dog when it rains:

The talkative springer spaniel who spent so much time in the yard,
And stood on hind legs to pick ripe figs from the tree.
Now when it rains, I think about bringing her in,
But there is no dog in the yard anymore.

I think of my dog when I eat:

The black and tan dachshund, my constant shadow,
Who sat up and begged at the table hopeful-eyed,
paws dangling.
Now when I eat, I look for the eager dog,
But there is no dog by the table anymore.

I think of my dog when I walk:

The lean, elegant greyhound, retired from the track,
Who ran for sheer delight, and wore a path in the grass.
Now when I walk, I feel for her gentle leash-tug,
But there is no dog beside me anymore.

I think of my dog when it snows:

The sturdy golden retriever with her thick fur
Alone in her kennel by day, but greeting me with love
each afternoon.

Now when I seek comfort I think of her calm presence,
But there is no dog in the kennel anymore.

There is no dog at my house anymore,
But still, I think of my dogs.



FALSE IMPRESSIONS

Part 2

Upon the death of his father, the slave Nabi-sin must leave the kitchens of his master, where his father had been embellisher, or cook. His master apprentices Nabi-sin to Zarriqum, slave and royal seal cutter to the household of King Hammurabi of Babylon. Kirum, Zarriqum's adopted daughter, escorts Nabi-sin to his new home and gives him an amber stone with a fire-bug trapped inside. Nabi-sin is delighted to learn that his master's son, Mar-eshtar, often works with Zarriqum. As boys, Nabi-sin and Mar-eshtar pretended they were the hero Gilgamesh and his companion Enkidu killing the giant Humbaba. Mar-eshtar is now a royal scribe in King Hammurabi's service, and Nabi-sin hasn't seen him in years.

On Nabi-sin's first day in Zarriqum's workshop, a tall, young man enters the room and, upon seeing Nabi-sin, stops in astonishment and exclaims, "Gilgamesh!"

ENKIDU!" I RETURNED merrily, for it was my old friend Mar-eshtar.

"Nabi-sin—how have you come to be here?" He embraced me with a strength that nearly knocked me over. "It has been too long since we killed the giant Humbaba together!"

"Yes, I miss those days! Perhaps we can find new adventures. I am to be Zarriqum's apprentice."

"I heard that your good father went to his fate. He will be missed." Mar-eshtar's



by Christy Lenzi

Illustrated by Barry Wilkinson



handsome features and ruddy complexion had changed little, but his voice was much deeper, and he was built like an ox. “I’m glad you’re here!” He clapped his large hand on my shoulder and turned to Kirum. “I have many stories to tell about my old friend! Nabi-sin has missed his calling—he should be a diviner. He has the gift of magic.”

I snickered, and Mar-eshtar continued emphatically, “It’s true! He has always been interested in omens and rituals. When we were ten, he tested his skills on Old Taribum, the singer of tales. One night, Nabi-sin’s father shared supper with Old Taribum in the kitchen, and in exchange, Old Taribum shared his tunes with us. He was singing *The Dream Circle*, a song about Gilgamesh seeking omens from dreams while sleeping inside a circle Enkidu drew for him. Old Taribum kept forgetting which dream was next, so he would go all the way back to the beginning. While Old Taribum was singing the third dream for the fifth time, Nabi-sin mixed a special potion to heal his memory. After drinking it, Old Taribum ran from the room in terrific haste. He attempted to return, only to flee immediately again in great distress! Whatever Nabi-sin gave him was certainly strong magic, but it never healed Old Taribum’s memory!”

“Yes, I remember!” I shook my head in amusement. “That was the night before you left for scribal school. I think I added a triple dose of manna to that potion to make it taste better. At the time, I didn’t know all the properties of manna. I only knew it was dried sap collected from ash trees. We sometimes

used it as a sweetener. Poor Old Taribum—I learned later that manna is also a very strong laxative!”

Kirum and Mar-eshtar burst out laughing.

“What is this?” Zarriqum stormed into the room. “I leave for a moment, and the workroom turns into a festival hall? Stories and jokes about old men when you should all be at work! Ever since Babylon conquered the city of Larsa, you young people think life is one long festival. Let the courtiers rejoice and make merry, but we have work to do!”

I HADN’T REALIZED the amount of skill required to produce even the most simple design upon a cylinder seal. I had imagined that I would be taught the mysteries of the bow drill on my first day of work, but several days had gone by, and Zarriqum’s lessons had not progressed beyond seal polishing and tool sharpening. I longed to be sitting at the bow drill, carving the wondrous images of gods and goddesses, kings and beasts like the ones that seemed to spring from Kirum’s drill tip onto the stone. As I polished the beautiful seal that Kirum had finished the day before, I imagined it being rolled over a piece of soft clay that sealed someone’s box of priceless treasures. Perhaps the owner would use the seal as a signature on an important document. The person might one day even pass it down to his or her children’s children.

“Father, the ambassador of Mari has returned to discuss the seal he ordered.” My daydreams were interrupted as Kirum entered



the room behind a well-dressed man with heavily oiled hair and a meticulously curled beard. He was tall, thin, and angular, with nose and eyes like the face of a thunderbird.

Kirum resumed her seat at the bow drill. She dabbed the mixture of oil and emery powder that I had prepared for her onto a seal and continued drilling a hole through the center of it so that it might be worn as a pendant.

The ambassador smoothed his linen garment and adjusted the golden tassels of his belt as he glanced around the dusty workroom

with his chin held high in disdain. Although he claimed to be visiting Zarriqum in order to discuss the design for his new seal, I suspected that his real motive was to engage in gossip. He and Zarriqum moved to the farthest corner of the room and talked in low voices, just as they had done for the past few days.

I did not care for the ambassador of Mari. Babylon and the city of Mari were political allies, so it was strange that, even though the ambassador had been sent as an envoy of peace to King Hammurabi's court, he seemed to



EMERY POWDER IS
USED FOR POLISHING
SEALS.

enjoy ridiculing the people of Babylon. The day before, Kirum had remarked upon the brilliance of the morning light, and the ambassador had replied haughtily in his nasal voice, “Babylonians may be surprised to learn that Shamash also deigns to shine on the city of Mari. They seem to think that only Babylon deserves the sun god’s rays! Of course, now that they own the city of Larsa, the Babylonians expect his light to shine there, too.”

It surprised me that Zarriqum showed such tolerance and even friendliness toward the insolent ambassador. Even as they now huddled in the corner talking, the ambassador offered Zarriqum his small jug of date beer, and with a sneer he exclaimed, “Let’s drink to clever Babylon! Like a witch she captured Larsa with her charms,” he lowered his voice and leaned in toward Zarriqum, “and whispers spells to bring down Mari—” He straightened up and finished loudly, “Oh, clever, *clever* Babylon!”

Zarriqum raised the jug to take a sip and handed it back to the ambassador, who guzzled it down and smacked his wet lips together.

“Curses!” Kirum whispered vehemently. She had drilled too deeply into the stone; the bit broke and then stuck in the seal. She cast it angrily aside. “Nabi-sin, please fetch me another blank seal.”

As I handed her the blank, she looked up anxiously at her father and the ambassador. “Don’t pay any attention to them,” she whispered to me. “Father cares nothing for politics, and the ambassador means no harm. He has a weakness for drink, and Father humors him,

that is all.” She seemed nervous, and her hand trembled slightly as she put a new bit into the shaft of the drill. She breathed a small sigh of relief as the ambassador patted Zarriqum on the back and walked away.

“We’ll talk again this evening,” he droned as he left the room.

Zarriqum turned to me. I realized I had been staring at him and I lowered my eyes to the seal I was rubbing furiously.

“Are you planning to polish off the inscription entirely or will you leave us a few of the signs?” He ran his gnarled fingers through thinning white hair and sighed deeply. “I must go to the court,” he said in a tired voice.

After Zarriqum left, I noticed a strange bowl sitting on the shelf where the ambassador and Zarriqum had been conversing. I picked it up and turned it over carefully in my hands. It was skillfully worked, made of fine lapis lazuli and inlaid with carnelian. This was not the dish of a seal cutter.

I cradled it in my palms and called out to Kirum, “Make haste! Perhaps the ambassador is still nearby. He left a valuable bowl, and I’m sure he would be upset if we didn’t try to return it immediately.”

Kirum did not jump up quickly as I expected her to do. Instead, she slowly rose, lifted the bowl gently from my hands, and placed it back on the shelf.

“It is my father’s,” she said simply. I wished she would look at me as she had the first day we met. It seemed that lately she was always looking somewhere else.

“How—,” I began.



“The ambassador and my father are . . . ,” she seemed to be searching for the right word, “they are old friends; the bowl is a gift.” She returned to her drilling, and I watched her in silence as I continued to polish the gleaming seal.

SHAMASH WAS NEARING the earth as Kirum and I prepared the evening meal for her father and his guest, the ambassador of Mari. I had already told Kirum that I desired

to be embellisher for her father as well as apprentice. She had laughed, claiming she knew my reason.

“It’s my cooking, isn’t it? I know I am a horrible embellisher! Perhaps I can be *your* apprentice.” I had thought it was an excellent idea, but as Kirum sat cutting the onions, she seemed melancholy and preoccupied. I tried to draw her into conversation.

“Kirum, how long have your father and the ambassador been such great friends?” I



was curious to learn how a Babylonian slave and a palace official from Mari had become comrades, but as soon as the words escaped, I knew I had said something wrong. She stood up and stuck the sharp point of her knife into the table, then turned her back to me as she washed her hands in the basin of water I had placed there.

"I would rather not talk of the ambassador," she said in a low voice. She turned to look at me. "Nabi-sin, did you know that my father and your father were old friends?"

She took me by surprise. I could not picture my father and Zarriqum laughing and patting each other on the back.

"Who do you think made this seal?" She held out her smooth arm, the color of golden sand, and with graceful fingers lifted the clay seal that hung around my neck.

"Kirum!" Zarriqum called loudly from the outer room. "Come here. I need to speak with you."

She let go of my seal and left. Kirum's softly spoken words had jarred me. Why did the thought of my father having a friend like Zarriqum bother me so much? He would never have felt comfortable in the presence of such a man as the ambassador, let alone become close friends with him. Father had always said, "Choose the ingredients for your dish as you choose your friends: they must be of the finest quality. A rotten one will spoil everything and leave a bad taste in your mouth."

I quickly finished up the meal and carried it through the corridor. The ambassador's

whiny voice reached me, and I paused to listen.

"She cut the original seal. Why shouldn't she cut the forgery?"

"She is but a sixteen-year-old girl. She shouldn't have to be involved in such politics, Ambassador," Zarriqum answered.

"Zarriqum, I am no fool even if you are. Your eyesight is poor. All your best work is produced by your daughter."

I decided I had better show myself and bring in the food, but Kirum's firm voice made me hesitate. "Father, I will do it."

I took several steps backward in astonishment.

"Good. Now listen to me." The ambassador spoke in a low, hurried tone. "The king of Mari must never suspect that the impression on the tablet was made with a replica seal. For his own good he needs to believe the tablet is authentic. Therefore it must look like King Hammurabi's own seal impression. Do you hear? She *must* cut the seal to look exactly like the original—"

Zarriqum interrupted the ambassador. "We'll talk more after our meal. Kirum, please see to it."

I hurried back to the kitchen and began shuffling dishes so that when Kirum reached me, I was composed enough to say flippantly, "Ah, there's my student! You missed the most important step."

"It is of no consequence. I'm sure I would have burned it or something." She laughed as if nothing had happened. "Father is ready for the meal. I'll take it to him now."

I excused myself for the night. Lying on my mat, I rolled Kirum's amber stone with the trapped fire-bug between my fingers. *Kirum*. How could I have been such a fool? I would never have thought that she was the sort of person who would betray her king. I didn't want to believe it. Then again, perhaps I was wrong. Maybe Kirum was like the fire-bug—helplessly trapped in the ambassador's hands. I winced as I remembered the quick, confident way she had agreed to his plan. I tried to push the memory out of my mind.

I kept rolling the amber through my fingers until sleep finally spilled over me. It was a troubled sleep. I dreamed a thunderbird stole the Tablets of Destiny from King Hammurabi and was flying them to the king of Mari. Even as I awoke in a sweat, I could hear the bird screeching. Becoming more lucid, I realized it was the ambassador's voice in the outer room.

It was still night. From the workroom drifted the soft hum of the bow drill. Kirum was cutting a new seal. I crept quietly out to the corridor and stood in the shadows, trying to make out what the two men were saying.

"Zzzarriqum . . . you donunder-ssstand . . ." The ambassador had been drinking too much, and his speech was beginning to sound slurred. "Thiss is important! I've heard enough court gossip in Babylon to figure out what'sss going on—Hammurabi has hisseye on the city of Eshnunna. In Mari, my king sits on hisss throne and does

nothing. Nothing! 'Pursue peace,' he says! No! Something must be done 'fore Babylon becomes too great—before Hammurabi 'cides to lay his handsss on Mari as well. *Must* take matters into my own hands—no one else will listen. . . . If the king of Mari is led to believe that Hammurabi wantsss to conquer him, too . . . well, then! He'll finally take sssome action! Betray Babylon the witch 'fore she can plot against Mari. Somebody needsss to give the king of Mari a little shove in the right direction. With your help, I can get rid of Hammurabi . . . and don't you worry—Mari'll take good care of you when Babylon fallsss. You'll be *wearing* beautiful sealsss, not cutting them!"

"What about the tablet—what shall it say?" I could hear Zarriqum pouring the ambassador another goblet of beer.

"It needsss to look like a decree from Hammurabi, ordering hisssarmies against Eshnunna and Mari. I'll pretend I intercepted it! It'sss the only way to convince my king to act. I'll use the replica seal to make the official impression on the tablet, and my king'll think it'sss from King Hammurabi himssself. When can the ssseal be ready?"

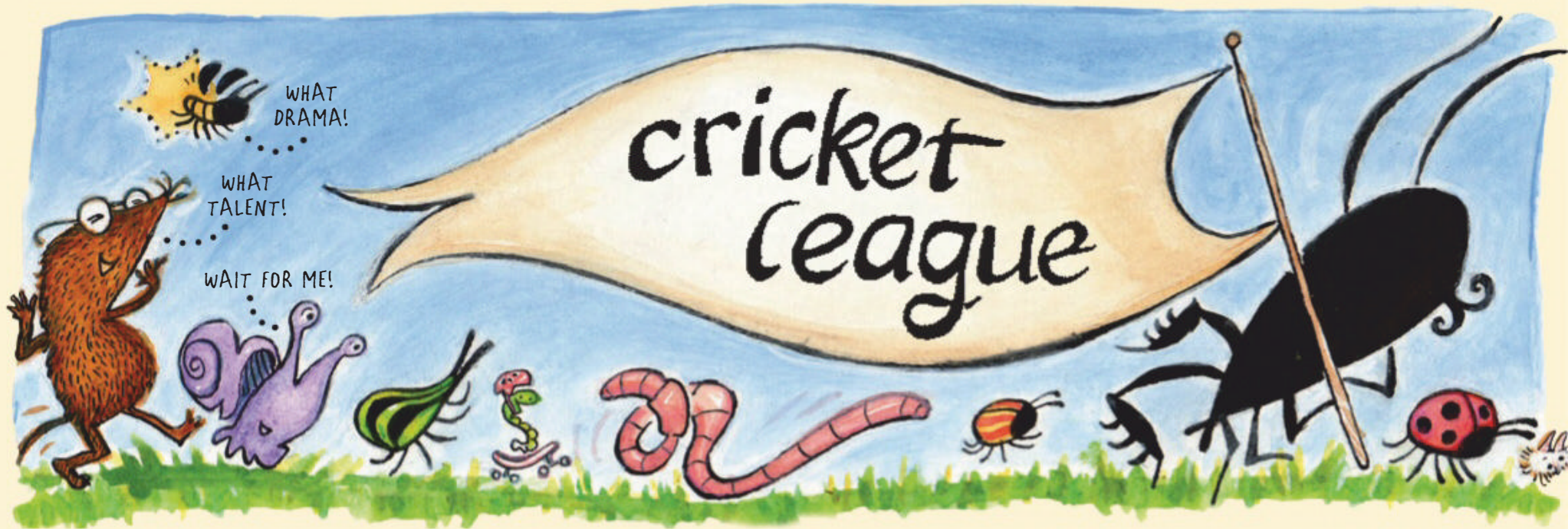
"Before Sin the moon is full again. Kirum's working on it now."

I had heard enough. There was a hollow feeling in the pit of my stomach. I knew what I had to do, and it made me ill. Creeping back to my mat, I prayed to my personal god Sin, god of the moon, for wisdom and protection.

to be continued



ANCIENT BABYLONIANS BELIEVED THEIR GODS USED THE TABLETS OF DESTINY TO KEEP ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE. THEIR LOSS MEANT LOSS OF ORDER. CHAOS!



WINNERS

NOVEMBER 2019 POETRY CONTEST

Holiday Magic

First prize 10 and under

Summer Claudia Balfanz, age 10
Roseville, MN

Chinese New Year

I move away from the New Year's party.
It is too much for me, the Fireworks,
The Dragon Dance,
Red envelopes and oranges.
I look out the window, thinking
That nobody remembers Qai Lin. Not the way
I do. I bring an orange to my mouth,
Knowing this will not be a lucky year.

There they are.
A Stag, a Doe, and Fawn, curled
Together. In the moonlight.
The Stag is sheltering mother Doe,
Lying in front of the infant. They are silver
In the moonlight, past my window.
Qai Lin, my grandmother! You had told me
The deer are my protector family.

They look at me, leave slowly.
Moonlight flows in drops of silver,
Speckles the Fawn's back. But I know
That nobody remembers Qai Lin. Not the way
I do. Still she is with me.
This will be our lucky year.

First prize 11 and up

Cecilia Appel, age 13
Tucson, AZ

A Cold Winter's Evening

Crystal flakes drift silently down.
A doe is huddled in the shelter of a towering tree.
She is tired, oh so tired, but happy
for a new mother's joy is without compare.
She licks the little round lump in the snow beside her.

The tall evergreens stand around to guard.
The wind rushes through the boughs to greet the newborn life.
Welcome to the world, young fawn!
Welcome to the touch of cold winter snow.
Welcome to the taste of sweet spring grass.
Welcome to the smell of approaching summer rain.
Welcome to the sound of rustling autumn leaves.
Welcome to pain, and fear, and sorrow.
And love.
So much love.

Second prize 10 and under

Faith Osterman, age 9
Morton, IL

Christmas Eve

No matter the wind, no matter the storm,
I'll be here by the fire, cozy and warm,
reading in the light of the Christmas Tree
while my mother is making Hot Chocolate for me.
Cozy inside of my house I will stay,
Counting the hours until Christmas Day.

Second prize 11 and up

Max Buonincontro, age 13
Media, PA

A Winter's Night

As I watched snowflakes fall on a cold winter's eve,
I saw the foggy moon peek through pine needle trees,

And just when I thought my hands would freeze,
I heard warm caroling voices sweeping through the breeze,

As I glimpsed white snow covering old November leaves,
And looked through windows at bright lighted trees,

I felt Christmas coming,
Coming up my back,
Up my warm anorak,
Approaching by degrees.

Second prize 11 and up

Katherine Hurley, age 13
Murray, UT

Feathery

A creak of timber, perhaps, or
Silky snow that slips from a tree.
I find myself awake once more.
The pale sky is feathery.

The moon falls silver, softly so
The only one who knows is me.
It shines off freshly fallen snow.
The pale sky is feathery.

Some snowflakes tap the window, and,
As silent as a thought, they flee.
They swirl down to rest on land.
The pale sky is feathery.

The magic of the stillness stands
On everything that I can see.
Winter's cold but gentle hands
Embrace the sky that's feathery.

Third prize 10 and under

Lizzie Mills, age 10
Yakima, WA

The best things about
the holiday meets
are the foods that we get
and the things we can eat.

The sugar and candy,
hot chocolate and brandy,
soft fudge and warm cider.
Who cares if we're wider?

The sweet apple pies that
bring us pure delight.
The pudding-like batter.
Don't mind if I'm fatter!

Yet all of these things
that I've searched for and found,
I've eaten them, eaten them,
and I'm only fifty-nine pounds.

Third prize 11 and up

Willow Shields, age 13
Landenberg, PA

holiday magic
flickering lights
crystal snow falling
chilly cold nights

slight wind
crisp frost
snow settles
grass lost

warm glow
cool sky
twinkling stars
cozy inside

Honorable Mention

Ella Anzelmo, age 13
New Albany, OH

Race to the Snow

As I sleep, little do I know
That outside my window, it's raining snow!
White flakes of frozen water and dust
Have covered the world in a powdery crust.

I wake and I run to the window to see
A beautiful winter painting 'round me!
Like dancers, the snowflakes are twirling and leaping
While underground animals are silently sleeping.

I run downstairs, and to my surprise,
The heater's off, and the room's like ice!
But it doesn't matter, for today is the day
When I will be out in the snow to play.

I pull on my coat and my winter boots
Oh, the sun is out! I'd better scoot!
I have to get in a lot of play
Before the snow melts and the fun goes away.

I rush out the door and into the yard,
So pretty, it looks like a Christmas card!
I'm finally out, oh, what do you know,
I'm final out to play in the snow.

Honorable Mention

Ruth Gebhardt, age 12
Inola, OK

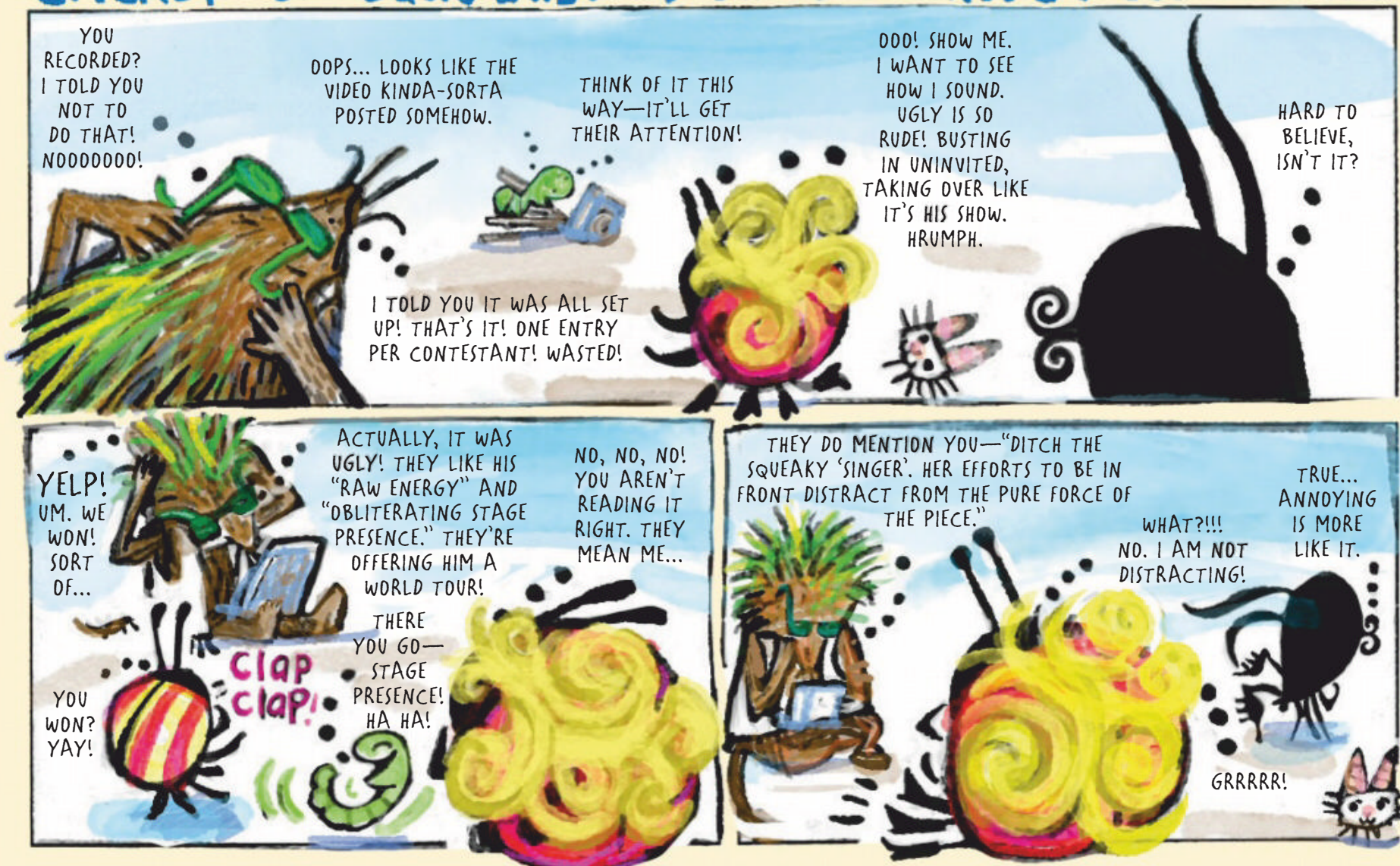
I Wonder

Snow is falling, falling.
Gently the icy flakes fly to the ground.
I stand in the middle of the fluttering flakes.
They are tiny and cold,
Cold when they hit my face and hands.

I look up.
I can barely see when I look straight up
Because snow falls in my eyes.
So I step back,
Under the roof of the house.

But then outlines catch my eye—
Black, sharp, high in the sky,
Dark against the white backdrop of the sky,
But partly muffled by the dancing snowflakes.
Birds!

Cricket & Ladybug: OF Fame & Glory! (or NOT...)



Up in the sky they flap above me
In a pattern, in a flock.
As I watch them, I wonder . . .
What is it like to fly so high through falling snow?

Honorable Mention

Katie Gommer, age 13
Media, PA

Can't Sleep

From the skylight in my room
I gaze upon the stars
I dream I'm floating through the skies
On my way to planet Mars

I close my eyes and hug my teddy
Soon I'll be sound asleep
But I'm too excited to relax
So I count my sheep

From the silence of my room
I hear a ho-ho-ho
Santa's here, I want to see!
But I can't seem to go

I know that if I see him
His magic will disappear
I can't do that to all the
Good boys and girls this year

So I lie in my bed awaiting
Ready to see the surprise
When we'll all run down to see
All the presents through hopeful eyes

But here I lie
Looking into the starry sky
Drifting off more and more
And the night seems to fly by

Honorable Mention

Anna L. Williams, age 10
Vacaville, CA

One single snowflake begins to awake,
the spirit of Christmas for all.

Hear choir voices singing, silver bells ringing,
carols play reruns in my head.

A beautiful tree, decked in tinsel and lights
banishes all family bickers and slights.

Who would have known that one thoughtful gift
would give cheer and joy such a wonderful lift?

The nativity set on the dining room table
gives me a feeling it's not just a fable.

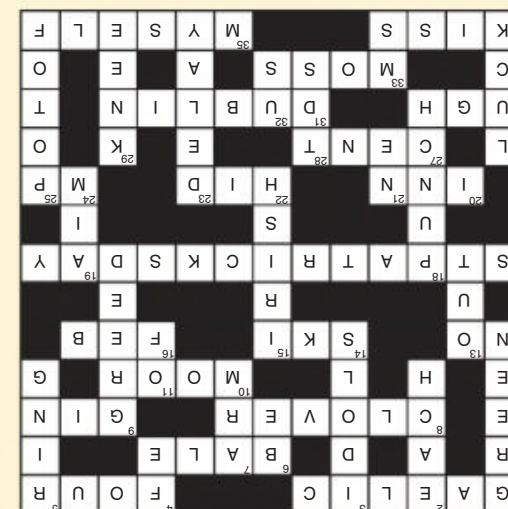
Dinner is a feast, not small in the least,
and family togetherness calls.

The stars how they twinkle, the bells, they still tinkle,
Christmas spirit is strong.

It's amazing to me, how one baby boy
could bring a whole world incomparable joy.

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

Solution to Crossbird Puzzle



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NEW POETRY CONTEST: PET FRIENDLY

Everybuggy loves pets—even a pet rock like "Iggy Flint." Edith loves "Good Samson," her big, loyal dog with a goofy look. And Ladybug really loves her pet kitty, Pussywillow, who just couldn't be cuter. For this month's contest, everybuggy wants to read your best poem about what makes a pet you love so adorable.

Maybe you will write about something cute or funny your pet does—like a dog that greets you with its food bowl when you come home from school, or a baby kitten that gets hopelessly tangled in a ball of string, or a hamster that naps on your desk while you do your homework. Perhaps you have a more unusual pet, like the rescued hunting falcon in "Mariam Finds Her Wings," or a working animal companion, like a horse that twitches its ears in its own funny way when you come to its stable. Your poem might even be about a pet you would like to have one day, or one that you imagine adopting from an animal shelter, or even a weird imaginary pet.

Whether your nonhuman companion is a dog, a cat, an iguana, or a magical pussy willow come to life, everybuggy will love reading your best poem—of 24 lines or less, please—about what makes your pet so lovable.

Contest Rules

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



HAVE YOU EVER wished, when you were annoyed with someone, that there was an easy way to let that person know how you felt? My friend DeMar Regier tells me that women in rural Anatolia (a region in Turkey) can do it by simply tying on a scarf!

In some Islamic countries, where it is traditional to cover one's head, generations of village women have used scarfs as a subtle way to communicate. By applying a lace called *oya* to the edges of their scarfs, they convey to others their personal feelings and emotions. The oyas, made of tiny three-dimensional flowers, appear to be just pretty decoration, but the lacy flowers carry specific messages. For example, if a woman wants to tell someone, "I'm cross with you!" she chooses a scarf edged with thistles. On the other hand, if she wants to say "I'm in love," she chooses a scarf trimmed with purple hyacinths. Pink hyacinths announce "I'm engaged," while violets promise "I shall always love you." The delicate jasmine's message is "I love somebody else!" Since most women have a storehouse of scarfs to choose from, they can use an oya to say almost anything.

Why do women use oyas? According to Turkish tradition, a wife should not speak in a discourteous or unkind way to her husband or her elders. So what can she do if she's irritated with her husband? Tie on a barley flower oya. But if she wears a hot pepper oya, he should really look out! This means "I'm furious!" Small girls are taught to make oyas as soon as their fingers are agile enough to handle a shuttle, a needle, or a crochet hook. In time, a girl's store of oyas, as part of her trousseau, goes with her to her new home.

Anatolian women, bound by a tradition that didn't permit them to speak angrily against husbands and elders, created a unique way to bend the rules. And though it's always a bad idea to judge a book by its cover, you can sometimes judge a person—or at least her state of mind—by her oya.

Old Cricket

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