

# Cricket®

Literary Adventures for Independent Readers



# Cricket

Literary Adventures for Independent Readers

January 2021    Volume 48    Number 4



PHOTO BY AUBREY HART

## COVER AND BORDER

by Ingrid Kallick

"Try Something New"

*acrylic and pencil on paper*

Ingrid Kallick is an artist and writer. She learned folk art from her grandparents, who emigrated from Norway, Bohemia, and Ukraine. Rumor has it that she was abducted by fairies as a child. After returning, she became an artist, with her first publication in *American Girl* magazine at age thirteen. She wandered the woods near her home with a sketchbook and field guides for plants, birds, and fungi, and later studied sculpture and graphic design at the University of Illinois. She has done art for magazines, murals, books, stage sets, and scientific visualization. Ingrid mainly works in acrylic, but also uses gouache, colored pencil, oil, and digital painting techniques.

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# the letterbox

THIS ONE'S  
FOR YOU...

MEWY YAY!

Dear Everybuggy,

Hi! I know, I know, you've heard this a section (10<sup>24</sup>) times, but I LOVE your magazine! I just have something to say (all from February 2020). Ladybug, you are correct! Hockey is very rough. Just don't punch-fight. Wear protective gear, and you'll be fine, Muffin. The more protective gear, the better! Sluggo, George, and Tail, here are a pad so your slime won't freeze and bodysuits so you don't get ice burn. George and Tail, do not wear dancing outfits when you play hockey. It's very dangerous! I hope this will make it better to play hockey. Happy skating!

Rhianna Probst, age 11

Aurora, Colorado

p.s. Ladybug, can you fly?

*Can I fly? You should see me!*

Love,  
Ladybug

Dear Cricket,

Even though I just started reading your magazines, I love the stories. My favorite book so far is *The Fog Test* by Pamela Love. It was a really good book because Kris never gave up, so he ended up seeing his family.

Katelynn B., age 9  
Conroe, Texas

Dear Cricket Magazine Editors,

I love *Cricket* magazine so, so much! I love just reading it right when it comes in the mail, especially during the quarantine, when there's not much else to do. I was wondering if you could do an issue, or maybe a story, about how the quarantine is affecting us.

Also, I definitely agree with Aviv (July/August 2020), Cricket Country should have a national band! I'm a violinist.

Maeve, age 11  
Washington, D.C.

*We've been hearing from other readers about their quarantine activities. You can read about them in this and in previous Letterbox pages.*

*A happy and healthy new year to all!*  
Cricket

WE, UM, HOPE YOU'LL  
TRY BEFRIENDING  
BUGS BEFORE EATING  
THEM.



DON'T  
EAT YOUR  
FRIENDS!

Hello!

I've been getting *Cricket* for two years now, but this is my first time writing. I love to read, do math, and write. I find it much easier to write on paper or in a notebook than on a computer. I have sooo many notebooks. Whenever I ask, "Where's my notebook?" my brother says, "Which notebook?"

I also like to tell my stories to myself or my siblings and then write them. I'm currently writing a book and I hope to get it published. I've wanted to be a writer since I was six and have told stories since I was very young.

Some advice for other writers: Observe and write what you observe in a notebook. It is very good for writers to know what small things are going on. Also, I find a notebook full of names very helpful. I also suggest keeping a notebook of words with you at all times. Best of luck to you!

Maya, age 13

Brooklyn, New York

p.s. I also play the viola.

Hey, Everybuggy!

This is my first time writing in to *Cricket*. I like reading, drawing, hiking, and definitely theater. My mom and I are reading the fifth Harry Potter book, and I'm a Hufflepuff. I love the story "Underwater Music" (July/August 2020). Be nice, Ladybug!

Ellie G., age 9

Paso Robles, California

Dear Ugly Bird,

Hi there! I think you would like my dad. He is from Mexico. When he was a boy he ate real bugs! I think it would be fun to try bugs! Craici gacie bugeez, yum!

Tater, I like space, too! I like to research dinosaur facts. *T. rex* is king of the dinosaurs. There were birds in the Jurassic Period.

Estela Roque Chaney, age 7  
Carnation, Washington

I LOVE THE FEEL OF  
WRITING ON PAPER.  
IT HELPS ME THINK.



Hi, Guys,

New Year's Eve is a very special day for me. It's my second CBversary. It marks two years since I first posted on Chatterbox. My very first post was a thread about favorite things. It's been two years, we've all changed, new people have joined, and I think it will be a nice full-circle moment. So post your favorite things.

My favorite things are tea, warm sweaters, snow days, Pokémon, graphic novels, walking on the beach, hot showers, cats, day-dreaming, reading, writing, drawing, sneakers, sports, the Chatterbox, laughing, Haribo gummi Twin Snakes, gummi peach rings, our Christmas tree, camp, watching the sunrise/sunset, and food.

I want to thank everyone, including the Admins, for making the Chatterbox such a great place.

Leo

Pudding's Place, Chatterbox

Today I was at my bus stop, and it started snowing! It was just flurries, but to middle schoolers in the Deep South, we were so excited. My friend and I sat together on the bus, and we were chatting about our memories in the snow. I remember in 2014 we had a snowstorm and got six inches of snow. I was about six and I remember eating the snow because I had never seen it before!

Secret

Down to Earth, Chatterbox

In Seattle there is this really cool museum about computers that is really hands on.

Last night we had violin group on the computer, and one of the teachers was talking about how they went around their neighborhood playing songs for people. She said, "We went Corona caroling!"

Dolphin, age 12  
Kent, Washington

THERE IS  
SOMETHING  
MAGICAL  
ABOUT  
SNOW...





I have been doing a lot more book-binding, whittling, and I have started weaving my first tapestry. I'm getting more sewing practice, too—besides face masks I also machine-stitched an apron and hand-sewed a stuffie bunny. And I learned paper quilling! I have had a lot of time to think of environmental things and have had two good story ideas. Also, we have finally attracted Baltimore orioles to our yard and we saw a pileated woodpecker, too! Lastly, we have some old telegraphs, and I'm learning Morse code on them.

Blackfooted Bobcat  
Quarantine Hobbies, Down to Earth

I follow the Nanulian down the hall and out into the cold, windy streets. The snow feels like it's biting me, and tiny pieces of ice shatter against my skin. I've gotten used to it, though—this is typical Sanukan weather.

I finally reach the small Sanukan laboratory. It's built into the side of the mountain, near the top. Within the cavern, it's much warmer than it is outside. Another Nanulian is waiting for me, one with white fur and silver and black stripes. He's got a few specks of dark navy blue in his fur as well. It must be Glow of Dying Embers.

Sybill  
A Tale of Two Kyngdoms  
Kyngdom, Chatterbox

Here's my idea: It's a sci-fi setting in the galaxy of Verin, specifically the planet Klay. Klay is the central planet, the planet where people, or rather aliens as most of them are, can gather, take refuge, and generally live. One day, many of the aliens receive a piece of mail, an important-looking message from somewhere called Earth. The message invites the aliens to Klay Center to meet with the humans and discuss something about some sort of business. A few moments after that, an automated bird flies up and spurts out a letter: "If you received a message from Earth, destroy it immediately and **Do Not Go.**"

Niteskiies  
Inkwell, Chatterbox

WEIRD HOW THERE  
CAN BE GOOD STUFF  
AND BAD STUFF AT  
THE SAME TIME.



I'm kinda nervous this year because I'm starting a new school, so I don't know a lot of people and I have a heavy course load. I'm also kinda worried about how online school will be. My school won't be in person till November.

I do Suzuki violin! I'm in book 9. I love playing violin. I'm in ninth grade. I'm taking:

I WOVE A POT  
HOLDER ONCE. IT  
WAS FUN!



orchestra, AP ancient world history, Pre-AP biology, Pre-AP English, Spanish 3, Algebra 2, art, and PE. I'm super excited for orchestra and Spanish!

MountainSpirit  
Cber Student Lounge  
Down to Earth

Hey, Guys!

I thought I'd create this place to take a break from homework and talk about school. Here you can compare classes, post notes, get help on different subjects, share essays, rant about online school, and procrastinate your schoolwork.

What classes are you taking this year? I'm in tenth grade. I'm also taking my first AP class, which is kind of nerve-racking. Here are my classes: AP art history, Mandarin II, humanities II, honors chemistry, advanced algebra, product design, fashion design, and spiritual exploration. I hope some of you have the same classes so we can study together! Hope to see you in the lounge!

Fidelity  
Cber Student Lounge, Down to Earth

Unfortunately, because of COVID school probably won't be as fun this year. We aren't switching classes or going on the cool field trips we usually go on. My grade was supposed to go to Chesapeake Bay for a week this year to study marine life! I'm so disappointed.

OK, I'll try to stop being so negative and be positive. This year I have electives for the first time, and that is fun. I also get to be in a more advanced art class. Plus I have my favorite teacher for biology.

QueenofWolves  
This Month, Chatterbox

Here is my "I'm Bored" list: Write a letter to friends. Do a puzzle. Read books. Go for a walk. Write a short story or novel. Organize my room. Go for a bike ride. Play a game. Do a craft. Listen to a podcast. Color, sketch, or draw. Play Legos. Do yoga or work out. Line up dominos and knock them down. Read *Cricket* magazine!

Cynthia M., age 11  
USA, Coronavirus Thread  
Down to Earth

Hey!

New challenge: Make up a new species and post the description in the replies. Either draw it yourself, or I could draw it for you if you'd like. I'll go first and post art of my new animal/hybrid, the Catraox! Now you!

Ripley\_the\_Fox  
Pudding's Place, Chatterbox

## CHIRPS FROM CRICKET'S LETTERBOX AND CHATTERBOX

There are a lot of things that don't make sense. What doesn't make sense to me is why mermaids aren't real! I really love those mythical creatures.

Emekittycon K., age 11  
Kitten Kingdom, Down to Earth

What's your favorite part about school? Your favorite teacher? Your least favorite subject? This is a thread to talk about all of those things.

Strawberri, age 13 winters  
This Month

I have started geocaching. It's really fun! I have found five so far and tomorrow I'm going on a hike that apparently has a multicache with seventeen caches. I don't like hiking, but maybe I will find some of them.

Feline Fantasy  
Quarantine Hobbies, Down to Earth

When I imagine something, read something, or am writing a story, my face will make the same expressions the character is. It can get a little awkward when my sister or parents will ask me, "Are you OK?" Also, when I listen to music, my fingers will air-play the music like I'm playing my violin.

Peregrine, age many moons  
The Aerie, Odd Habits  
Thread, Chirp at Cricket

I am vegetarian. I am also trying to stop eating animal products from factory farms. However, I can't give up ice cream and cheese completely, so I'm only doing it every other week.

PygmyOwl  
Down to Earth

One of the things I really like about poetry and creative writing in general is that it can be interpreted in so many different ways, regardless of what the author originally intended.

Jaybells  
Poetry Contest, Pudding's Place

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

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

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

# cricket country

TIME TO  
CHOOSE UP  
SIDES FOR  
THE BIGGEST  
SNOWBALL  
FIGHT EVER!

MY TEAM IS  
MARTY, ZOOT,  
GEORGE, AND TATER!

WELL, MY TEAM IS SLUGGO,  
PUDDING, MUFFIN, AND TAIL!

UMMM.

HUH?

GO, MY TEAM!  
I'LL PROVIDE  
THE AIR COVER.

I SHOULD HAVE  
WORN MY  
SNOWSHOES...ER,  
SNOWSHOE.

MEWY-  
HEY!

MEWY NO  
PICKED ME!

PICK  
ME!

YAY!  
WHERE'S  
THE SNOW?

GEORGE AND TAIL  
AREN'T ON THE  
SAME TEAM?

THAT'LL BE  
A STRETCH!

DON'T  
WORRY, PUSS.  
YOU CAN BE  
ON ANY SIDE  
YOU WANT.

YOU'RE TOO SMALL  
TO COUNT,  
ANYWAY.

HEADS UP!  
SNOWBALL  
COMING  
THROUGH!

TOO SMALL?  
MEWY  
PHOOEY!

YOU CALL  
THAT A  
SNOWBALL?

TAKE THAT!

OH YEAH?  
TAKE THAT!

THIS IS A  
SNOWBALL.  
(EKK! OOF!)  
BETTER STAY  
OUT OF THE  
WAY, PUSS.

HAVE A  
SNOWBALL,  
TAIL!  
(THWACK!)

AND  
HERE'S ONE  
FOR YOU,  
GEORGE!  
(TOSS!)

HA-HA! WHAT DO  
YOU THINK OF THIS,  
CRICKET? (HEAVE!)

I THINK  
I NEED A  
BIGGER  
SNOWBALL.

MEWY  
WANNA HELP!

THIS'LL BE THE  
SNOWBALL TO  
END ALL  
SNOWBALLS!

OH YEAH?  
COME ON, TEAM!  
LET'S ROLL  
A MONSTER  
SNOWBALL AND  
SHOW CRICKET!

I'LL PUT YOU  
OUT OF THE  
WAY, PUSS, SO  
YOU DON'T GET  
SQUISHED.

IS BIGGER  
ALWAYS  
BETTER? (YES!)

MEWY NO! MEWY  
PLAY, TOO!

STAY UP HERE—YOU'LL BE NICE  
AND SAFE. NOW EXCUSE ME, LOOKS  
LIKE THE TEAM NEEDS HELP FROM  
AIR PATROL...

MEWY-GRRRR.  
-SPTT SPTT.

OOF!  
OOF!

I CAN'T  
LIFT IT.  
LET'S PUSH  
THEM BACK!

C'MON, TIME TO SHOW  
SOME BUGGY MUSCLE!  
PUSH!

WE'RE  
WINNING!  
(OOF!)

NO, WE  
ARE!  
(OW!)

MEWY  
WHOOOPS!

GRR!

GRR!

MEWY EKK!  
(TUMBLE,  
TUMBLE)

I'M WINNING!

MEWY  
MFFFT.

NO, I'M  
WINNING!

MFFT!  
SPPT!  
MEWY HELP!

WHOA.  
PUSS?  
PUSS!

HEAD FOR THE  
HILLS! SHE'S  
COMING THROUGH!

EKK!

# KaPow!



# The Cat With No Meow

by Alexa Tondreau Dahl



Illustrated by Michelle Schneider

text © 2020 by Alexa Tondreau Dahl, art © 2020 by Michelle Schneider

"JESSALYN, ARE YOU trying to merge with your chair at the cellular level?" Mrs. Lockwood asked me in her low, croaky voice from the front of the classroom.

Twenty heads turned in my direction, to witness whatever *cellular merging* was. My plan to disappear during English period today clearly wasn't working. Even so, I sank deeper in my seat.

"You're after Esha," Mrs. Lockwood informed me.

Within seconds, Esha was standing at the front of the class with her poster turned backward. She seemed to be looking forward to her presentation, which didn't surprise me considering how much Esha liked to talk.

Me, I'd been dreading this assignment ever since Mrs. Lockwood said we needed to share something no one else in the sixth grade knew about us. I'd never given a presentation in front of a class before. Up until this year, I'd been homeschooled by my parents.

"You can begin, Esha. Please keep it short." Mrs. Lockwood sighed.

Esha smiled a megawatt smile. "One thing about me you may not know—I have a black cat, named Sultana, who never meows! The veterinarian said not to worry because some cats are just that way. And someday, if she wants to meow, she will. Sultana is small for an adult cat and only weighs seven pounds. She has five toes on her front left paw, which is a little creepy, I admit. Again, the vet said it's perfectly normal. In my opinion, Sultana is truly the best cat, ever."

A KITTY DOESN'T  
HAVE TO MEOW IF SHE  
DOESN'T WANT TO!



ARF!



Then with great flourish, Esha turned the poster board to reveal a stunning photograph of herself and . . . Shadow, my black cat. My cat! Mine! The cat on the poster was identical to Shadow, down to the spot of white fur on her throat.

Why was Esha doing a presentation on Shadow?

A smattering of applause went around the classroom as Esha returned to her seat. I stood up slowly. This was going to be even worse than I had imagined.

I went to the front of the room and held up my poster—which featured an intricate photo collage of my cat. “There’s something no one knows about me, which is that I have a pet named Shadow. She’s a black cat with five toes on her front left paw.” My voice trembled like there was an earthquake inside of it. “She’s been my cat since I was



seven years old. One interesting thing about Shadow is . . . she never meows.”

The whole class was looking at me like I’d lost my marbles, and I couldn’t continue. I ran back to my seat, staring at the floor the whole way.

“Jessalyn and Esha, see me after class,” Mrs. Lockwood said.

Minutes later, I stood side by side with Esha, who kept looking at my poster and then back at her own.

“It’s rather obvious”—Mrs. Lockwood laughed, and it was a gravelly, grumbly sound—“that someone here plagiarized someone else. You have the weekend to work out who should come up with a different topic. Monday, I expect one of you to give a new presentation.” She raised an eyebrow at us,





and I used my last bit of courage to whisper yes.

I followed Esha into the hallway. “Sultana is my cat,” she proclaimed. “I am one hundred percent positive, beyond a doubt.”

“I don’t know who Sultana is,” I said quietly. “But Shadow is mine.”

Her forehead scrunched up. “Why don’t you come to my house today after school, and you can see for yourself. I live at 55 Maddux Drive.”

Esha’s house ended up being just a couple blocks from where I lived, and her neighborhood was like mine, with two-story houses and birch trees lining the street. Inside, there wasn’t much furniture or clutter, but there were lots of tall bookshelves. The rooms were very quiet, and despite how nervous I’d been when I arrived, there was something about Esha’s house that made me feel calm.

Upstairs in her bedroom, a black cat was curled into a snug ball on the bed.

“That’s Sultana!” Esha shrieked. “I told you!”

Sultana was exactly like Shadow—even in the way she gently flicked her tail while she napped. I was so stunned that I didn’t know what to say. Finally, I just asked, “Why is her name Sultana?”

“Sultana was one of the most famous silent film actresses in India! Sultana said everything through her eyes. I thought it was a good name for a cat that never meows. Plus, I’m going to be an actress when I grow up.”

It was a great name, actually, but I was too shy to tell her that. “I really do have a cat

named Shadow,” I said. I didn’t want to add that Shadow was one of my closest companions. Though I wanted to make new friends at school, it hadn’t happened yet.

“Let’s go to your house and see her right now,” Esha suggested helpfully.

“The thing is . . . she won’t be home. Shadow likes to go out exploring in the afternoon.”

Esha’s face turned red. “Are you lying about having a cat, or what?” she asked loudly, sounding frustrated.

A man popped his head around the door. “Is everything OK, my daughter?” he asked in a whispery voice. He looked at me and said quietly, “Hello, there. Welcome.”

“Yes, Baba,” Esha muttered. “Sorry.”

He left without a sound.

At that moment, Sultana stood up and shot both of us a glance with her deep yellow eyes—a glance which said she understood everything that was happening, and she wasn’t very pleased.

Taking a deep breath, I said, “Come to my house tomorrow morning. I live at 37 Carson Way. Shadow will be there.”

Bright and early Saturday morning, Esha stood at my front door with a funny look on her face. When she stepped inside her eyes grew wide as she watched my four younger brothers scamper up and down the stairs, screaming and laughing.

My mom walked by carrying a cup in one hand and her guitar in the other. “Hellooooo!” she sang, using her yodeling voice. “I needeed mooore cooooofffecce!” she warbled.



We were standing by the schoolroom, where books, papers, and art supplies cluttered the tables. Also, the little stage was a mess with props and costumes left out. No matter how often I tidied up here, everything became jumbled again.

Suddenly, Esha ran and jumped up on the stage, raising an eyebrow at me. "Jessalyn," she croaked, "are you trying to merge with your chair?"

It was a perfect impression of Mrs. Lockwood, and I couldn't help but laugh.

"I love this stage!" Esha cried. "Why do you have it?"

"We use it for homeschooling sometimes—my brothers and I put on plays we've written. My parents teach us here at home. Well, not me anymore, now that I'm in middle school."

"I had no idea you were homeschooled," Esha replied. "That's so cool."

I blushed. I hadn't told anyone at school yet.

Then Shadow scampered out from behind one of the tables. She darted in between Esha's legs, curling her long tail around Esha's ankle, and then just as quickly, she was twisting her tail around me.

We both laughed. "That's Shadow," I said, feeling so relieved to prove to Esha that I wasn't lying.

"Why did you name her that?"

"Because shadows are dark . . . and they don't make any noise," I answered softly.

"Brilliant!" Esha yelled, and she grabbed a tambourine off the stage and shook it in the

air. Quickly, she looked around like she might get in trouble.

Shadow didn't jump or run away. She was used to that kind of noise. It was Esha who seemed to find the commotion unusual, and I thought about how Esha was a loud and theatrical person, living in a house as quiet as a library. And me—I was the quiet one, living where everyone shouted and sang.

I realized Esha and I might be really different, but neither of us fit into our families very well. Which made us sort of the same.

Esha sighed. "I have to tell you something. This morning, I followed Sultana when she left my house. She always leaves when the sun rises. I discovered that she came right here! She climbed the fence and went straight into your backyard."

I gulped. "The cat door is in the back. Shadow comes inside first thing in the morning, and disappears again in the afternoon."

We looked at the black cat before us as if we were seeing her for the first time, but she wasn't paying any attention at all.

"She's been living two lives," Esha said, her voice filled with wonder. She was silent for a moment, but then she laughed. "Sultana! You clever thing!"

"What do you mean?" I asked sadly. Truthfully, it hurt my feelings that Shadow had a whole different family somewhere else.

"I think when she wants to be playful, she comes here! There are lots of kids, and so much noise!"

"And when she wants peace and quiet, she goes to your house!" I exclaimed.









Esha threw her arms around me. I was surprised, and I'm not a big hugger, but I hugged back because I understood. We were going to share our cat. She'd be Sultana with Esha, and Shadow with me. Nothing had to change.

"I can do a different presentation," Esha said. "She was yours first. She didn't show up at my house until I was nine years old."

"No." I shook my head vigorously. "I should tell everyone about what it was like to be homeschooled. It's something no one knows because I've been too embarrassed to tell people."


Esha smiled her megawatt smile. "Can I help with the poster?"

"Sure! We have tons of supplies around."

As if she'd been listening, Shadow/Sultana jumped up on one of the tables and carefully walked in between the things left out.

"I wish she'd meow one of these days," I admitted.

"I'm very curious how that would sound," Esha agreed.

Our black cat turned to look at us. For a second, I wondered if she might finally meow. But then her deep yellow eyes said that she didn't need to do anything at all, because she had everything she wanted right here. 





# NEW YEAR'S EVE

by  
Beverly  
McLoughland

The Old Year  
Is at the station  
Waiting for the train,

A one-way ticket  
In his hand—  
He won't be back again.

Where is he heading?  
No one knows.  
Some place faraway,

His luggage packed  
With memories  
Of each and every day.

Happy memories,  
Sad ones, too—  
The whistle blows, and then,

He climbs aboard  
As the brand New Year  
Steps, wondering, from the train.

Illustrated by Swansan Chalabi

text © 2020 by Beverly McLoughland, art © 2020 by Swansan Chalabi

HAPPY NEW  
YEAR!



WEE!

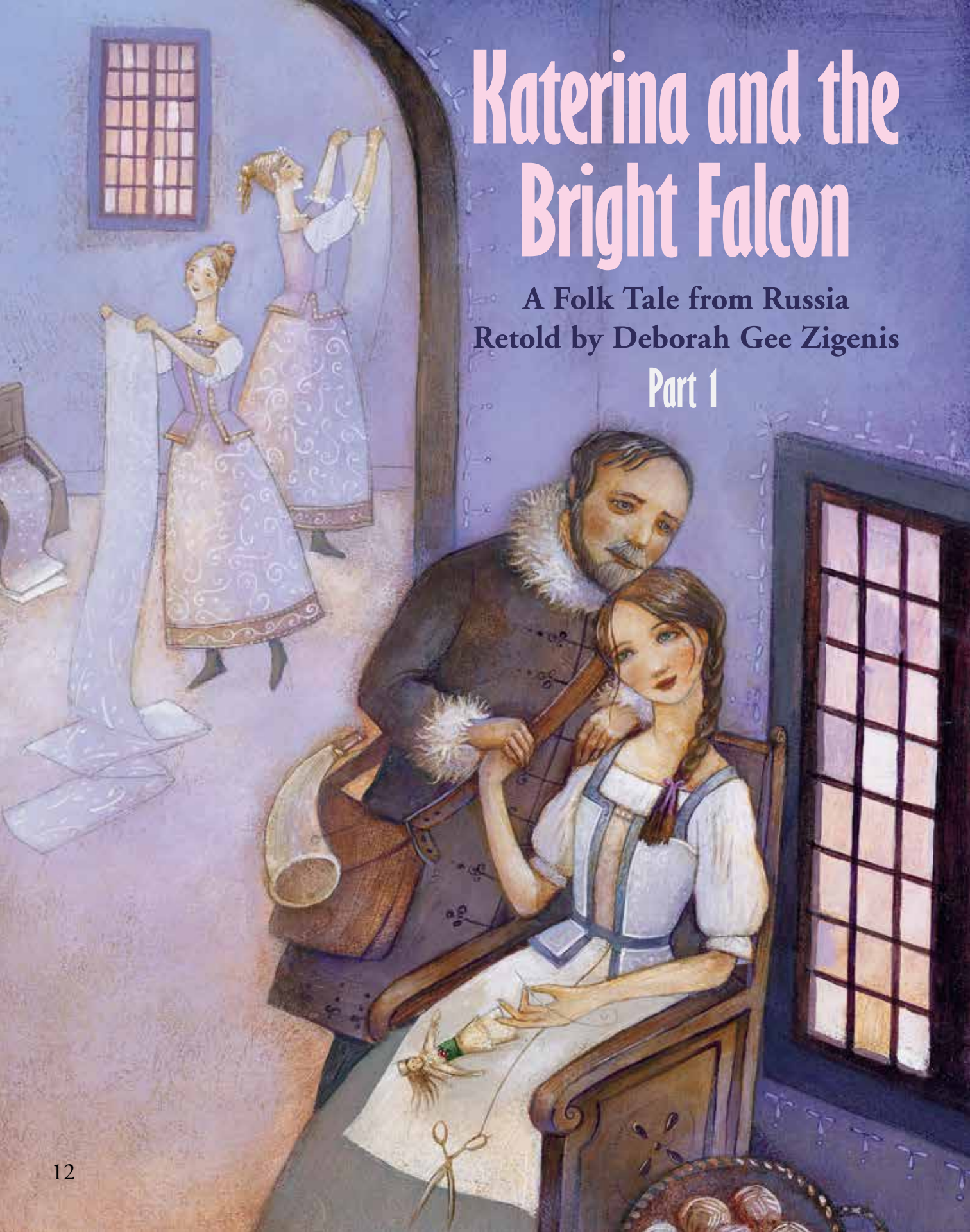




# Katerina and the Bright Falcon

A Folk Tale from Russia  
Retold by Deborah Gee Zigenis

Part 1





**THERE ONCE LIVED** a prosperous landholder who had three grown daughters. One day, when the last of the snow lay in little piles beneath the cherry trees, he prepared to set out for the fair.

"I am off," he said, shrugging into his heavy coat and stepping into his fur-lined boots.

"Oh, Father," cried his eldest daughter, who lingered before the fire. "I beg of you, bring me a length of fine cloth from which I might fashion a new gown."

"Aye," the second eldest chimed in. "I have had nothing new to wear for such a long time."

The eldest nodded. "Even my finest gown grows worn and threadbare."

Their father chuckled as he pulled on his furred cap, for well he knew how these two elder daughters loved flattery and finery and primping before their mirrors. Many a season could pass ere even their workaday gowns began to ravel. But he could afford the indulgence, and so smiled and said, "I shall search out the finest silks for your pleasure." Then he turned to Katerina, the youngest. "And what would you like?"

She shrugged. "There is nothing I have need of, Father. Nothing I desire."

"Come, little one." He put an arm about her shoulder. "I shall be making purchases for your sisters. Surely there is something you would like me to bring you."

"Oh, I suppose." Katerina smiled. "If I must have something, bring me back a flower, a red flower."

Her sisters tittered behind their hands. Their father shot them a silencing glance.

"A red flower," Katerina repeated. Then she brought her father the woolen mittens she had been warming before the stove and stretched up onto her toes to kiss his grizzled cheek.

The father pulled on his mittens and set off for the fair. Swiftly he made his elder daughters' purchases, buying each a length of finely embroidered cloth, one emerald green and gold, the other silver and sapphire blue. But after searching every booth and market stall, he could not find a single crimson flower.

When he returned home, he gave his elder daughters their gifts, and they were pleased with his purchases, very pleased indeed.

Then, turning to Katerina, he shook his head. "I am sorry, little one. I looked everywhere. I could not find even the smallest spring blossom for your pleasure."

"Never mind." Katerina patted his hand. "Perhaps you shall meet with better fortune next time."

In the days that followed, Katerina's elder sisters cut, fitted, and sewed their new gowns, pausing every now and then to taunt Katerina with her unfulfilled request.

The next week, however, their father again set out for the fair. The two elder daughters asked for a silken kerchief for each of them.

"And you, little one?" The father turned to Katerina. "What would you like?"

Katerina smiled. "I have yet to receive the red flower you promised me." Then she kissed him on the cheek.

At the fair he bought kerchiefs of the sheerest silk for his elder daughters. But after searching every booth and market stall, he could not find a single crimson flower.

When he returned home, his elder daughters were delighted with their gifts. Placing their kerchiefs on their heads, they minced across the farmyard, the gauzy silk fluttering upon the breeze.

To Katerina, however, he apologized. "I am sorry, little one. I looked everywhere, but no one had any red flowers."

"It matters not." Katerina placed her hand in the crook of his arm and nuzzled against him. "Come. Your supper is nice and hot."

A week later, the father again set out for the fair. As he prepared to depart, his elder daughters asked him to buy them some earrings to wear with their new kerchiefs and gowns.

"And you, little one?" He turned to Katerina.

"You know . . ." She smiled and wagged a finger at him.

"A red flower." He sighed. "Are you certain there is nothing else I could purchase for you?"

"A red flower," Katerina repeated as she helped him with his jacket and scarf. "That is all I desire."

The father easily found golden earrings for his elder daughters, earrings that tinkled like little bells in the breeze. But after searching every booth and market stall, he could not find a single crimson flower. Shoulders drooping, he turned his cart toward home.

No sooner had he passed beyond the walls of the town, however, when he spied an old

man beside the road. When the cart drew abreast of him, the old man approached. In his hands he held a black lacquered box. It was round, the size of a saucer, with a brilliant red rose painted on its lid, each petal outlined and powdered with purest gold.

The father pulled his horse to a halt. "What have you there?" He leaned from the cart.

"Why, 'tis a trinket box, good sir," the old man replied, "fine enough to grace a czarevna's dressing table."

"H'm." The father scratched his chin. "How much do you want for it?"

The old man searched the anxious father's face. "A thousand rubles."

"Sold," the father replied. Am I not a prosperous landholder? he thought. Have I not lavished hundreds upon thousands of rubles on my foolish elder daughters?

Drawing forth his pouch, he counted out the money.

The old man nodded his thanks, then handed up the box.

"God be with you and yours," he whispered as the father set out for home.

When he reached home, his elder daughters rushed to meet him at the gate. Springing from his cart, he dropped the satin pouches that held the earrings into their outstretched hands. Then, ignoring their squeals of pleasure, he turned to Katerina. "Here, little one, look what I have for you."

Katerina crossed the muddy yard to his side.

Slowly, he pulled the lacquered box from his coat pocket and placed it in her hands.





"Oh, Father . . .," she said. "'Tis beautiful!"

"I am glad to have finally pleased you," he replied, his eyes sparkling merry and blue as the spring day.

Katerina clutched the box to her breast. "I shall always treasure this." Then she kissed her father's weathered cheek and linked her hand through his arm to lead him into the house.

That evening, when Katerina had overseen the washing of the last kettle and pewter cup, she went upstairs to her bedchamber and sat before the open window.

Pulling the beautiful box from her pocket, she laid it on the wide sill to admire it. The flecks of gold within the rose's heart glinted in the candlelight. Gently, she lifted the lid. Inside, upon a bed of red velvet, lay a single, golden feather.

Katerina drew it from the box.

Suddenly, with the speed of an arrow finding its mark, a falcon whose pinions shone like flame swooped under the eaves and in through the open window.

Katerina leaped from her stool.

The falcon flew once around the room, its powerful wings setting the candle flame

dancing. Then it struck at the wooden floor with its outstretched talons and vanished in a flash of golden feathers. In its place stood a handsome young man. Katerina's hands trembled as she clutched at the knot of her woolen shawl.

"Do not be afraid." The young man reached a hand to calm her. Then, after

sweeping her a courtly bow, he continued, "I am Phenist the Bright Falcon, lord of a faraway land."

Katerina eyed him warily.

"I have been bewitched," he explained.

Katerina watched as the young man paced before her, reaching out to her as though begging her to understand.

"I have been cursed to roam the earth bearing the form of a falcon by day and my true form only by night."

The young man then paused and turned to her, gazing thoughtfully. "How came you by my feather?"

"It—'twas a gift." Katerina glanced from the black lacquered box to this shining young man.

"H'm." As he gazed upon her, Phenist's eyes shone in the shadows, brighter than the candle's flame.



Katerina backed away.

"Have no fear," Phenist hastened to reassure her as she stood, back pressed to the wall. "I mean you no harm."

Drawn by the simple kindness in his voice, Katerina finally met his gaze. His eyes were an uncanny green flecked with gold. Fine laugh lines etched their outer corners. His smile was sweet, and his hands, when at last he stepped forward and caught hers in their grip, were firm and warm.

Leading her to her little stool before the window, Phenist sat at her feet and told her of the jagged mountains and mysterious forests over which he had soared as he wandered the wide, wide world.

His manner, Katerina marveled, was open and friendly, as though he had known her all her life. And soon, despite her initial fear, she felt happier than she had ever felt with anyone, save her beloved father.

Finally, as the sky to the east lit with the coming dawn, Phenist rose and turned toward the window. "Farewell, sweet Katerina," he cried. "And thank you for this night's sweet companionship. Watch for me. I shall come to you again."


Then he stepped onto the window sill and leaped out into the darkness.

Katerina gasped and rushed to peer out after him, only to see a bright falcon winging off over the woods into the morning sky.

*to be continued*







The frost is here,  
The fuel is dear,  
And woods are sear,  
And fires burn clear,  
And frost is here  
And has bitten the heel of the going year.

Bite, frost, bite!  
You roll up away from the light  
The blue woodlouse and the plump dormouse,  
And the bees are stilled and the flies are killed,  
And you bite far into the heart of the house,  
But not into mine.

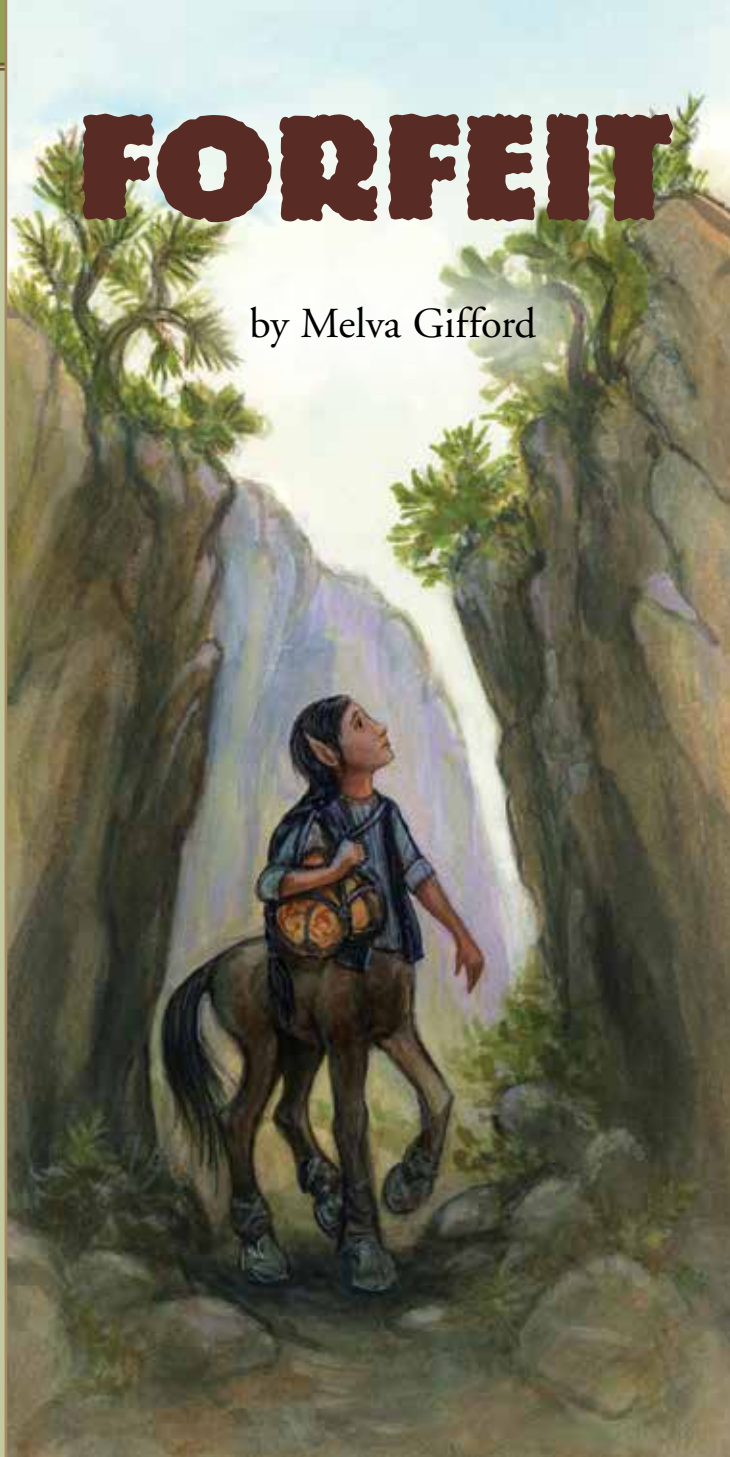
Bite, frost, bite!  
The woods are all the searer,  
The fuel is all the dearer,  
The fires are all the clearer,  
My spring is all the nearer,  
You have bitten into the heart of the earth,  
But not into mine.

# Winter

by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

# FORFEIT

by Melva Gifford



**GALILEE PAUSED AT** the large outcropping of rock lining one wall of the canyon rising before her. Among the sharp cliffs and sparse foliage, there was no sound or sign of movement.

No trespassing. It is the law and part of the ongoing treaty.

But she had already gone too far and must now finish it.

She panted, weary from a half-day's travel, and tried not to panic.

The respect of borders was a key element to maintaining the peace between Centaur and Dwarf. But even territories must be breached when one had to save the life of the herd's mating goad, especially if she was one's own mother.

Her gaze darted about the landscape in search of Dwarves. *None, as yet.*

Her muffled hoofbeats thumped against sandstone as she hurried through the narrow canyon. Her long braid hung damp down her back, her flanks moist from exertion. Even though the high rock walls protected her against the hot sun, perspiration dotted her face and neck.

Her two hearts, one in her human breast, the other in the torso of her horse body, beat in heavy accent to her trot. Soon she'd arrive at the end of the rocky canyon. It opened onto a grassy plain. There, she could dispose of the leathers tied to her hoofs. She could then run full speed back to the border only a short distance away.

She tried to keep her gait even, her body moving in a clear pattern. Measured steps and cloaked hoofs were necessary precautions to avoid being detected by the Dwarves residing in the mountain.

Illustrated by Ingrid Kallick

text © 2020 by Melva Gifford, art © 2020 by Ingrid Kallick

FORFEIT MEANS  
A PENALTY...  ...OR LOSS.



A gourd containing the recently acquired treasure bumped against her side, its beat in rhythm to her steps. It hung from a thick strap of leather strung over her shoulder. The plant, trisk, housed in a ball of mud and cloth, would be good for a day. Galilee could not help resting a protective hand on it. The trisk was the reason she had risked breaching the border. The plant, boiled with a high concentration of luri root, would break her mother's fever.

*Only a short distance to go.*

Rock and shale suddenly slid onto the path in front of her. The mouth of the canyon closed, cutting her off. She reared, her front hoofs narrowly avoiding the cascade of rolling stones.

Dust clogged the air, and long moments passed before she glimpsed the lone dwarf standing on the new mound of rock. He was a short, burly fellow two thirds the height of a human man. He leaned against the handle of a heavy pick. His cold, dark eyes looked sternly down at her.

She knew him. King Terdour.

"You are Lerrid and Teena's foal," he said.

She stood before him, hearts pounding so hard within her, they hurt. She tried to suppress the terror encompassing her. With forced calmness, she answered.

"I am. And for breaking a treaty, my life is forfeit."

He smiled, apparently pleased she recognized her status.

"Before payment, explain the breach, to see if this warrants an act of war."

She shook her head. "I act alone, without permission."

And in accordance to tradition, she lowered her body to the ground, resting on bent knees. It was uncomfortable but a sign of courtesy so as to not tower over a dwarf while in conversation. She felt the scrape of stone against knee.

In answer to her act, King Terdour descended the mound. Wielding his heavy pick with ease, he climbed down to ground level until he finally stood before her.

Galilee lifted the pouch from her side. Loosening its strings, she withdrew the three stems of trisk. Resting the herb on top of the leather, she placed both on the hard earth.

Terdour looked down. "Who is dying?"

"My mother, our herd's mating goad."

"Your whole herd then."

"Yes."

He pointed to the gourd still hanging on her other side. "Stimulant?"

She shook her head. "I fast until my task is done. I used krigflist to nourish the trisk plant after cutting its stems."

"Why not take the whole plant? You would have had it all had you not been caught."

"Only the three stalks to ensure recovery."

He stared at her.

"You could have traded."

"You refused. You always refuse, even when my father has been generous."

"Hum." He stepped toward her. "So the rest of the trisk plant remains at its place. Nourished by your krigflist, it will prosper?"



She nodded.

"The young are often known for greed."

She remained silent.

"What is your last request before reprisal?"

She leaned forward. "I realize your kind holds little interest in the land outside the mountain. But you do nourish the plants of trisk, triod, and leskeem. You know their value in trade." She held out the gourd of krigflist. "If a Dwarf representative could take these trisk stems to my mother, so that she and my herd may live, I will offer the krigflist to aid in the growth of plants."

He laughed. "With your life forfeit, the krigflist is ours nevertheless."

She paused, nodded, her gaze dropping to the earth as she now accepted that realization. "True," she murmured. She forced herself to continue, looking at him. "But for the rare times you have traded, has it not been convenient? With us gone, our herd extinct, what you have left is man."

His gaze lit with fire. "We don't get along with man."

She said nothing.

He rubbed his chin, looking at her. "You've gained Lerrid's wisdom, foal, and are not prone to rashness, even in this act."

She cast down her eyes submissively. "Thank you, King Terdour."

Hand still rubbing the stubble of his chin, the Dwarf king slowly walked around her as she stared down. She was covered with dirt from her journey and the dust from the avalanche on a sweaty body. Her

knees were now scraped from kneeling upon the ground to honor him. Travel-worn and disheveled, she belied the reputation Centaurs had for being obsessed with their appearance. Even humans teased them for their vanity.

Certainly, King Terdour could shame her now before her execution. She was sure he'd noted her covered hoofs, her lathered torso, and weary features.

"You took precautions to avoid detection."

"Yes, King Terdour."

He stood once more before her and studied her face. After a long moment, he said, "I will permit a representative to take the trisk to Lerrid and your mother. You are right, it is sometimes convenient to trade with your herd. The Centaurs provide an adequate barrier between us and the humans. Your herd has even been known to trade with the humans. Maybe through you . . ." He did not finish.

With a sigh of relief, Galilee smiled. She nodded to the Dwarf king. She packaged the trisk stems, and with her other hand, she extended the gourd of krigflist.

Terdour lifted his pick, heavy and sharp. He eyed her warily. "The Dwarf representative to give the trisk to Lerrid and his mate will be you. Then you must return in three days to pay for the breach of the border." He took the gourd.

Galilee's hearts swelled. She could still accomplish her mission, save her mother and herd. As for her own life . . . had her father

REPRISAL MEANS PAY BACK... ..OR PUNISHMENT









not taught her one may need to lose one battle to win another?

"I will return, King Terdour."

"Yes, you shall, or there will be war between us."

Then other Dwarves appeared on the mound of rock. King Terdour extended a hand to his companions. "You will be escorted to the border."

"Yes, King Terdour."

Two Dwarves advanced upon them.

Galilee lurched into a standing position, her knees bleeding.

She followed her escorts into a cave leading into the mountain. The Dwarves led her through twisted tunnels and vast caverns

until they were once more outside. The flatlands of the border waited before her.

She headed for home in a gallop.

**IN THE COOL** of the cave, Galilee stood before her father. Her hearts beat as fiercely as when she'd faced King Terdour. With one trembling, extended hand, she offered her half of the trisk plant.

Lerrid's powerful arms were folded, his gaze glowering. A frown set his thin lips. His tail snapped in irritation.

"You've been gone a full day while your mother lies ill." His gaze centered on the plant. His eyes widened in recognition. "That does not grow on our or human lands." His







eyes glinted as his voice rose. “What were you thinking, breaching Dwarf territory? Had you been caught, it would have been war.”

She almost stepped back but stood firm against her father’s fury. “I will not permit our herd goad to die when I have not yet reached maturity to replace her.”

Her father blinked. With such blunt phrasing, he could not accuse her of sentimentality.

Slowly he turned his gaze to the furs in the far corner of the cave. There, Teena—mate and mother—lay sleeping, breath raspy.

Her father’s eyes softened. “Thank you,” he whispered.

Galilee bowed her head.

Lerrid gently took the plant, cradling the limp leaves in his large hands. “Boil water.”

“Yes, Father.”

She spent two days with her herd until she was sure that the brewed trisk had broken her mother’s fever.

On the third morning, her father rested a hand on Galilee’s shoulder. The two of them silently watched as Teena slowly paced the circumference of the cave.

Lerrid’s baritone voice rumbled. “You have not left your mother’s side since you’ve returned. Potential loss has made your heart tender.” He squeezed her hand gently. “Your daring has preserved our goad and herd. Taking decisive risks is a necessary

trait for the future goad,” he said. “A bright future lies before you.”

*No future, Galilee thought. My life is forfeit.*

She had not told her father of her meeting with King Terdour.

**BY LATE AFTERNOON** she had crossed the Dwarf border, returning to the same canyon where she had been caught. The note she’d left would explain to her parents all that had transpired.

The avalanche blocking her way had been cleared from the entrance. She made no attempt to hide her approach. The clatter of hoofs against rock echoed against the canyon walls as she slowly entered.

Dozens of dwarves lined her path as she approached the lone figure standing in the canyon’s center. King Terdour had a cocked crossbow strung from a leather strap on his side.

*He’s going to shoot me.*

She suppressed the tremor in her voice. “I’ve come in payment.”

“So you have.”

“Before sentence,” she added, “I wish to thank King Terdour for the preservation of the life of my mother. I left a note for my parents . . . of our meeting.”

He nodded, shifting the crossbow. “We checked upon the trisk plant you nurtured. It is now twice its previous size.” He paused. “You’ve shown restraint from greed. You’ve also honored your word by

your return. I release you from the payment of forfeit. Instead, you are to deliver a wine-skin of krigflist each full moon for a year. You are now free to return to your herd. In future, I will consider a more generous response to trade.”

Galilee gasped and bowed her thanks.  
*I'm free.*

Then another thought. Dare she?



Her hearts pounded, but she kept her tail still and tone neutral, like her father did when trading with the humans. “King Terdour, when I bring the krigflist at the next full moon, may I also bring a wagon of blesv fruit? Perhaps it could be offered for possible exchange.”

His voice hardened. “Exchange for what?”

The conversation had taken a direction she had not expected. She thought quickly. “Dwarves are renowned for their craftsmanship and skill in the forging of metals. My father greatly admires metal resistant to corrosion. Maybe you would exchange bars of copper in fair proportion to the fruit?”

King Terdour smiled. From his fur vest he withdrew an intricately carved baton. Its exquisite craftsmanship depicted various territories of the land and seasons of the year. Constructed of six compartments ingeniously screwed together, the rare artifact offered six tokens to enter Dwarf territory for trade.

“Bring your wagon,” he said.

Galilee took the baton. “Until the next full moon, King Terdour.”

She bowed before permitting a smile of farewell. With a prance in her step, she trotted toward home. 🐾





**“THE INUIT  
WOMAN TOLD ME  
THAT IF I EVER  
SAW A UNICORN, TO  
CLOSE MY EYES.”**

**WAITING FOR UNICORNS**  
*by Beth Hautala*  
submitted by Kaia N. of La Farge, WI

**“The copper-haired  
rider looked at the  
black sky and swore.”**

**IN THE HAND OF THE GODDESS**  
(Song of the Lioness, Book 2)  
*by Tamora Pierce*  
submitted by Silverwaxwing  
via Blab About Books, Chatterbox

**“A JELLYFISH, IF  
YOU WATCH IT  
LONG ENOUGH,  
BEGINS TO LOOK  
LIKE A HEART  
BEATING.”**

**THE THING ABOUT JELLYFISH**  
*by Ali Benjamin*  
submitted by Ella Hahn of Perrysburg, OH

**“I am eleven years old, and  
I am invisible.”**

**COUNTDOWN** *by Deborah Wiles*  
submitted by Addy via email

**“AT EXACTLY TWELVE  
O’CLOCK ON THE AFTERNOON  
OF HIS TWELFTH BIRTHDAY,  
HICCUP HORRENDOUS  
HADDOCK THE THIRD,  
THE HOPE AND HEIR TO  
THE TRIBE OF THE HAIRY  
HOOLIGANS, WAS STANDING  
SHAKILY ON A WINDY,  
NARROW WINDOW LEDGE  
THREE HUNDRED FEET UP IN  
THE AIR.”**

**A HERO’S GUIDE TO DEADLY  
DRAGONS** (How to Train Your Dragon,  
Book 6)  
*by Cressida Cowell*  
submitted by LilyPad  
via Blab About Books, Chatterbox

**“The Fossil sisters lived in  
the Cromwell Road.”**

**BALLET SHOES**  
*by Noel Streatfeild*  
submitted by Melody via Blab About  
Books, Chatterbox

**“YOU CAN’T CRY IN  
SPACE.”**

**SPACE HOSTAGES**  
*by Sophia McDougall*  
submitted by Kate-the-Great  
via Blab About Books, Chatterbox

**“To say that the Thunder  
Rake was a wagon would  
be to call the sea a  
puddle, for the Rake was  
a fortified city, full of  
workshops and stables,  
houses, towers, gardens—  
even a rippling canal.”**

**THE STAR SHARD**  
*by Frederic S. Durbin*  
submitted by Celeste Thalhammer  
of Blue River, WI

**“Marley was dead, to  
begin with.”**

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL**  
*by Charles Dickens*  
submitted by Magdalane Kay Lane of  
Port Washington, WI

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# ONCE UPON A TIME IN A DEEP, DARK MINE

by Constance Rutherford

**In memory I** hold a vision of my grandpa grooming one of his Shetland ponies on his farm in the 1940s. He was expecting a family to visit that evening—a possible sale. “But you know, Millie,” he said to me as, brush in hand, he gently stroked the pony’s sleek, brown hide, “we have to be careful who we sell our ponies to.”

“What do you mean, Grandpa?”

“Well, some people don’t know how to care for a pony. If you give a pony too much grain, its feet can become deformed. And too much new spring grass can make ponies really sick. In winter, Shetlands stay healthier outdoors, instead of being kept in a barn. A three-sided shed is all the shelter they need. Other than that, they’re fine in all kinds of weather.”



Illustrated by Micha Archer

text © 2020 by Constance Rutherford, art © 2020 by Micha Archer



But there was another reason why Grandpa was careful who he sold his ponies to. “Not all buyers have good intentions,” Grandpa sighed. “Ponies are sometimes used down in the mines, to pull heavy carts of ore through the tunnels. Shetlands are just right for that. They’re small, and exceptionally strong for their size.” Grandpa paused and looked at me. “Sadly, some of the ponies don’t come back out at the end of the day, like the men do. They’re stabled down there. Can you imagine it? They work and live in the mine, never enjoying fresh air, grass, or sunlight.”

As Grandpa spoke, the love of his ponies seemed to glow in his eyes. I knew it was a love that had begun many years before. When he was young, his mother died, and at the age of twelve he took a job in the local livery stable—even sleeping there at night. So the raising, training, and showing of his Shetlands were the direct result of a longstanding love.

Shetland ponies come from the Shetland Isles, a cluster of islands in the North Sea, two hundred miles northeast of Scotland. Shetlands are believed to be descended from the tundra ponies of Siberia and the mountain ponies of Southern Europe, which likely migrated to the Shetlands over an ancient icy land bridge. At some point Celtic people who also settled on the islands added an “oriental” horse from western Asia to the bloodline. Excavations have uncovered bones of small horses on the islands dating back at least 2,000 years.

Although the Shetland Isles stretch as far north as Greenland, the influence of the surrounding sea keeps the temperature fairly moderate. Rain and snow occur mostly in





Young Shetlands  
frolicking

winter, with snow rarely staying on the ground for long. Still, the climate can be harsh. Storms over the sea can produce forty-five-foot waves, while seventy-mile-per-hour winds drive blinding sea spray over the land. Protected by a long, dense coat and mane, the ponies shelter among the island hills, backs to the wind, heads lowered, their bushy tails shielding their private parts and bellies.

“You know,” Grandpa went on, “there’s a salt mine within thirty miles of here. It’s under the city of Detroit, more than a thousand feet down. Can you believe this whole part of the country was covered by a great inland sea millions of years ago? When the sea dried up, the salt in the water was left behind. As a boy I was told that ponies were used in the mine to haul the carts of salt, just like they were used in the coal mines of Virginia and Pennsylvania.”

Hearing Grandpa’s story was painful to me. The vision of a pony, dusty and drab with coal dust and harnessed to a cart was awfully hard to forget. I learned that in Britain in 1913 there were 70,000 pit ponies at work in the mines, and thousands still worked there in the 1950s. In the U.S. it was not until 1971 that the last pit pony left its mine.

Down in the mines, boys often worked beside the men to help support their families. A boy as young as eleven might work ten hours a day instead of going to school. Most of the boys were poorly nourished, and the work was hard and dangerous. Coal dust damaged their lungs, shortening their lives. Then new laws were passed by individual states, beginning with New York State in 1886, requiring that the boys be fourteen years of age or older. But some states had no requirement for a birth certificate as proof of age. So a boy who was big for his age could still be doing mine work at a younger age.



A pit pony and young boy in a  
coal mine in Wales in 1913





In my imagination I hold an image of a young boy standing beside a pit pony, his face blackened with dust, the pony without luster in its eyes. They peer from the past, captives of the blackness that surrounds them. I'm comforted by the thought that perhaps they may have shared a bond of love. And through sharing this bond of love, their agonies would have been made so much easier to bear.

I have a photo of Grandpa with his prizewinning Shetland, Queenie. There's a look of gentleness in her eyes, without any sign of the bad temper Shetlands are sometimes said to have. Each and every pony Grandpa owned was sweet and gentle, yet spirited enough to enjoy a sprint across a field. I learned to ride on Queenie. I can still remember the wind whistling past my ears as I gripped her body with my legs, rocking up and down with every one of her cantering strides.

In the springtime Grandpa's mares had their foals, and they were tiny little things, about two feet tall. Because the mares trusted us, my sister and I could handle them when they were only a day or two old. Wrapping our arms around their necks we hugged them to us, nestling our faces in their soft, fuzzy coats.

Being raised with love and gentle handling makes all the difference—developing love instead of hate, trust instead of fear. 🐝





# The Pit Ponies by Leslie Norris

They come like the ghosts of horses, shyly,  
To this summer field, this fresh green,  
Which scares them.

They have been too long in the blind mine,  
Their hooves have trodden only stones  
And the soft, thick dust of fine coal,

And they do not understand the grass.  
For over two years their sun  
Has shone from an electric bulb

That has never set, and their walking  
Has been along the one, monotonous  
Track of the piled coal trucks.

They have bunched their muscles against  
The harness, and pulled and hauled.  
But now they have come out of the underworld





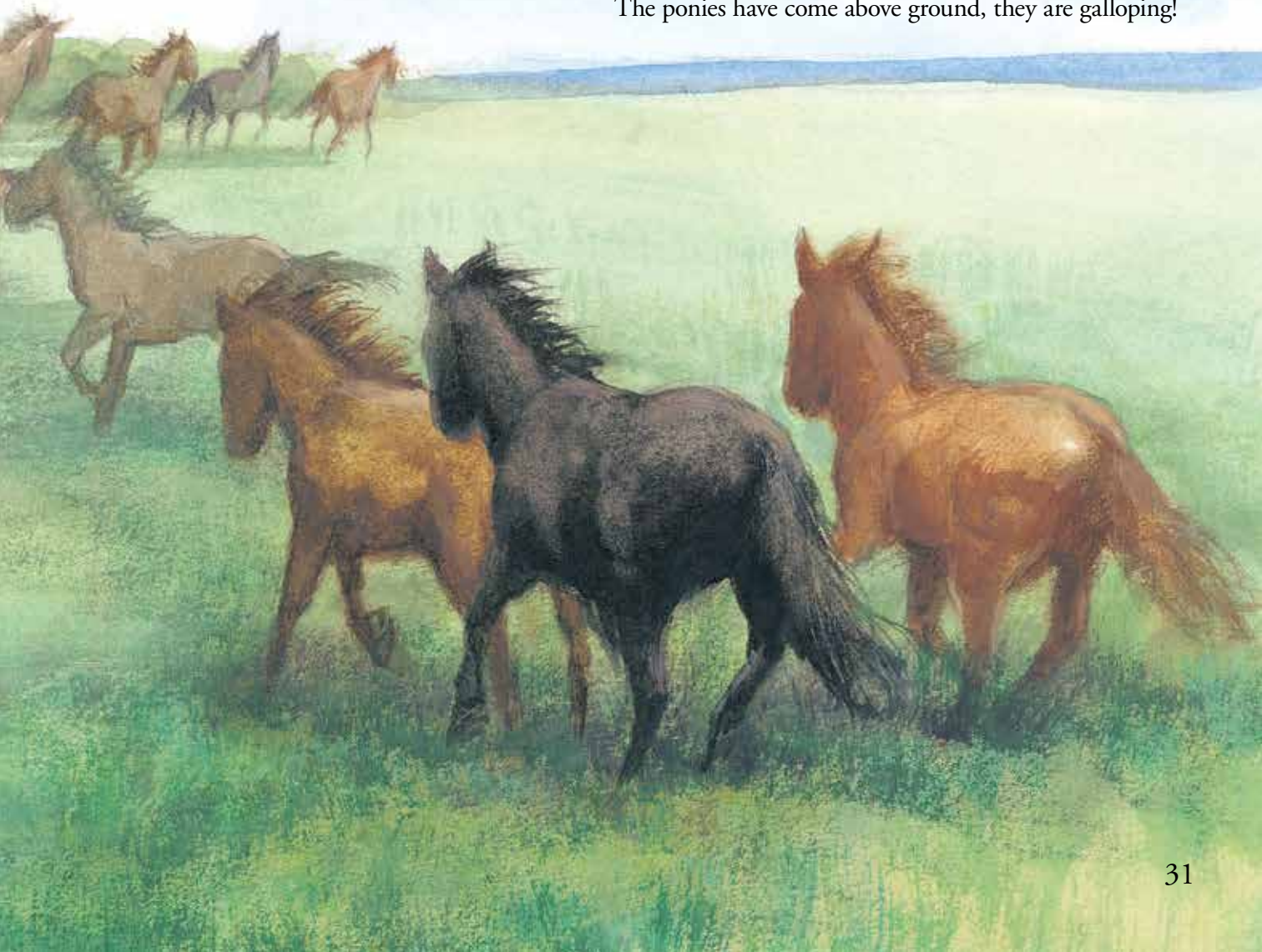
And are set down in the sun and real air,  
Which are strange to them. They are humble  
And modest, their heads are downcast, they

Do not attempt to see very far. But one  
Is attempting a clumsy gallop. It is  
Something he could do when he was very young,

When he was a little foal a long time ago  
And could run fleetly on his long foal's legs,  
And almost he can remember this. And look,

One rolls on her back with joy in the clean grass!  
And they all, awkwardly and hesitantly, like  
Clumsy old men, begin to run, and the field

Is full of happy thunder. They toss their heads,  
Their manes fly, they are galloping in freedom.  
The ponies have come above ground, they are galloping!





# SISTERS AND OTHER LIFE FORMS

by Rachel Delaney Craft

## Part 1

**“IT’S NOT YOUR** fault. It’s not your fault.”

I kept telling myself this as I waited for the cryotube’s cooler to pump down. Its rhythmic wheezing echoed the same reply: *Yes, it is. Yes, it is.* As the temperature dial crept downward, I glanced at the face in the rapidly frosting glass.

“She shouldn’t have even been on the ship,” I muttered. This was *my* pilot’s test,

*my* first solo orbit. If Mom and Dad hadn’t insisted Sera come along “just in case,” none of this would have happened. OK, maybe I still would have crash-landed on an uncharted moon and lost all communication with the rest of the galaxy, plus all access to my nav files. But at least I wouldn’t be freezing my big sister in a cryotube.

The tube’s blue light blinked: chill complete.

Illustrated by Eve Liu

text © 2018 by Rachel Delaney Craft, art © 2020 by Eve Liu

A CRYOTUBE IS LIKE A  
SUPER DEEP FREEZE.



NAV FILES ARE  
NAVIGATION FILES.



A LASER SUTURE IS A FUTURISTIC DEVICE FOR STITCHING UP A WOUND.



YOUR FEMORAL ARTERY IS THE MAJOR BLOOD-CARRYING VESSEL IN YOUR LEG.

Now that Sera was safely frozen, I looked around the shuttle. Most of it had survived the crash, except the first-aid module—also my fault. I should have made sure it was securely locked before takeoff. Its cover had come open when the asteroid hit, sending its contents flying—including the laser suture, which had shattered against the shuttle wall. The gash in Sera's thigh was too deep for simple gauze, with blood cascading from her femoral artery. She had lost consciousness quickly, and without the laser suture to close her wound, my only option was to freeze her until we reached a medi-base.

"Bixby," I said, "what's your report?"

Bixby, my D-class organo-robotic two-seater shuttlecraft, made a series of beeps and blips as his computers processed the request. I had upgraded most of his parts over the years, but he was still older than my grandparents, and he was a slow thinker.

"Life-support systems at seventeen percent," he replied. "Navigation files offline. Radar and lidar offline. Communication systems offline."

I walked around the pilot's chair to examine the dashboard, where most of Bixby's computer system was housed. "This all looks intact. So why is everything offline?"

Bixby thought for a moment. "Energy deficiency. Solar panels at twelve percent capacity. I have only enough power for essential functions."

I nodded. "Essential functions" meant he could talk to me and he could filter the

air inside the shuttle so I could breathe in this moon's oxygen-deficient atmosphere. He didn't have enough juice to get us off the ground, let alone fly us back home to Silar Three. He didn't even have enough to keep Sera's cryotube cold.

I went to the rear of the shuttle, where Bixby's backup solar panels were locked in padded, shockproof compartments.



LIDAR IS A DEVICE USING INFRARED LASER LIGHT.



IT DETECTS PARTICLES AND CONDITIONS IN THE ATMOSPHERE!

“Aha.” The compartments were intact. I opened one after another, pulling out two, four, six, eight solar panels. There were ten backups total, enough to power Bixby’s slowest cruise speed and all life-support systems. Enough to get us out of here.

“Oh.” I opened the last compartment, and my heart sank. It was empty. Then I remembered: on my last practice mission, two of Bixby’s panels had shorted. I’d replaced them, then forgotten to restock the emergency compartment.

I sighed, imagining what Sera would say if she wasn’t in cryostasis. *This is why Mom and Dad wanted me to come with you.*

Grinding my teeth, I glanced at Sera’s cryotube. At least I didn’t have to listen to her now. That would only stress me out further, and we’d be too busy arguing to get any repairs done.

A pang of guilt jabbed my rib cage. *Really?* said Sera’s voice in my mind. *You’re not even sorry you killed me?*

“You’re not dead,” I muttered. At least, not yet.

“OK, Bix.” I glanced out the windshield at the clump of megacacti where we’d landed. “Find a place to sun yourself. I’ll get suited up.”

With a creak of metallic joints, Bixby stood and started lumbering across the desert. He was built for flying, not walking, and the sand would wreak havoc on his terrapads. But his compromised solar panels needed all the sun they could get. He emerged from the cactus grove and knelt on his forward thrust-ers, while I zipped up my exosuit and pulled

the oxygenated plexibubble over my head. It smelled like mothballs. Grimacing, I buckled on my tool belt, opened the door, and stepped outside.

Holy cosmos, this moon was hot. I closed the door quickly, hoping to keep Bixby’s interior—and Sera’s cryotube—as cool as possible. As I clambered onto Bixby’s back, he leaned forward and back, calculating the optimal angle for his solar panels. Not that it mattered, I thought as I surveyed the damage. Bixby’s body was built of a tough-





ened, self-healing polymer, but the solar cells on his back were more fragile. After we crashed, Bixby had skidded across the sand through the megacacti, and their spiny arms had crushed or scraped off most of his solar panels. At this rate, it would take a week to accumulate enough power for a trip back to Silar Three. And we didn't have a week—we had only as much time as the cryotube could stay cold. It could last indefinitely while drawing power from Bixby, if he had any; but without a power source, its internal battery

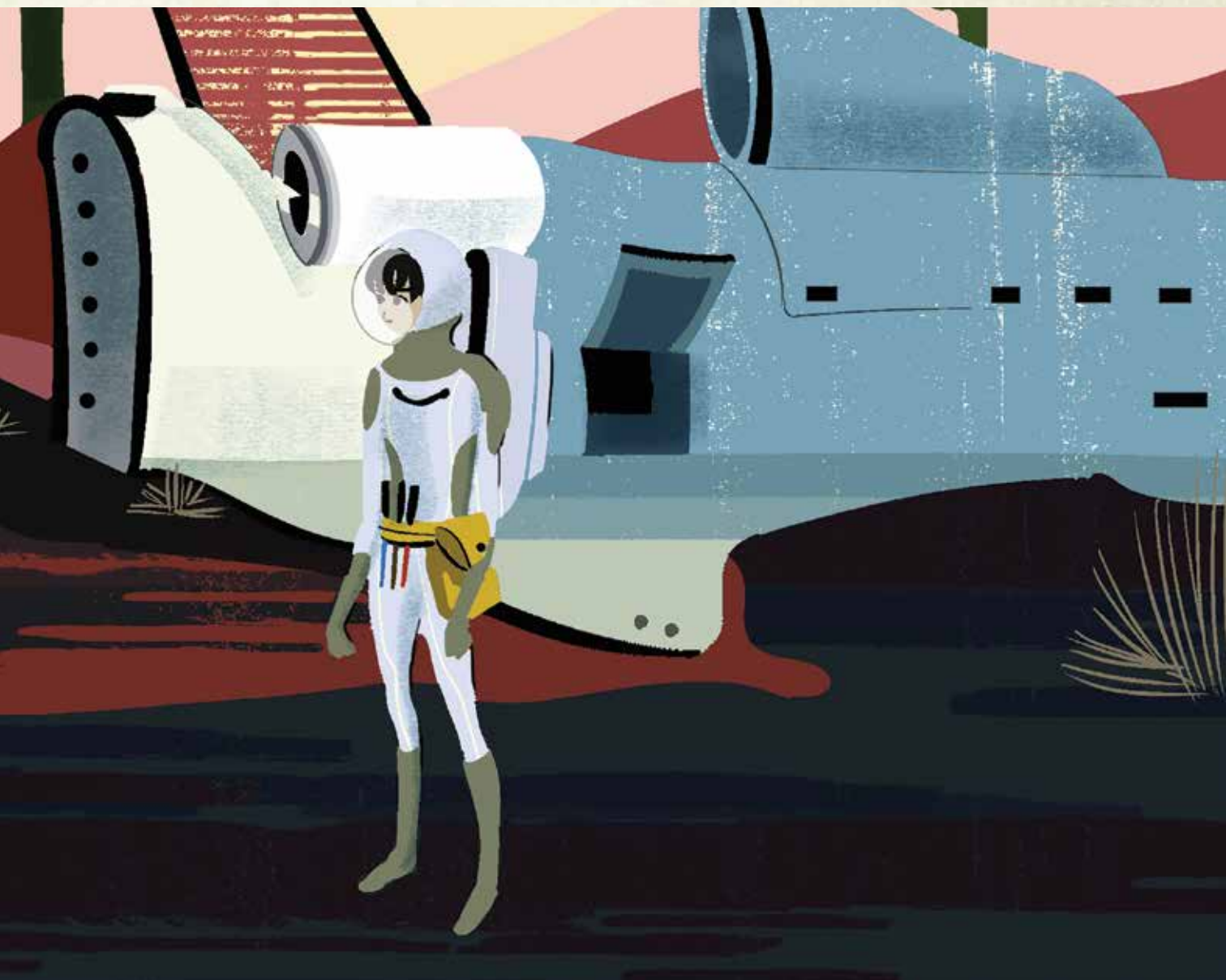
would last five days, tops—less than that on this face-meltingly hot moon.

"How does it look?" Bixby asked.

I shook my head. "Not good."

I climbed down, landing in a cloud of sand, then trudged back inside. Already Bixby's interior had increased in temperature—three degrees, by my suit's temp sensor. I groaned. I needed to get the backup solar panels installed soon, or Sera would melt.

I paused beside Sera's cryotube. Its blue light blinked insistently, telling me it was run-



ning on battery power—or maybe telling me I was being a bad sister. I should have been crying, or sniffing at the very least, replaying fond memories in my head. I should have been whispering to the cryotube, saying things like “I love you” and “Can you forgive me?”

But when I peered into the frosty glass over Sera’s face, all I could think about was the way her hand-me-down suits squeezed my stomach until my eyes bugged out. Or how she always called me “Max-ine” even though she knew I hated my full name, whether or not I’d been named after our first ancestor to colonize Mars. Or my fifth-grade science fair, which I won with my robotic root implant that made plants grow 2.7 times faster. The judges had swarmed around my poster, taking photos and shaking my hand until it was numb, while I stood there wearing my shiny blue ribbon and a pathetic grin. I’d stayed up all night preparing to answer questions like “Did you observe any increase in pollen production?” and “What’s the tensile strength of the implant alloy?”

But all they said was, “You’re Seramina Tut’s sister, right? Wow, you’ve got some brains in that family!”

That was all anyone cared about: brains. Sera was a natural researcher. She studied things. She could memorize page-long equations and multiply six-digit numbers in her head. I was more of a mechanic, a tinkerer, good with my hands—that’s why I was the youngest person on Silar Three to take the pilot’s test. My parents liked to say Sera and I complemented each other, though I didn’t

agree. Most of the time, I was just annoyed with her for getting all the attention.

I hefted the first solar panel. It was over two feet wide, and heavy. By the time I got it onto Bixby’s back, I was hunched over and panting, fogging up my plexibubble.

*Stand up straight, Maxine.* That’s what Sera would have said.

“Max,” I muttered, my mind wandering to the science fair. To my voice, drowned out by all the stupid judges. “I’m *Max* Tut.”

While I installed the new panel on Bixby’s back, I took a look around, squinting against the sun. The ground on this moon was mostly sand, of a deep red color—probably rich in iron. Clumps of megacacti as tall as buildings dotted the landscape. The faint outline of mountains broke the horizon in the distance. A series of beeps and whines told me Bixby was running his usual scans with his terrapads.

“Terrain is silica-based,” he said. “Small quantities of water detected. Plant and animal life likely.”

I grunted as I locked the solar panel’s connector into Bixby’s socket. “Let’s hope that animal life doesn’t come sniffing around while I’m working on you.” Bixby was a science vessel; he had zero weapons and only basic shielding capabilities. If the animals on this moon were as big as the cacti, they could do some serious damage to him. Then it wouldn’t matter if I got the solar panels working.

“This terrain does not match any in my database,” Bixby said, stating the obvious. “It is closest to the volcanic beaches of the







Hawaiian Islands on Earth One. Are we on Earth One?”

“Of course not,” I snapped, pulling a screwdriver from my belt. Silar Three’s solar system wasn’t even in the same galaxy as Earth One. “This place is uncharted. It must have come out of a wormhole or something.”

Bixby whirred thoughtfully. “My records show a temporal distortion approximately one

minute before the asteroid struck me. That would be consistent with a wormhole.”

I began screwing the panel down. “The asteroid probably came through it, too. But the moon got pulled into Silar Three’s orbit. The asteroid didn’t.”

If anyone on Silar Three knew we were here, they could easily launch a shuttle—a fully charged, fast-moving one—to rescue

AN ASTEROID CAME  
THROUGH A WORMHOLE?  
YIKES!!



NOT OUR KIND OF  
WORMHOLE.

us. But I had no way to contact them, and it could be days or weeks before their sensors noticed the new moon, especially with the wormhole's magnetic interference.

"Since this moon is uncharted," Bixby said, "would you like me to run additional scans?"

"No. Save your energy." The panel glowed green, activated by the sunlight, and I climbed down. I walked through the shuttle door and past Sera's cryotube to retrieve the next panel.

*This is amazing.* That's what she would have said if she was awake. *Can you believe it? We discovered a new moon!*

"Whatever," I said, lifting the panel carefully.

*Come on, Maxine. Don't you know how rare wormholes are? And the odds of an entire moon coming through, right before our eyes—*

I groaned. "Please be quiet."

"Captain Max?" said Bixby. "Is that an order to cease communications?"

"Huh? Oh. No, I was just . . . talking to myself." Stuck on this moon less than an hour, and I was already losing my mind.

Sera was right; this should have been the best day of my life. This discovery would make headlines. Years of research—and many pilot missions—would follow, to explore and study the moon. And who knew what secrets it might hold? The juice from its cacti might cure a disease on Silar Three. We could build habitation pods from iron extracted from the sand. The moon might even be colonizable someday.

But none of that would matter if Sera didn't make it back with me.

*Hurry,* said her voice in my head as I carried the panel toward the door.

I resisted the urge to kick the cryotube on the way out. "Don't worry," I grumbled. "I'll get you back home soon. Back to your research, your internships, your awards, your stupid publications."

Before we left for this ill-fated mission, Sera had gotten a research paper published in a big-name science journal and become the planet's youngest scientist to see her name in print. Kind of made my root implant look lame in comparison. No wonder my parents hadn't paid much attention to my pilot's test—they were too busy bragging to the neighbors about Sera's publication and asking me why I hadn't read it yet.

And if I failed now, they would know it was my fault she died. My fault our planet had lost one of its most brilliant minds.

"You shouldn't have been there," I said quietly as Bixby's door hissed open.

*I couldn't let you go alone.*

I stepped into the desert. "You didn't trust me?"

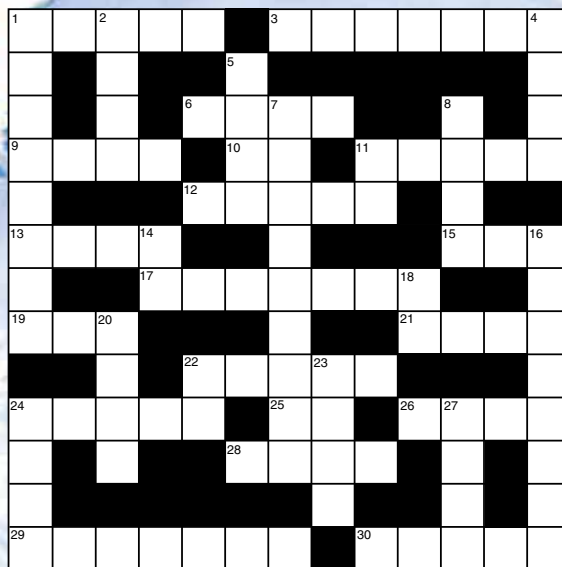
The door slid shut, but Sera's voice followed me outside. *Of course, I trusted you. But what if something happened? Who would put you in a cryotube?*

Sera was mature like that. Grown-up. Self-sacrificing. Just another way in which she was the better daughter.

*to be continued*



# ugly Bird's Chilled- to-the- Bone Crossbird Puzzle



Solution on page 47

## Across

1. Winter footwear
3. Large floating mass of ice
6. Opposite of *hard*
9. The North Frigid \_\_\_\_\_ is an area above the Arctic Circle.
10. Either . . . \_\_\_\_\_
11. Sheets of floating ice
12. Past tense of *freeze*
13. Swiss mountain range
15. "\_\_\_\_\_ the season to be jolly . . ."
17. The three little kittens lost these
19. Dutch East Indies (abbreviation)
21. Repeating the sound
22. Penetrating cold
24. North and South \_\_\_\_\_
25. In the direction of
26. "Out on a \_\_\_\_\_"
28. Degree between  $-1^{\circ}\text{F}$  and  $1^{\circ}\text{F}$
29. Figure built out of snow
30. Item of clothing worn around the shoulders for warmth

## Down

1. Heavy snowstorm
2. Out in the \_\_\_\_\_
4. Firms up from liquid to semisolid
5. Shut the \_\_\_\_\_; it's freezing in here!
7. Frozen fingers or toes
8. Winter outerwear
11. Chemical symbol for *iron*
14. Small (abbreviation)
16. What you throw in a snow fight
18. Compass direction
20. \_\_\_\_\_ a car engine to let it warm up on a winter day
22. Narnia author: \_\_\_\_\_ Lewis
23. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Rings
24. Friends (informal)
27. A fresh thought or concept

WHAT'S  
WITH ALL THE  
DISGUSTING  
JUNK?

UGLY'S TRYING  
TO IMPRESS A  
NEW FRIEND WITH  
SOME GIFTS. EW!

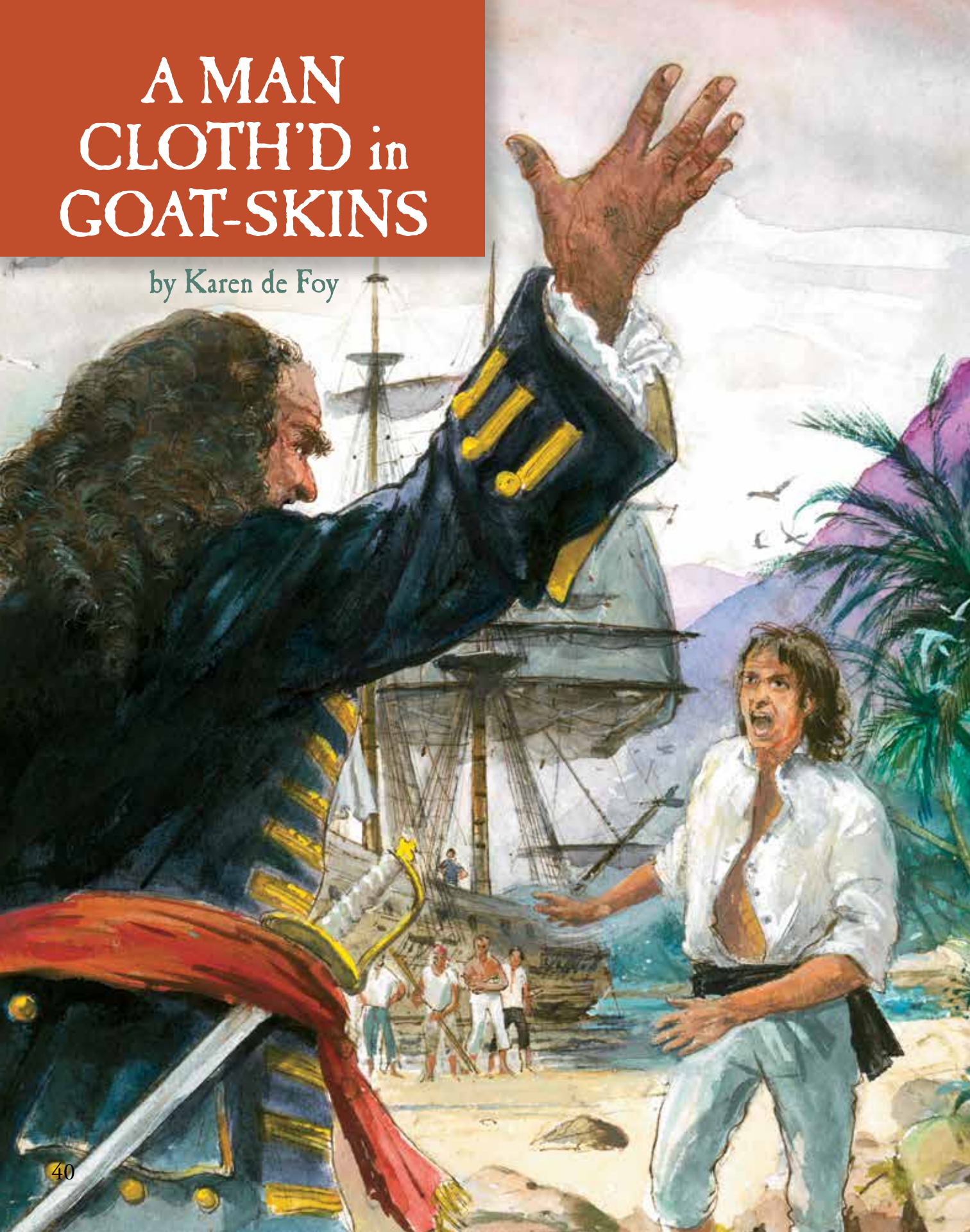
LOOKS LIKE HE'S GETTING  
A COLD SHOULDER.

By Long Johns Castellón  
and Mittens Conahan



# A MAN CLOTH'D in GOAT-SKINS

by Karen de Foy





## ALEXANDER SELKIRK RACED

after the wild goat as it bounded ahead of him up a steep slope. His calloused feet hardly felt the rocky ground. The Scottish sailor grinned, remembering when he'd been too slow to catch a healthy goat.

The desperate animal sprinted up a crag, thick with bushes and trees. Selkirk, a hairbreadth behind, reached out to grab his prey. Suddenly there was nothing but air beneath him. Selkirk screamed as he plunged over a precipice, crashing to the ground far below.

When he regained consciousness in terrible pain, Selkirk felt something soft beneath him—the dead goat. Falling on it had saved his life.

Selkirk moaned. Realizing that he needed to reach shelter if he wanted to survive, he began the long, painful process of dragging himself to his hut a mile away. At last he collapsed onto his bed of goatskins.

For the next ten days, the injured man was barely able to move. But there was no one to care for him. He was alone on an island 400 miles west of Chile. He didn't know when he would see another human face.

**IN SEPTEMBER OF** 1703, Alexander Selkirk had signed on as navigator aboard the *Cinque Ports*, a privateering ship that the English government had authorized to attack the ships of France and Spain, England's enemies at the time.

Privateers were crewed by rough men, and Selkirk was no exception. Back in Scotland, he'd once tried to kill his brother Andrew.

Andrew's crime? He'd laughed when Selkirk accidentally drank from a can of seawater.

The crew of the *Cinque Ports* had ambitious plans to capture Spanish treasure in the wealthy "New World" of South America. But none of their plans went right. The sailors—whose only pay was a portion of what they plundered—had little to show for risking the stormy journey around Cape Horn and a miserable year at sea.

In September of 1704, the *Cinque Ports* stopped at a remote Pacific island called Juan Fernandez, a place of jagged peaks layered in mist and lush green vegetation. The crew needed to gather food and water and to repair their weather-beaten, leaky vessel. The men caught abundant fish in the island's natural harbor and killed the seals that carpeted the beach. At night tiny hummingbirds swarmed into their fires and died.

Selkirk, examining the *Cinque Ports* closely, discovered that marine worms had eaten her wood to a honeycomb. Much of the hull's timber needed to be completely replaced. He told Captain Thomas Stradling that the ship was unfit to sail. They should wait here for another ship to rescue them, Selkirk insisted. Sailing in the *Cinque Ports* would mean death.

The captain disagreed. Selkirk, always hot-tempered, started shouting. He tried to persuade other crew members to abandon ship with him. Captain Stradling got angry in turn. He had Selkirk's things put on shore and ordered everyone else back onto the ship.

Selkirk felt certain he was right to stay behind. But as the *Cinque Ports* raised its

A CRAG IS  
A ROCKY  
OUTCROP.



A PRIVATEER  
IS A  
PRIVATELY  
OWNED SHIP  
HIRED BY A  
GOVERNMENT  
TO HARASS  
ENEMY  
SHIPS.



anchor, the prospect of living alone on the wild, mysterious island suddenly overwhelmed him with horror. He sprang up and plunged into the water, begging to be taken back on board.

Captain Stradling refused. The *Cinque Ports* sailed out of sight. Selkirk was marooned.

**FOR THE FIRST** few months Selkirk rarely left the shore. He ate seals and crawfish when hunger forced him to eat. He slept only when his eyes wouldn't stay open. He spent the rest of his time gazing out to sea, desperate to spot sails.

At night he was terrified by the island's weird noises: the cracking and groaning of trees uprooted by the wind, the barking and roaring of thousands of seals. He imagined dangerous beasts creeping down from the misty, tree-covered hills towering above him. As his fear and loneliness became unbearable, he fought the temptation to end his life.

At last he realized that he should build a shelter. The island's climate was mild, but winter would bring frost and heavy rains. Selkirk constructed two huts out of trees and long grasses. One he used for sleeping, making himself a raised wooden bed. The other was his kitchen, where he kept his cooking fire and prepared his food.

He was grateful for the few belongings he had with him. They included his clothes, a musket with powder and bullets, a kettle, knife and hatchet, his navigational instruments, and a Bible.

The rough sailor started reading from his Bible morning and night. He read out loud—

he didn't want to forget how to speak. The words he read comforted him.

Selkirk began eating more of what the island had to offer. Ships had occasionally harbored at the island in the past. Their sailors had planted turnips and parsnips, and one of the island's palm trees grew leaves that tasted like cabbage. The Scotsman missed salt and bread, but he learned to season his food with pepper from native trees.

He hunted wild goats with his musket at first, but when his powder ran out, he trained himself to catch them on foot. He lamed young goats and tamed them to make a herd, so that he'd always have food nearby if he became ill.

In the night, rats came and chewed on Selkirk's clothes and feet, so he used his goat's meat to tame other animals—the island's cats. (Both cats and rats had come to the island on previous ships.) Soon he slept surrounded by great numbers of them. Selkirk began singing to his goats and cats, teaching some to "dance" with him.

When Selkirk's clothes wore out, he sewed himself new ones out of goatskins, using leather strips as thread and a nail for a needle. He replaced his worn-out knife by cutting and pounding new knives out of iron barrel hoops he'd found on the beach.

After eighteen months, Selkirk had conquered his fear and melancholy and learned to live comfortably on the island. Away from many of his temptations, he found a certain peace. Life on the island was good.

But Selkirk still kept his eyes on the sea, watching for sails. Then at last—a ship!

NO RATS WOULD DARE  
NIBBLE MY TOES WITH PUSS  
TO PROTECT ME!



MEWY  
GRRRR!



Was it from a nation friendly to Scotsmen? Selkirk crept through the trees as close to the beach as he dared and spied on the landing sailors. They were Spanish. Disaster! The Spanish never allowed sailors who'd seen their New World treasure ports to return home. Selkirk turned and fled.

A shot rang out. They'd seen him! He dashed over rocky hillsides deep into the forest and scrambled up a tall tree. The Spanish sailors clambered after him. They paused beneath his tree. Selkirk hardly dared to breathe.

Finally, without thinking to look up, the sailors turned and made their way back to the beach. Selkirk kept hidden until the ship left several days later.

**ON FEBRUARY 2, 1709**, four years and four months after Selkirk had been marooned, two more ships anchored in the island's natural harbor. This time, they were English. Selkirk stepped onto the beach to greet their crews.

Long-bearded and shaggy, Selkirk was a surprising sight. Captain Woodes Rogers called him "a Man cloth'd in Goat-Skins, who look'd wilder than the first Owners of them."

Selkirk had trouble making himself understood. "At his first coming on board us," Rogers wrote, "he had so much forgot his Language for want of Use, that we could scarce understand him, for he seemed to speak his words by halves." But Selkirk's



## MORE THAN ONE ROBINSON CRUSOE?

Alexander Selkirk and the fictional Robinson Crusoe both suffered from loneliness and fear before learning to live comfortably on their islands. Both kept cats and goats, dressed in goatskins, hid in trees, feared the arrival of hostile strangers, and took comfort in reading their Bibles.

But Crusoe's much longer story was probably also influenced by accounts of other castaways. Perhaps the idea for Crusoe's eventual companion, a Carribean Indian he called Friday, came from the story of a Miskito Indian from Central America called Will, who was marooned for three years on Selkirk's island in the 1680s. To survive, Will sawed the barrel of his musket into pieces and forged them into harpoons, hooks, and a knife.

English surgeon Henry Pitman's account of his adventures when he and several companions were marooned in 1687 also shares many similarities with Crusoe's story. Both Pitman and Crusoe escaped from slavery in small boats. Both were marooned on Caribbean islands within sight of the mainland. Both ate turtles and turtle eggs, smoked wild tobacco, and attempted to make pottery. And in each story, escape from the island involved rescuing prisoners of a mutiny, overpowering the mutineers, and leaving in their ship.



Statue of Alexander Selkirk in Fife, Scotland, on the site where his home once stood


speech came back with practice. The sailors in the *Duke* and the *Duchess* were amazed to see him outrun their dogs when catching goats.

Selkirk did not find it easy to return to his old life. The ship's salty food was hard to swal-

low, and he was not eager to touch liquor again. Shoes made his feet swell. But he sailed with the English a few more years—even capturing Spanish treasure—before returning to London in 1711. Meanwhile, he learned that the *Cinque Ports* had sunk soon after leaving him.

Selkirk's story was told in travel journals and newspapers. He had returned home to fame, with gold in his pockets. Nonetheless, some accounts say that Selkirk regretted leaving his island and never again found the peace he'd felt there. Eventually, he went to sea again, and died of fever off the coast of Africa in 1721.

**IN 1719, PROLIFIC** English writer Daniel Defoe, author of satires, political essays, moral treatises, and poetry, tried his hand at something unusual and new: a novel. His book, titled in part *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, told of a shipwrecked man who struggled to survive alone on an island for more than twenty years. The book was wildly popular, reprinted at home and abroad, pirated, satirized, and praised by eminent thinkers. Today it remains a classic, considered by many to be the first novel in the English language. Scholars believe that Selkirk's story probably inspired Defoe to invent Robinson Crusoe.

In 1966 the government of Chile renamed Selkirk's island Isla de Robinson Crusoe, and a smaller island 100 miles west Isla de Alejandro Selkirk, commemorating the marooned sailor who found peace on an island wilderness and whose adventure inspired a masterpiece. 

STRANGE THAT HE MISSED HIS  
ISLAND AFTER BEING RESCUED.



THINK OF THE PEACE AND  
QUIET. AND NO UGLY BIRD!





## WINNERS SEPTEMBER 2020 STORY CONTEST Time Travel

### First prize 10 and under

**Laura Morris**, age 10  
Spokane, WA

#### Making the Right Decision

"Psst, I need to talk to you." My best friend, looking super excited, is pulling me toward the nearest classroom. It's empty, and she shuts the door. "This is really big. I made a time machine, and it can take our brains back in time if you know how to use it. Come on, we've got to test it out!"

I've just realized what everything she said means, and before I can protest, my friend flips a bunch of levers, and a machine in her hand starts glowing. The room tilts, dissolving under my feet.

I try to process what I'm seeing. It's me, talking to a kid from last year. I remember what this is about. The boy wanted me to let him cheat off of my test in science, but I said no. Many nights, I've wondered what might have happened if I'd let him copy my test. We were good friends up until that year, but now, I barely remember him. We've hardly spoken with each other this year either. I've wished so many times that I'd chosen differently and let him copy my work. Maybe then this wouldn't feel like a wrinkle in my life timeline. A moment when I made a big mistake.

Then I remember we're back in time. I can change this! But I can't move as the floor dissolves again, and my friend and I appear back in the classroom. She doesn't mention anything about what we just saw, and I don't bring it up.

We exit the classroom and run into the same kid outside the door. He apologizes for what happened last year. When the bell rings, the three of us walk to class together.

Things have a way of working out eventually. Wrinkles can be ironed. We can't see the future and will never know what might have been different. We could spend our entire life going *what if*. . . But the best thing that we can do is make the right decision for the time.

### First prize 11 and up

**Lucy Kershen**, age 13  
Norman, OK

#### Greetings, Time Traveler

I step into the Ocean Room of the museum. My younger brother, Jacen, is trotting ahead toward the shipwreck display on the opposite side of the room. He loves it here.

I don't. The museum gives me the creeps. The exhibits are old, dusty, and smelly, since they aren't taken care of. The lights flicker and sometimes go out completely, darkening the rooms until they sputter back to life. It's cold and echoing, so one footstep sounds like a hundred. Why does Jacen like it here?

"Jacen, wait!" I call. The Ocean Room's floor is always wet, and I don't want him to slip.

Too late! "Whoa!" shrieks Jacen as his foot slides out from under him. He grabs hold of the curtain hanging in the corner. (I don't know why it's there as the exhibits don't have windows.) The fabric pulls aside, stopping Jacen.

"Jacen!" I skid over to him. "You OK?"

"Good. But look at that!" Behind the curtain there's a door.

"Don't go over there!" I say, but Jacen is already in front of the door, his hand twisting the knob open.

"Jacen!" I say. "Don't go in there. It's not an exhibit!"

"C'mon, Catie," Jacen pleads. "Let's go look!"

Before I can stop him, he grabs me and pulls me inside.

Clocks. That's the first thing I notice. Clocks everywhere, each of them showing a different time.

"Wow," breathes Jacen. He's not looking at the clocks but at the large cylinder in the center of the room.

The cylinder is glass. On the inside, there is a round shelf displaying thousands of things: a stuffed squirrel, a gemstone, a spoon. The ceiling

and floor around it is a mirror, so it appears to go on forever.

I circle the cylinder and notice that the back is carved out. Jacen steps inside.

"Jacen, wait! We've got to—"

Light surrounds us, and an iPad-like device descends from nowhere. On the screen is a world map and a bar with dates and times on it. A voice echoes: "Greetings, Time Traveler. Where and when would you like to go?"

### Second prize 10 and under

**Mary Busch**, age 10  
Laurel, MD

#### Time Night

I lie in bed, listening. Suddenly, a "Meoow" comes through the open window. I jump out of bed, slip my shoes on, and meow back. I tiptoe down three flights of stairs and head into the playroom. I climb out of a window—oiled the day before so it slides easily and doesn't creak—and out into the moonlight. I meow again, and a familiar "Meoow" answers.

About the meowing: in literature class we read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. In it, Tom and his friend Huck Finn meow to each other as a signal. My friend Kate and I thought that would be a good idea to do for Time Nights. The first time, I meowed so quietly, she didn't hear me!

"Jaime!" I turn. Kate is walking toward me dragging a washing machine box behind her. I walk over to the box, climb in, and help Kate over the rim. She pushes the button, and everything sort of just melts away.

Then I look around and realize we are in ancient Egypt! We climb out of our box and look at each other. We are dressed like ancient Egyptian peasant girls!

Just then, a mean-looking man pops up behind us. "Where's the water?" he growls.

We look behind him and see hundreds of men working on a pyramid. We take some jars we find in

the box and bring them to the men. I see two men talking to each other away from the others, and we sneak closer.

"Where will you get it from?" one asks.

"I've already got it, see?" The other takes a dagger out of his loincloth thing. "As soon as he's in range, I'll do it, then put it in someone else's hands." The man puts the dagger away and heads for some water.

By sundown, we have forgotten about the murder plot—until it actually happens! The man stabs another man's back, then thrusts the dagger into my hands.

Kate pulls me toward the box, the workers are gaining on us, we get into the box, flip a switch—and we're home.

### Second prize 11 and up

Laura Civillico, age 12  
Damascus, MD

I don't know why and I don't know how, but I am able to peer into the past and see into the future. Well, theoretically I can see into the future. I've never tried. Honestly, I'm afraid of what I'd see. I've always been the weird girl who can't speak, shunned by everyone because of it. I don't want to see my sad, lonely future.

I close my eyes and picture a river. Wading in, I see all different memories from my past as I look

behind me. I'm too scared to look ahead. Letting the current drift me back, I stare at my memories. Kids laughing and teasing me on the playground. Mom crying because she knows she'll never fully understand me, her only child.

No.

My way forward may be difficult, but it's not better behind me. I don't want to be alone my whole life and I want to see if I will be so I can prepare myself to prove that future wrong.

I fight my way up the river, my muscles aching from pushing against the phantom current. Years' worth of sweat and tears run off me and into the rushing water. I pass the present time and pause. I could go back now. I could go back and pretend this never happened.

No.

With renewed strength, I push the water behind me and shoot forward, kicking my legs and choking on river water.

Stop!

I look around me and I see something that makes my heart fall out of my chest. It's me. I'm with a man and two children and I'm laughing. And talking.

Numb with shock, I let the current drift me back. When I see the break between the past and the future, I dive underwater. The river disappears, and I'm back in my own home.

I can do this. I know I can.

"H-hope," I croak in a voice hoarse from lack

of usage. "Hope."

I want to see my future again. I want to see my future family again. But when I try to picture the river, it's gone.

### Third prize 10 and under

Maggie Berkson, age 9  
Oakland, CA

### A School Back in Time

Urgh, thought Gretta, as she squeezed her fist. It seemed as though the talking machine inside Ms. Tosta's throat had a broken stop button, and now she would not stop talking. Geography lesson was taking forever, and she longed to go home and read. She was overwhelmingly tired, and none of Ms. Tosta's words really registered in Gretta's mind. She wished she were back in the olden days, where it was much more studying than listening.

Suddenly a strange thing happened. The room started to shrink; the walls were now of wood, the lights only candles, and a cozy wood burner was in the corner. Her classmates were the same, but wearing old-fashioned clothes.

Ms. Tosta wore a long skirt and blouse. "Gretta," she snapped, "write faster! Daydream one more time and you'll find yourself in the Headmistress's office faster than you can say 'Jack!'"

Gretta blushed and bent down. Goodness, Ms. Tosta was snappy today. She looked up.

## Cricket & Ladybug & the Abominable Snowball





"Gretta!"

"Sorry! You weren't so strict a minute ago."

"Enough."

Suddenly Gretta remembered. She had wished. But now she wanted to get back.

With a flash, the lights were on, and Gretta heard Ms. Tosta's not-strict voice. How good it was to be back again!

### Third prize 11 and up

**Sahiba Kaur Sethee**, age 12  
Cardiff by the Sea, CA

I reached into my pocket and felt my hand wrap around the smooth, golden pocket watch my grandfather had given me on this very day so many years ago. With trembling fingers, I brought the watch up to my lips and whispered "911." I felt my feet lift off the soft carpet of my bedroom floor and felt myself slowly landing in the office I knew so very well.

Within seconds of my arrival, I saw my grandfather, sitting at his desk innocently, not knowing that he would soon be dead. Just like I do every year, I tried to warn him. I screamed, even yelled, but knew that it was no use, for you see, when time traveling, the traveler may only view the event, not change it.

I peered out through the large, glass window, searching for "the enemies." I prayed something would go wrong in the aircraft and that this evil-minded mission would be abolished, but much to my dismay the plane could be seen in the distance, heading straight for the building. I watched as the plane confronted the building, crashing through it as though it were a soft cloud. The glass shattered, and the structure began to collapse. I could hear the screams of innocent souls, and the smell of panic filled the air.

I watched my grandfather, who much to my surprise looked quite calm, as the ceiling began to crush his body, and I could barely hear his whisper, "Run, Seva, run to where it is safe!"

I closed my eyes and felt tears streaming down my cheeks and could hear the thunderous crash of the building next door.

How could someone do something so cruel? I thought and wept some more. I then slowly crouched down beside the lifeless body of my grandfather and prayed for all those who had to experience such a miserable phenomenon. "I, Seva Kaur, am safe and strong. I am here for you," I whispered to my grandfather so that maybe he would feel reassured.

I then whispered "2020" into my pocket watch.

### Honorable Mention

**Maud Birrer-Lundgren**, age 15, Klamath Falls, OR.  
**Claire Crighton**, age 11, Lancaster, MA. **Avah Dodson**, age 12, Lafayette, CA. **Dagny Haggerty**, age 11, Clearwater, FL. **Olivia Liu**, age 9, Coquitlam, BC, Canada.  
**Josie Morgan**, age 12, Loganville, GA. **Isabella Oh**, age 13, Washington, DC. **Colin Owatari**, age 7, San Francisco, CA. **Taarika Kaur Sethee**, age 9, Cardiff by the Sea, CA. **Alexandra Staver**, age 14, Evansville, WI.  
**Ryan Ye**, age 12, Stouffville, ON, Canada.

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

### Solution to Crossbird Puzzle

1	M	V	H	S <sub>06</sub>	N	V	W	M	O	N	S <sub>62</sub>
1		E		D							1
V		D		O	H	E	Z		E		V
B	W	I <sub>07</sub>	T <sub>02</sub>	O	T <sub>52</sub>	S	E	T	O	P <sub>07</sub>	
M			T	L	I	H	C <sub>02</sub>				
O	H	C	E					I	E	D <sub>61</sub>	
N		S <sub>12</sub>	N	E	T	I	W				R
S <sub>51</sub>	I	T <sub>51</sub>		S				P <sub>11</sub>	d	T	V <sub>51</sub>
	V		E	Z	O	R	F <sub>51</sub>			Z	
S	E	O	T	F <sub>11</sub>	H	O <sub>01</sub>			N	O	Z <sub>6</sub>
1				T	F	O	S <sub>0</sub>		E		1
E						D		P			1
G <sub>7</sub>	R	E	B	E	C	I	S	T	O <sub>02</sub>	O	B <sub>1</sub>

Acknowledgments continued from inside front cover

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## NEW STORY CONTEST: RESOLVING CONFLICT

In "Forfeit," Galilee helps resolve a longstanding conflict between Dwarves and Centaurs. And in "The Cat with No Meow," Jessalyn and Esha resolve a misunderstanding over whose cat is whose. Even good friends don't always get along—not only Cricket and you-know-who with the black spots, but even George and Tail, who are two ends of the same worm. For this month's contest, everybuggy agrees that they want to read your best story about resolving, or settling, a conflict.

Maybe you will write about brothers or sisters who always disagree, like Max and Sera in "Sisters and Other Life Forms." Or your conflict might involve a social issue you care about, like improving the treatment of animals or preventing pollution. Perhaps you'll write about friends who have a silly misunderstanding, like scheduling their birthday parties on the same day, or who are competing for a spot on the soccer team or for the lead in a school play. You might set your story in another time in history, or create an imaginary world filled with fantastic creatures.

Whether you're in conflict with your best friend, your little brother, or even your goldfish, everybuggy will be joining hands around the Cricket Country mailbox as they politely share your best story—of 350 words or less, please—about solving a conflict. Peace out!

### 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 January 25, 2021.
7. Send entries to **Cricket League**, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354. (No faxes or email submissions, please!)
8. We will publish winning entries in the April 2021 issue and on the *Cricket* website.



**CAN YOU IMAGINE** spending a summer near the North Pole where the sun shines twenty-four hours a day? The sun is so low in the sky, the slanted rays create continuous daylight that lasts for months. What a summer that would be! Beth A. Clark tells me that one amazing bird actually experiences two of these summers each year.

Arctic terns, with their long, pointed wings and deeply forked tails, make the longest and most spectacular of all migration journeys. Traveling only twenty weeks of each year, they complete a 22,000-mile round trip from the Arctic to the Antarctic.

The midnight sun has already appeared when the Arctic terns, smaller members of the gull family, arrive at their nesting sites. When the sun finally sets fourteen weeks later, the birds fly thousands of miles to the Antarctic, where the seasons are reversed. During this second summer the sun doesn't set for eight more weeks. Even after the sun finally dips below the horizon, it stays light all night for the last ten weeks of their stay. As soon as the days begin to shorten, the terns return to the high Arctic. Scientists can verify this incredible journey by attaching coded metal bands to the birds' legs at their breeding grounds, and then recapturing them after this southern migration. The codes on the bird bands accurately trace the Arctic terns' route, identifying exactly where and when the birds were banded.

Arctic terns, elegant birds barely longer than a ruler, are the world's migratory champions. Because of their phenomenal journey in search of the sun, these birds have twenty-four hours of daylight for at least eight months of the year. This gives them more hours of daylight than any other animal on earth!

*Old Cricket*

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Join the 2021 Spark!Lab Dr. InBae & Mrs. Kyung Joo Yoon

# Invent it CHALLENGE



## Be a Game Changer!

Hey, Young Inventors!



Former pro football player Shawn Springs is an inventor and **GAME CHANGER**. His company, Windpact, creates technology for helmets to reduce injuries caused by impacts in sports. Shawn's

inventions will change the game for players in many sports—baseball, cycling, skiing, football, and hockey, to name a few—forever! What ideas do you have for making sports more...

Fun?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Safe?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Accessible?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Fair?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Competitive?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



Create an invention that makes sports more exciting, fun, fair, or safe for all.  
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