

Books were everywhere, and Mrs. Tuttle, the person responsible for the books, was getting frantic. Her predicament started in October when she found the book supply running low.	12 25 28
Mrs. Tuttle was a very organized person. She ordered more books immediately, requesting that they be delivered by air. Air mail was always the speediest way to receive books. By November, it was obvious that someone messed up somewhere. She was sure she had not ordered this many books!	40 55 67 77
As usual, flocks of birds delivered the books. Mrs. Tuttle would find the birds gathered on the steps of her library in the morning. Each bird would flap its wings and remove the leather bound books tied to its legs by straps of ribbon. They would wait for her to unlock the doors with her skeleton key. Some days they were not patient, and they would peck holes in her socks. She would end up shouting, "Stop! I am moving as quickly as I can!"	91 107 123 139 154 162
Mrs. Tuttle was usually cool and composed, but now she was beside herself with worry. She did not have enough room in her library for this many books.	176 190
"That's it! I've had enough! Someone will have to call off these birds," Mrs. Tuttle screamed one afternoon. A flock of flamingoes with packs of dictionaries had just stumbled through the doors. She marched over to the telephone, dialed, and waited. She tapped her foot in annoyance.	204 217 230 237
"Hello, this is Mrs. Tuttle from the library. Someone will have to call off this multitude of birds. I have more than enough books."	252 261
"You can never have enough books," said the person who answered the telephone. The voice sounded different to Mrs. Tuttle, as if the speaker had a beak.	273 288
"I have stacks of books here taller than I am," Mrs. Tuttle huffed.	301
Just then a hummingbird fluttered by her shoulder carrying a tiny book of poems. Mrs. Tuttle gave the bird one of her sternest looks, but instead of flying away, the bird began to chirp and sing. Mrs. Tuttle sighed and slowly hung up the receiver.	315 331 346
"My, you're pretty," she told the hummingbird. "Can you help me straighten out this mess?"	359 361

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Bridget Baxter lived in a black and white world. Her stockings were black and white striped, her school uniform was black and white checkered, and her father's automobile was black. Her hair was an odd shade of gray and so were her eyes, ears, and feet.	14 27 43 46
It seemed that Bridget was the only one in her world who noticed the problem. Everything seemed boring and mundane in shades of black and white. Bridget dreamed of something more. She fantasized of a world in color, even though she couldn't explain to anyone exactly what color was all about.	61 73 87 97
"It's just different," she told her grandmother one morning over a cup of foggy tea with a lump of colorless sugar and a slice of uninspiring lemon.	112 124
"It's uplifting and wonderful. If only I could show you the ideas I have in my head."	140 141
"I thought the same thing when I was your age too, Bridget," her grandmother told her. "It's best to focus on your homework, dear, and get your head out of the clouds."	155 172 173
That night, Bridget attempted to focus on the black and white pages of her books, but she failed. Instead, she slipped outside where the sky was the cheerless color of ashes and walked across the empty pastures and paddocks. Bridget disregarded her surroundings until she was completely lost. Then she noticed a black-caped woman waiting in the middle of her path.	188 203 214 227 235
"Are you the one that's looking for something more?" the woman asked.	247
Bridget was about to deny the truth when she saw something around the woman's neck that caught her attention. It was a color that Bridget had never seen before.	260 275 276
"Do you like it?" the woman asked. She pulled back her hair and showed Bridget her necklace. Then she stopped abruptly and held an intricate box out to Bridget. "Take it," she said. The box was filled with colorful beads of all different shades and hues.	291 305 321 322
"Go on with you now," the woman shouted, "and share your gift."	334
Bridget swung around and then turned back. "Thank you," she shouted, but the woman had already vanished and the pasture was black once again. Bridget clutched her box with excitement and ran all the way home to show her grandmother.	347 359 373 374

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David was always the first person in his family at the breakfast table. While his sisters were primping their hair in front of the bathroom mirror, David was already halfway through his bowl of cereal and thinking about what he was going to eat next.	15 29 45
David would eat anything—as long as it was breakfast. One of David's favorite meals was sausage, hash browns, and eggs. He also adored French toast, blueberry pancakes, and oatmeal with brown sugar and fresh cream. He would eat poached eggs at the drop of a hat, and he could devour a half-foot pile of flapjacks in seventy-eight seconds flat.	59 71 84 103 107
David would rather starve than eat the spaghetti and meatballs the school cooks served the students for lunch. What David WOULD eat was a bacon and egg sandwich and piles of fresh fruit. A pink grapefruit with sugar was one of David's more frequent snacks.	120 134 149 152
"One of these days you're going to have to broaden your tastes, David," his mother would tell him as she packed him hardboiled eggs for lunch. "Someday you're going to find a place that doesn't serve breakfast, and you're going to have to try something new."	166 179 195 198
"But just last week, I tried that onion, mushroom, and shrimp omelet at the restaurant," David told his mother. "They're always coming up with new things for breakfast."	212 225 226
That day at school, David ate his hardboiled egg while all the other students had pizza and cooked broccoli for lunch.	241 247
Then, across the table, David saw a girl pick up something interesting and take a bite out of it. She rolled her eyes with delight before taking another bite. Then she started taking bites so fast that the fascinating piece of food was rapidly disappearing.	262 278 291 292
Suddenly she looked up. "You want some?"	299
"What is it?" David said, hesitantly.	305
"It's a cookie. Try it. I guarantee you'll love it."	315
David took a tiny bite. A wonderful taste landed on his tongue and made him feel happy. David felt he could eat cookies and nothing but cookies for the rest of his life.	331 347 348

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During the entire month of April, Leo and his brothers would spend every spring day in their garage after school. They had to prepare for the annual kite competition. They made kites out of their dad's old lightweight fishing rods and their mother's old dresses.	14 29 44 45
This year Leo's two older brothers, Mark and David, were working together on a gigantic kite shaped like an eagle. Using wood glue, string, scraps of nylon, and satin, they began making one of the most beautiful kites Leo had ever seen. Leo himself was making a kite shaped like a great fish with an arched back and a mouth open wide to catch the wind.	59 73 88 105 111
"Fish don't fly," Mark and David laughed when Leo first announced what his kite was going to be. "With your luck, Leo, it'll catch enough wind to drag you down to the lake and you'll get soaked."	125 142 148
Leo ignored them, and let them say what they thought as he worked. Using metal wire and navy silk, he made a spiked fin down the fish's back and two large side fins to catch up-drafts. If everything went as Leo planned, the body of the fish would billow with air, the fins would catch the wind, and his fish-kite would rise high into the air.	162 179 196 213 216
Mark and David worked very hard on crafting sturdy wings for their eagle. They even used real feathers spray-painted with gold. They gave their eagle-kite gleaming black eyes and a sharp, hooked beak.	230 243 251
"Our kite is sure to win first place," boasted David. Mark glanced at Leo's clumsy-looking fish.	265 268
"Yours is sure to win last place, Leo," he said.	278
The day of the competition, Mark and David's kite swooped up into the air right away. But the eagle-kite swooped too fast. It swooped to the right, it swooped to the left, and then it swooped right into a tree.	293 309 319
Leo's fish-kite climbed into the air slowly, like a great fish rising out of the water. Many people pointed at Leo's kite.	336 342
"A fish," they said. "What an original idea." Leo took home top honors.	355

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After supper one evening, while Harry was exploring the forest, he came upon something extraordinary. A squirrel's nest that once rested snugly between the branches of one of the towering maples had fallen to the ground. It was tangled in a heap of broken branches and blackened leaves. Harry was ready for the worst as he cautiously approached the nest, but instead of a disaster, he got a surprise.	13 24 41 55 69
When he crouched down to inspect the abandoned nest, something brown and frizzy flew up in his face. It scrambled around his neck, raced down his back like lightning, and then shoved itself snugly in his pocket.	81 97 106
Harry thought about digging his hand into his pocket and pulling out the trembling creature, but he decided not to. The squirrel was obviously frightened. For whatever reason, it felt protected in Harry's pocket, so he let it stay there as he hiked home.	120 132 149 150
When he got home, Harry slammed the front door behind him and scrambled past his parents. He pounded up the spiral staircase to his quiet bedroom.	163 176
"Oh, I do wish you'd slow down and stop banging through the house," his mother shouted up at him.	191 195
"Sorry, Mom," Harry said half-heartedly over his shoulder as he shut and locked himself in his bedroom. As soon as he was alone, he reached gently into his pocket. He expected the squirrel to race out of his hand and hide under the bed, but instead the little critter just sat in Harry's palm and stared at him. The squirrel scrunched up its black nose and sneezed, and Harry laughed.	209 225 242 258 266
Harry's laugh must have frightened the squirrel because it flew out of his hand. It literally soared up to the curtain valance above his window and angrily chattered down at him. Then it fell from the valance and slipped between the dusty books Harry had on his shelf and looked for a place to build a nest.	281 294 309 323
To this day, Harry's mom still doesn't know her son keeps a flying squirrel for a pet, but she does often wonder why all the nuts and crackers in the house seem to disappear.	339 356 357

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I did absolutely nothing wrong, yet here I lay. I am in my own bedroom,	15
staring at the shadow of my swaying foot. This experience is certainly not the	29
first of its kind, and I truly suspect it won't be the last. I'm absolutely sick and	46
tired of this kind of maltreatment. I used to thoroughly enjoy my renovated room,	60
but recently it's become a symbol of dread and boredom. It's a place I'd rather	75
not occupy.	77
Somebody is certainly going to incur my wrath. That somebody may have to	90
be an imaginary scapegoat. I'm not strong enough to deal with someone who	103
can fight back. I don't want to be mean, but my options are extremely limited.	118
My bedroom has no television. I have only a small CD player with a mere	133
handful of CDs. Of course, I cannot play them because I don't get to choose	148
which CDs to play. So I'm sentenced to lie here in subdued silence.	161
For some strange reason I cannot comprehend, someone decided to punish	172
me and confine me to this bedroom. Most of my close acquaintances remain	185
outside the room. I am convinced most of them are laughing at and mocking me.	200
Perhaps they should be confined like caged rats with absolutely nothing to do	213
except for quietly read the same obnoxious magazines over and over again. If	226
they wanted to punish me, they have certainly succeeded. The solitude is much	239
more than punishment. It is more akin to torment.	248
Whatever did I do to deserve this treatment? I really don't understand.	260
Scream out loud a little. Use a bad adjective or two. Big deal! Of course, if they	277
took care of my basic needs, I'd be as content as the next fellow.	291
Oh, they say that I'm somewhat selfish and perhaps a bit spoiled. I'd like	305
them to take a walk in my shoes and then tell me how they'd enjoy being eighty-	322
four and treated like a helpless infant.	329

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I got the usual wake-up call from my mom at exactly 5:45 a.m. After I rested my eyes for what seemed like only a minute or two, she called to me again.	18 33
"You'd better be getting up right now or you'll be late!"	44
I slowly walked to the bathroom to take my morning shower, only to find a huge spider sitting on my washcloth! After a few minutes of taunting the spider, I managed to wash it down the drain.	60 74 81
My bug hunting efforts made me late for breakfast. I somehow managed to eat my cereal and make it to school on time. The day went fine until fifth period, when to my surprise, I discovered that an Air Force colonel was substituting for my English teacher. I spent the entire period in silence under the watchful eye of a Persian Gulf vet.	95 113 127 143 144
During sixth period, I remembered that I had detention for not finishing my math homework. I also remembered that I forgot to tell my mom about my detention. I decided to give her the bad news by e-mail. I hoped the e-mail might soften her up. A phone call from my math teacher later that day, however, removed any sympathy my mother may have had for me. Detention seemed to drag on forever. I had homework to do but couldn't force myself to do it.	158 173 190 204 219 229
When I got off the late bus, I braced myself for my mother's wrath. I found her in the den, and to my surprise, she didn't yell as loud as I thought she would. After she was done yelling at me, she told me that my guitar lesson was canceled for the evening. I took some comfort in this news because I knew I could continue to torture her with "Purple Haze" and "Layla" for another week.	247 265 281 297 306
Dinner went off without a hitch. I ate everything on my plate. After dinner I went to my room to catch my favorite TV show, only to discover that a special speech by the president's wife was on instead. I decided to go to bed early that night. I was glad the day was finally over!	322 339 356 362

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when you're the new kid in class and everyone ignores you.	23
After I moved to Watercress, Indiana, nobody in my fourth grade class knew my	37
first name was Jason for a week straight. The teacher even printed it in bold letters	53
across the blackboard my first day in attendance. If I hadn't been best friends with	68
Sigmund, I might not have made it through that trying first week at my new	83
elementary school when everyone shouted, "Hey you!" to get my attention.	94
Sigmund is my imaginary friend. Only I can observe his antics. Sigmund has	107
fuzzy, purple ears that stick out like teacup handles from both sides of his shaggy	122
head. He also has a mouth filled with lots of sparkling white teeth. His paws are the	139
size of trash can lids, but his eyes are thoughtful and gentle. Sigmund purrs when	154
he is content, and he cries big, indigo tears when he is upset.	167
Although I am the only one who can see Sigmund, anyone can hear him. Even	182
though he is a little shy, Sigmund does cause a commotion at times due to his large	199
size. For example, if Sigmund knocks over a stack of books or trips over a desk,	215
people near him would be able to hear the commotion he caused. Last week,	229
Sigmund was dancing around in the front of the room while the teacher taught us	244
how to divide. Suddenly he spun around and accidentally ran into the chalkboard.	257
He caused a lot of anxiety when the other kids heard his loud crash but couldn't see	274
him. Several students looked at each other and whispered, "What was that?"	286
The teacher told us it was probably only a minor earthquake and continued on	300
with her lesson. Only I knew Sigmund was the cause.	310
Even now that everyone knows my first name is Jason and I have a group of	326
friends my own age, I'm still friends with Sigmund. I just don't explain why I smile	342
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In the old spider's spare time, she knitted coverings for all the animals of the forest. For the moose and his family, she knitted the warmest mosses into snug-fitting vests. The moose family repaid her with the horns they dropped in winter. Now the old spider weaves her webs amongst their fallen horns, and she doesn't go hungry.	15 29 43 58 59
For the wolves, she entwined her own spider silk with soft whiffs of mist—a very delicate procedure. Now the wolves are invisible when they streak across the moonlit fields. They repaid her by taking their pack across the valley when the group howls. Now the old spider's sleep isn't disturbed.	75 87 102 110
When the field mice requested clothes for winter, the old spider made them cloaks out of oak leaves trimmed with dandelion fuzz. The mice repaid the old spider with news that a blizzard was coming.	123 137 145
After the snow, a sly wolverine came knocking on the old spider's door requesting protection from the cold. She conjured a muffler, as black as the night, trimmed with lace from her own web. In repayment, the sly wolverine warned her that the blackbirds were hungry and were gathering in the trees above. That night a blackbird pecked at the old spider's window. The crafty spider looked into the gleaming eyes of the bird. She was busy working on webs for the spring.	158 172 186 201 214 228
"I hear you make clothes for the animals," the bird said, watching the old spider work. "You must help me. My feathers are no protection against this bitter wind. I need you to weave a cape for me to cover my feathers." The spider considered the blackbird's request.	243 258 274 276
"What is your name?"	280
"Raven," he said. "If you weave a cape for me, I shall repay you quite generously."	295 296
"Then I shall make you a cape," she replied.	305
She worked long into the night, intricately braiding spools of her black spider silk and the fur from cattails. Raven came to retrieve the cape in the morning. He shuddered with delight as he pulled it over his black shoulders.	319 334 345
"Now, what do you demand of me?"	352
"Only a ride on your broad shoulders," the wise spider replied.	363

In the old spider's spare time, she knitted coverings for all the animals of the forest. For the moose and his family, she knitted the warmest mosses into snug-fitting vests. The moose family repaid her with the horns they dropped in winter. Now the old spider weaves her webs amongst their fallen horns, and she doesn't go hungry.

For the wolves, she entwined her own spider silk with soft whiffs of mist—a very delicate procedure. Now the wolves are invisible when they streak across the moonlit fields. They repaid her by taking their pack across the valley when the group howls. Now the old spider's sleep isn't disturbed.

When the field mice requested clothes for winter, the old spider made them cloaks out of oak leaves trimmed with dandelion fuzz. The mice repaid the old spider with news that a blizzard was coming.

After the snow, a sly wolverine came knocking on the old spider's door requesting protection from the cold. She conjured a muffler, as black as the night, trimmed with lace from her own web. In repayment, the sly wolverine warned her that the blackbirds were hungry and were gathering in the trees above. That night a blackbird pecked at the old spider's window. The crafty spider looked into the gleaming eyes of the bird. She was busy working on webs for the spring.

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Jean led her sister Annabelle and her brother Kevin into the foothills of the mountains. There were rumors of extraordinary things happening near the creek by the mountains. All of the children in the hollow heard stories about a character named Johnny Rabbit. The children said he would sit on the porch of his rundown old cabin and scare off visitors. They said if you stopped to visit Johnny Rabbit, he would try to frighten you away. Many of the neighborhood children spoke of monsters in the pond near his house. Johnny Rabbit kept the monsters to make people stay away. There were also tales about his mean dogs, the dangerous poison ivy that he planted around his house, and the trained bees that would sting anybody who tried to trespass on his property.	14 26 40 55 71 84 98 111 126 134
Jean did not believe these stories and intended to find out the truth of the matter. Jean led her little sister and brother further into the woods. They walked for half an hour, and finally came to an old shack in a clearing. A sign on the fence read, "No Trespassing." Jean looked past the fence and saw an old man sitting in a rocking chair on the front porch. At first, Jean was a little frightened. Then she said, "Hello there."	150 166 184 199 215 216
"Hello," the man responded. "What do you want?"	224
"I just wanted to meet you," said Jean holding her brother's and sister's hands.	238
"Just a second," said the man. He told his old bloodhound to go inside the house. Jean walked to his porch and sat down with Kevin and Annabelle. The man had two big front teeth and twitched his mouth like a rabbit. Jean found out his name was Johnny and he had lived in this house his whole life. He raised carp in the pond of his farm, often had rabbits for supper, and liked to eat honey. Jean learned that he was a nice man and that all the rumors about him were false. After a nice talk, Jean, Kevin, and Annabelle walked away, noticing the large beehive near Johnny's front gate.	253 268 284 301 317 335 348 351
"He was a very nice man after all," said Jean to her sister and brother. "I guess we tend to fear those things we don't understand."	368 377

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Joan walked along the dingy, stone corridor. The sound of her footsteps was almost deafening in the silence. She paused briefly as she reached the entrance to the cave. As she peered inside, she noticed a glow coming from a small, raised wooden platform located near the center of the cave. Stretching across the surface of the platform was the long sought after Golden Sword. Its gem-studded handle radiated light throughout the cave.	13 27 42 55 69 74
Joan's heart pounded as she gazed upon the ancient relic. She knew it belonged to many heroes, including Daniel the Dragon-Killer. Almost everyone knew the tale of his noble deeds.	88 101 105
Long ago, an evil dragon terrorized Joan's homeland. He roamed the land for many years. Daniel heard of a Golden Sword and decided to search it out. After finding it, he used the sword's magic to defeat the dragon and save countless lives. Becoming a hero, however, changed him forever because he eventually abandoned his homeland and was never seen again. Daniel became a legend. After a century passed, children still dreamed of becoming a hero just like him.	118 133 148 159 173 184
Joan dreamed of becoming a heroine as well. Most of her friends grew up and started families of their own, while Joan spent the majority of her time practicing with her sword. She could not outgrow her childhood dream. She desperately desired to become a heroine.	199 214 227 230
Joan had already decided what quest would be hers. She learned of a Silver Knight who terrified many people living in the land far to the west. She would destroy him and restore truth and justice to the people. To carry out her plan, she needed the Golden Sword.	244 259 275 279
Joan's quest for the Golden Sword was difficult. Many dangers lurked in the enchanted forest surrounding the cave. Despite the dangers, Joan succeeded. As she grasped the sword, she could feel magic quivering within its handle. With the Golden Sword, she encountered and defeated the Silver Knight.	292 303 317 326
Joan continued with other acts of heroism for many years. She became famous throughout the entire kingdom, and as she had desired, she became a legend. Eventually, she returned the Golden Sword to its resting place where it would wait for the next hero to discover it.	339 352 366 373

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Last summer in early August, the Jones family packed up their station wagon and headed for the lake. By the time they arrived at Windy Lake, set up their tent, docked their boat, and fed their three cranky children, the Jones family was ready to turn in for the night.	14 30 45 50
The next morning dawned, cool and clear. While Mr. Jones fished for their breakfast in his canoe, the children played on the narrow beach. Mrs. Jones sat and watched the kids as she read a few pages of a novel.	63 78 90
Lunch was prepared over the campfire. They had grilled sunfish and trout with carrots and potatoes and a can of baked beans.	103 112
After lunch the Jones's went swimming. They took special care in applying a special mixture of sunscreen and bug spray to the children and themselves. All afternoon, the two oldest children floated on their raft in the shallow waters, and the youngest child made sandcastles on the beach.	125 138 153 160
That evening after dinner, Mr. Jones played his guitar and sang songs. When the children were droopy-eyed and relaxed, Mr. and Mrs. Jones tucked them into their sleeping bags and enjoyed the campfire by themselves. They held hands and stared at both the starry sky and the fireflies that darted in and out of the shadows.	173 187 200 217
At sunrise they woke to a rain that flooded their tent and dampened most of their supplies and clothes but didn't dampen their spirits. While Mr. Jones entertained the children on the campground's muddy playground, Mrs. Jones took the station wagon down the road to the laundromat. She returned at the right moment to take a picture of her husband and the kids at the edge of the lake. Mr. Jones was attempting to teach his boys how to skip stones over the water.	233 246 258 274 291 301
After hot dogs and potato chips, the Jones family took a short, evening hike. They returned to their campsite just in time to chase off a family of raccoons that had rummaged through their trash as well as their freshly washed clothes.	315 332 343
"Isn't camping fun?" Mrs. Jones asked her husband as they hunted for their clothing in the underbrush.	356 360

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Michael enjoyed sailing on the sea more than anything else. The feel of the wind through his hair while it filled the ship's sails, the chop of the ocean beneath him, and the deep navy color of the waters were just some of the reasons for his love of the sea.	15 32 50 51
Michael remembered having a fascination with the sea. He grew up on the shores of the Atlantic in the state of Maine. From the moment he was old and strong enough to haul up a net, he was allowed to go on the boat with his father in the evenings.	63 81 100 102
Michael's great-great-grandfather had been a sea-faring captain. He had owned his own ship and made a run from the New York harbor to the Orient and to Calcutta every year. He'd brought back spices, the richest of silks, and teacups so fine you could see the tea through the china. Best of all, he'd brought back stories of his adventures on the high seas. Out of all his treasures, the stories were the most important. Only the stories remained intact as the years flew by.	115 132 147 163 178 189
On his eighteenth birthday, Michael inherited the old, silver compass that once belonged to his great-great-grandfather. The compass was tarnished and dented, yet amazingly, its silver arrow still pointed true north.	201 213 222
After his high school graduation, only one route of education interested Michael. He wanted to study the sea and its creatures. He hadn't realized, however, that there would be so many sea-related careers to choose from. He could be an oceanographer and study the vast oceans. He could be a marine specialist and study the characteristics of different marine animals. Or he could be a fisherman like his father and his father before him. Fishing was an occupation that went back for generations in his family.	234 248 263 276 290 305 309
Now, as a grown man with a boat of his own, Michael would sometimes find himself on the deck of his ship thinking of his life with the sea. It was then that he would slip the old compass out of the pocket of his wet slicker, study it under the stars, and remember just exactly where he came from.	324 343 360 369

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Mr. Huffman, a man who lived at the end of Simon's street, had dragon-like features. He had green, glowing eyes and dry, scaly hands. His house had four chimneys that were constantly smoking, even in the middle of July. His windows were smudged black with soot and smoke.	15 29 42 49
The other kids on the block told Simon that Mr. Huffman and all of Mr. Huffman's relatives were dragons. Simon didn't know if he believed the rumors about Mr. Huffman. Last week he'd observed the old man stacking firewood next to his stone house. He'd looked tired and worn out to Simon. "Aren't dragons supposed to be invincible?" wondered Simon. "If Mr. Huffman was a dragon, why did he seem to have such a hard time stacking firewood?"	65 78 92 106 120 127
"He needs all that wood," whispered Ned Swampett, Simon's next-door neighbor. "Dragon babies won't hatch unless their eggs are constantly kept exposed to open flames."	139 152 153
Simon thought about Ned's explanation the next day as he watched Mr. Huffman chopping more wood. Could it be true that the old man was concealing dragon eggs in his basement?	166 181 184
"He's got a dungeon full of rubies," whispered Shelia Swampett, Ned's sister, while they watched Mr. Huffman climb in his rusted sedan and drive away. "He's going to the jewelers now to purchase more rubies. Did you know that baby dragons eat rubies, Simon?" asked Shelia.	196 210 225 230
When Mr. Huffman returned, he had a jeweler's box tucked under his arm. When he accidentally stumbled and dropped it on his way up his front walk, Simon saw the glimmer of rubies in the afternoon sunshine.	244 260 267
Simon decided he would satisfy his curiosity. He waited for Mr. Huffman to leave again, and then he snuck over to the house and slipped through a smudged basement window.	281 295 297
There he found a room with four fireplaces. In the middle of the room was a golden nest. In the nest was a pile of baby dragons sleeping in a lethargic heap. The dragons were black and smoke curled from their nostrils. Placed next to them was a bowl filled with rubies—their favorite meal.	313 329 343 352

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Ms. Pringle was the strangest teacher at Eastbrook Elementary. Everyone agreed, including the students, teachers, janitors, and even the principal.	10 20
Ms. Pringle's laugh sounded like a cackle. Her hairdo was like a dust ball perched on the top of her head. It was frizzy and golden. She favored bright colors, and sometimes under the cuffs of her pants, her students saw that her socks didn't match.	34 50 65 66
One day, Sammy raised his hand and Ms. Pringle called on him.	78
"Ms. Pringle," Sammy said. "Do you know that your socks are mismatched and your shoes are untied?"	91 95
"Oh," Ms. Pringle said bending down hastily to take a look. "I guess you're right, Sammy. You see, I have better things to do than worry about whether my socks match or my shoes are tied."	110 125 131
On Thursday, Ms. Pringle came to class in slippers and the students were flabbergasted to see that her hair was still twisted in curlers. She had only one earring dangling from her left earlobe, but she wasn't the least bit worried when Tony pointed out the missing earring to her.	144 159 174 181
Ms. Pringle left the single earring in all morning. She taught the students how to divide during math class and about England and France during history class. She taught them how to make a cursive letter B. She also took all their pictures for a bulletin board she was decorating.	196 209 226 231
All day long she lost curlers. They rolled from her golden hair, off her desk, and down between the aisles where her students sat in wonder. By the end of the afternoon, her hair was one curly, untamed mess. But when Angie offered Ms. Pringle a barrette to clip it back, she declined.	247 262 275 284
"I have better things to do," she announced to her students. "Now, let's see. We were talking about squids."	299 303
"What better things do you have to do?" someone asked. Ms. Pringle looked up and smiled. A curler rolled between her feet.	317 325
"Why, teach you, of course," replied Ms. Pringle.	333

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One day, Victoria was walking home from the grocery store with a brown bag on each hip when a sparkle caught her eye. The sparkle came from a slightly dented ruby ring wedged tightly in a crack of the cement sidewalk. After much muttering and three scraped knuckles, she retrieved the ring and held it in the palm of her hand.	15 30 44 60 61
Some words were engraved on the inside of the ring's golden band, but the ring was so worn and bent that Victoria could not read them. Victoria slipped the ring on her thumb. Feeling quite content, she skipped all the way home. When she got there, her youngest brother Roger was waiting in the yard with a picture he colored for her.	76 92 106 121 123
"Why, you're so sweet, Roger," Victoria said patting her brother on the cheek as she spoke. She was about to say more, but there was a poof of smoke. When the smoke cleared, Victoria saw that Roger had turned into a sugar statue. Victoria stepped closer and saw that her brother was one solid piece of sugar crystal. Rogers's mouth was open as if he wanted to speak. Just then, Victoria's other brother, Newman, came out onto the back stoop.	137 154 167 181 195 203
"What are you doing, Victoria?" Newman asked. "Mom needs the carrots and sesame seeds you picked up at the grocery store in order to finish dinner. I'll come and get them from you."	215 231 236
Newman crossed the yard to his sister, wondering why she didn't answer. His eyes finally settled on Roger. "What happened to him?"	249 258
"Really, Newman, are you as cold and insensitive as an ice cube?" Victoria asked. "I called him sweet and he turned..." Victoria gasped as the groceries she was passing to Newman fell to the ground. Newman had turned into a statue of ice, his two surprised eyes starring up at her.	271 285 301 309
In an instant, Victoria realized the ring she wore was cursed. She tore it off her thumb and threw it into the street. As soon as the ring was off her thumb, her brothers began to revive. She no longer wondered why someone left that ring on the sidewalk by the grocery store.	325 342 356 362

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"You won't believe what I saw this morning!" Chen exclaimed at the breakfast table. "Just before the sun came up, a spaceship landed on the roof of the house next door. It stayed for about 15 minutes and then flew away. Do you think our new neighbors are aliens?"	13 29 46 49
"No, I'm sure it was just a dream, Chen," his mother said. But Chen wasn't so sure.	65 66
When he arrived at school, Chen learned that his class had a new teacher. The new teacher's name was Mrs. Ling. Chen thought she behaved very strangely.	81 93
"How are all my human boys and girls today?" Mrs. Ling questioned the class. "Today I will teach you all about my, I mean OUR, solar system. I will draw a sketch of the solar system on the chalkboard for everyone."	107 125 134
Mrs. Ling then picked up the chalk, but instead of raising it to write on the chalkboard located right behind her, she crossed the room and attempted to scribble on the window.	150 163 166
"Oh," she said when Kim Sung pointed out that the window was not the chalkboard. "Ah, yes, here is the chalkboard. Now I will draw our solar system."	180 194
Then Mrs. Ling began to draw many loops and circles on the blackboard. She drew a fiery sun and the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. Everyone expected her to stop after drawing the tiny, cold planet at the edge of the solar system. Instead, she drew a gigantic planet surrounded by hoops of fire.	208 221 234 249 254
"What planet is that?" Kim Sung asked. "We don't have a planet like THAT in our solar system."	270 272
"Of course not," Mrs. Ling replied nastily as she erased the unusual planet. "I just drew it to see if you all were paying attention, and you were! You are a wonderful class of human boys and girls."	286 303 310
Later that night, while Chen was walking home from school, he saw Mrs. Ling walking down the sidewalk toward him. Chen was about to jump into the bushes and hide, but Mrs. Ling turned and walked up to the door of the house next to Chen's house. Oddly enough, it was the same house the spaceship had landed on the night before!	324 338 356 371 372

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"How are all my human boys and girls today?" Mrs. Ling questioned the class. "Today I will teach you all about my, I mean OUR, solar system. I will draw a sketch of the solar system on the chalkboard for everyone."

Mrs. Ling then picked up the chalk, but instead of raising it to write on the chalkboard located right behind her, she crossed the room and attempted to scribble on the window.

"Oh," she said when Kim Sung pointed out that the window was not the chalkboard. "Ah, yes, here is the chalkboard. Now I will draw our solar system."

Then Mrs. Ling began to draw many loops and circles on the blackboard. She drew a fiery sun and the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. Everyone expected her to stop after drawing the tiny, cold planet at the edge of the solar system. Instead, she drew a gigantic planet surrounded by hoops of fire.

"What planet is that?" Kim Sung asked. "We don't have a planet like THAT in our solar system."

"Of course not," Mrs. Ling replied nastily as she erased the unusual planet. "I just drew it to see if you all were paying attention, and you were! You are a wonderful class of human boys and girls."

Later that night, while Chen was walking home from school, he saw Mrs. Ling walking down the sidewalk toward him. Chen was about to jump into the bushes and hide, but Mrs. Ling turned and walked up to the door of the house next to Chen's house. Oddly enough, it was the same house the spaceship had landed on the night before!

One night Jessie caught a jarful of lightning bugs and set them on her nightstand	15
to use as a night light as she fell asleep. These lightning bugs weren't ordinary	30
lightning bugs. Regular lightning bugs have neon green bubbles on the rear part of	43
their bodies. These lightning bugs had miniature light bulbs that gave off a green	58
glow. Regular lightning bugs have rather squinty black eyes and tiny brains. These	71
lightning bugs wore black spectacles and had large brains. They all carried a little	84
backpack on their backs filled with books and maps. Although they were trapped in	98
a jar, they waited quietly for Jessie to fall asleep before they started to speak.	114
"What do you think she's doing over there?" asked one lightning bug named	115
Ryan. "Do you think she's sleeping yet? I never realized humans have such	128
gigantic eyebrows."	141
"Her breathing is slow and regular, so I'd say she's asleep," said another lightning	143
bug named Billy.	157
"Oh, look, she's drooling," said a bug named Herman. "When we get out of here,	160
let's trap her in a jar and see how she likes it."	175
Herman was by far the brightest lightning bug of the bunch.	187
"Come on, Herman," said Billy, as he helped the team of lightning bugs unscrew	198
the lid of the jar. "Let's escape!"	212
Soon the lightening bugs were out of the jar and in the wide-open air of Jessie's	219
bedroom. Some of the bugs quickly darted out of the window as soon as they got	236
the chance, but Herman and Ryan lingered around Jessie's pillow.	252
"I wonder what she's dreaming about?" murmured Herman.	262
"She's probably dreaming about the kind of animal she wants to capture next	270
time," said Ryan. "Why don't you wake her up and ask her, Herman?"	283
"Let's go. Let's go," prompted the other lightening bugs from outside.	296
"One moment," said Herman. He studied Jessie's ears and then pulled	307
something out of his backpack. He gave Jessie a pair of neon green earrings and	318
told his friends, "I want to give her something to remember us by because she didn't	333
hurt us. She was only curious."	349
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Peter Perkins is the school bully and everybody is tired of his teasing. Everybody including Will Weston, who is already six feet tall and very good at basketball. Peter Perkins teases Will because Will is as skinny as a weed. He also laughs at Will's bright red hair and freckles. Peter Perkins calls Will carrot head and beanpole whenever the teacher isn't listening. Will just ignores Peter and tries to memorize his spelling words or complete his math assignments.	14 29 45 58 71 79
Will isn't the only person that Peter Perkins goes after. There's Molly May who's in third grade and as shy as a turtle. Molly May has long black hair that she weaves into braids and a pair of spectacles trimmed in gold. Molly loves to read. She reads on the way to the cafeteria, in the gym, and on the bus. Peter Perkins pesters Molly from the back seat of the bus, calling her book face and worm brain from the back seat.	93 111 127 144 161 162
One afternoon, Peter Perkins was mocking people out on the playground as always. Suddenly, he lost his balance and toppled off the seesaw. Now it was everyone else's turn to point and laugh and whisper and tease. When Peter stood up, his face was streaked with tears and he was cradling his right arm. It seemed that no one was going to help him, but suddenly Molly and Will appeared.	174 188 202 218 232
Molly saw Peter fall while sitting under a tree reading her book, and Will saw Peter's accident from the basketball court. Molly and Will helped Peter to the nurse's office. The nurse took one look at Peter's arm and announced, "It's broken. Looks like you're going to the hospital, young man."	247 260 274 283
Peter looked down at his sneakers so no one could see he was crying.	297
"Here," Molly said, handing him her handkerchief. "I broke my arm in second grade. It's not that bad, really. You get to choose what color cast you want."	310 325
"If the nurse says it's okay, Molly and I will ride along with you," Will said. "I broke my arm last summer."	342 347
"Okay," Peter sniffled. He was sure glad Molly and Will decided to be nice to him despite all of the mean things he had done to them.	363 374

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Radcliff didn't like being a rat. He had gray fur with brown splotches and a limp,	16
cold tail that was always getting slammed in doors. His left ear had been caught in a	32
mousetrap, and only his right ear remained. Radcliff thought he would have a better	46
life if he were a rabbit.	53
Radcliff wanted to be a rabbit so badly. Everyone knows rabbits have more fun	67
than rats. Rabbits get pulled out of top hats. Rabbits have cute, wriggly noses and	82
perfect ears. They have soft, downy coats very fluffy cotton-ball tails too. They can	97
hop, they have their own holiday, and they get far more time on a stage than rats.	114
One afternoon while down in his dingy, damp rat hole, Radcliff decided to	127
transform himself into a rabbit. He made himself rabbit ears out of several sticks	141
and an old white T-shirt that someone had thrown away. He also made himself a	156
puffy, bunny tail out of old cotton balls. Then he climbed up out of his hole and went	174
into the sunshine. Luckily enough, the first person Radcliff met while out on the	188
sidewalk was a magician.	192
"Oh, what a lovely rabbit," the magician said as he bent down to stroke Radcliff's	207
bristly back. "Why, you're just the rabbit I need to star in my magic show."	222
Radcliff was overjoyed when the magician picked him up and stowed him in his	236
top hat. On stage later that evening, the magician pulled Radcliff out of his hat and	252
received a robust applause. Radcliff did a little tap-dancing number that brought	265
down the house.	268
"You were wonderful," the magician told Radcliff after the show. "No one even	281
realized you weren't a real rabbit."	287
Radcliff was heartbroken. He was sure the magician thought he was a real	300
bunny. What if the magician intended to toss him out on the street and find himself	316
an authentic bunny? Fortunately for Radcliff, that didn't happen. Instead, the	327
magician made Radcliff dinner and they practiced magic tricks until midnight. When	339
the magician was tucking Radcliff into bed, he smiled.	348
"Tomorrow we have another show," he said, "and I will be the only magician in	363
the city with a magic rat."	369

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Shelly and Ricky strolled down the aisle of the large, all-purpose store. They weren't looking for anything in particular and were in no hurry to find it. As they turned the corner into the paper aisle, Shelly saw a small coin purse lying on the floor. There was only one other customer nearby, so without looking inside the coin purse, Shelly asked the woman if it was hers. The woman quickly took a look at the coin purse and answered negatively.

The coin purse was small and had a zipper. It was the kind of purse a child would carry to the store. Thinking it was a child's purse, and hoping to find some identification inside, Shelly and Ricky unzipped the purse. Expecting to find nickels and dimes, they were totally surprised when Shelly pulled out two one hundred dollar bills and several ones!

If the purse held only coins, Shelly and Ricky would have turned it in without question. But holding two hundred dollars in their hands made them catch their breath and think again. All kinds of thoughts raced through their minds as they looked at each other with the money in their hands. There was no identification inside or out, so there was no way to prove who owned it. It would be very easy to walk out of the store with the money, and no one would know. They both wanted the money. They both needed the money. But they both knew it would be wrong to keep the purse.

When they went to the counter with their find, the cashier's amazement was apparent. She couldn't believe someone would turn in a lost purse with that much money. As Shelly gave her name and explained the situation, the cashier interrupted saying, "A young woman reported this coin purse missing. She had just cashed her pay check. She'll be so grateful for your honesty!"

As Shelly and Ricky left the store, their faces reflected their mixed emotions of pride and disappointment. They were sad they couldn't keep the money, but they also knew they had done the right thing.

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The black squirrel worked all summer long gathering acorns and lining her nest with tufts of grass. She groomed her bristly black tail and practiced jumping from branch to branch.	13 27 30
"Looking good," the gray squirrel would holler up at the black squirrel whenever he watched her practice. "You should join the circus or something. Then you wouldn't have to worry about stocking food for winter or gathering twigs for your nest."	43 56 70 71
"You should worry about your own food and nest," she told him as she paused to frown down at him from a swaying branch. "You run around on the ground all day and steal your food from the human's bird feeder. A squirrel can't rely on humans to provide food all winter. Just you watch. In the middle of January, the humans will forget to fill the feeder. Then all you lazy animals that depend on the feeder during the summer are going to be in trouble."	87 103 119 134 150 158
The gray squirrel cracked another sunflower seed between his sharp teeth.	169
"That'll never happen," he said. "Those humans fill the bird feeder every week."	182
"Mark my words, Mr. Gray Squirrel," she said. "You will wish you had prepared for winter like me."	196 200
"Yeah, yeah, yeah," said the gray squirrel, rolling his eyes behind the black squirrel's back. "Oh look, they're putting out more seeds and orange halves. See you around."	213 226 228
Just as the black squirrel predicted, the bird feeder was full all through December, but when January rolled around, the blue jays finished all the seed and the feeder stayed empty for a week. The black squirrel was well fed and warm with her hoard of acorns and cozy nest, but the gray squirrel was hungry and cold. In a week's time, the gray squirrel lost all of his winter fat. He was especially skinny and gruff the evening he knocked on the black squirrel's door.	241 255 271 288 304 314
"Please let me in," he squeaked. "I have no nest and no food. I should have prepared for winter in the fall just like you said."	330 340
"You're quite right," the black squirrel said. "If you're going to stay with me, you can shell the nuts."	355 359

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The bright lights glaring down on the stage were making Holly sweat. It wasn't	14
her nerves that had her hands all clammy, she told herself. It was just the heat in	31
the auditorium.	33
She had been standing offstage for nearly an hour now, and her hands kept	47
sweating more and more. Wiping them on her skirt didn't seem to be doing any	62
good. She decided to try not to think about it and to take deep breaths instead.	78
Today was the day of Holly's first piano recital. It was being held in a huge	94
auditorium with at least two hundred people present. The young man currently on	107
stage was playing a sonata. He was almost finished, and Holly was next on the	122
program. The thought of walking across the stage made her stomach lurch.	134
"Just calm down," she told herself. "You've practiced this piece a thousand	146
times. You could play it in your sleep." Somehow this idea distracted her until the	161
pianist before her left the stage and the applause died down.	172
Holly felt every eye on her as she walked shakily to the grand piano. The clicking	188
of her heels across the stage sounded unbearably loud to her until she self-	202
consciously sat down and placed her hands on the keys.	212
For a terrible moment, her mind went blank and panic threatened to overtake her.	226
"I can't do it!" she thought. She felt like crying until she forced herself to take a deep	244
breath, clear her mind, and begin to play.	252
Her fingers awkwardly played the first few bars, and her fingers felt numb, like	266
little blocks of wood, clumsily clunking down on the keys. Then she hit a sour note.	282
Holly's back stiffened in shock, and suddenly her hands flew across the keys with	296
a confidence born of sheer determination. The music swelled and ebbed and	308
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Holly felt her whole body vibrate with the force of the enthusiastic applause that	327
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On Thursday morning, the children in Mr. Randall's fifth grade class were very excited and difficult to control. Thursday was their field trip. Mr. Randall wiped the sweat off his forehead and smiled at his assistant teacher, Miss Peach, as all twenty-four students waited by the curb, clutching their brown-bag lunches and craning their necks to see the yellow school bus.	13 27 41 54 63
"Everyone in single file now. No pushing or shoving," Mr. Randall called to the students as they clambered into the bus like a herd of stampeding elephants.	77 90
Mr. Randall's students believed they were the luckiest class in the entire school because their field trip was more exciting than any other. Even some of the sixth graders agreed they were very lucky. Today Mr. Randall's class was going to the circus!	103 118 132 133
When the bus pulled in front of the circus tent, several students pressed their faces against the bus windows and exclaimed, "Wow!" Several others couldn't say anything at all. They were staring at the pair of lions a woman was leading around by a leash.	147 159 175 178
Once inside the tent, the students were so impressed with the surroundings that they listened to every word Mr. Randall said. When he told them to sit down, they sat down. When he told them to speak in whispers, they spoke in whispers for the rest of the show. No one threw spitballs. No one jumped out of their seats. The children in Mr. Randall's fifth grade class were, for once, perfectly behaved.	191 207 223 239 251
Mr. Randall glanced over at Miss Peach and winked.	260
"Happens to them every time," he whispered.	267
A bunch of clowns buzzed around in a pink car in the middle of one of the rings in the center of the tent, and the children's eyes opened as wide as saucers. Then fifteen clowns climbed out of the car, and the students clapped as loudly as they could. When it was time for the trapeze act, the students held their breath. When the elephants came out, they said, "Oh" and "Ah." On the bus on the way home, the students chatted excitedly about the circus. What a great field trip!	286 301 316 331 348 359

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The circus was coming to town, and everyone wanted to go to the show to see the spectacle. Tickets were hard to obtain because the show was practically sold out.	16 29 30
When Dad came home from the office, he said nothing about the upcoming circus. None of us kids suspected a thing as dad ate his dinner and watched the Monday night football game.	43 59 63
The football game rolled along, and the whole family watched the rivalry unfold. It was a good game. Suddenly, Dad got up from his chair, went to his coat, and pulled five little pieces of paper out of his pocket. He quietly handed us each a piece of paper. They were circus tickets!	76 93 109 116
"Next Saturday we will be going to the circus," he said. "It will be great."	131
Before we went, I imagined what we would see at the circus. First, we would park our car close to the colorful tents and walk to the very first mini-donut stand we could find. Mini-donuts are excellent and absolutely must be eaten at a circus. I heard it's a rule. Next we would walk to the colorful big top while eating our donuts. The circus smells would drift through the air and the scent of fresh popcorn would be overwhelming. There always was something new to see too. Going to the circus gave us a wonderful chance to be together.	146 164 179 196 211 225 233
On Saturday, we arrived at the circus! First came the clowns! One clown had a goofy nose. Moments later, a funny multicolored clown raced into the grandstand, took my dad's hat, and ran off with it. The clown went back into the center ring, tripping over the ring itself, and jumped into his little blue circus car. The car drove rapidly out of the ring and out of the circus tent with my dad's hat.	248 260 277 293 308
I looked at my dad. All my family could do was roar loudly with laughter. Everyone around us laughed hysterically because they all saw the clown steal my dad's hat. Shortly afterward, there was a tremendous ruckus by the other end of the tent and the car came in again. It went super fast and nearly hit an elephant on its way back to the center ring.	323 336 351 369 375
"Where is Dad's hat?" I wondered. The car stopped and out came one clown, then another, and then another. Fourteen clowns piled out of the car, and the last one that climbed out was wearing Dad's hat.	389 404 412

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The football game rolled along, and the whole family watched the rivalry unfold. It was a good game. Suddenly, Dad got up from his chair, went to his coat, and pulled five little pieces of paper out of his pocket. He quietly handed us each a piece of paper. They were circus tickets!

"Next Saturday we will be going to the circus," he said. "It will be great."

Before we went, I imagined what we would see at the circus. First, we would park our car close to the colorful tents and walk to the very first mini-donut stand we could find. Mini-donuts are excellent and absolutely must be eaten at a circus. I heard it's a rule. Next we would walk to the colorful big top while eating our donuts. The circus smells would drift through the air and the scent of fresh popcorn would be overwhelming. There always was something new to see too. Going to the circus gave us a wonderful chance to be together.

On Saturday, we arrived at the circus! First came the clowns! One clown had a goofy nose. Moments later, a funny multicolored clown raced into the grandstand, took my dad's hat, and ran off with it. The clown went back into the center ring, tripping over the ring itself, and jumped into his little blue circus car. The car drove rapidly out of the ring and out of the circus tent with my dad's hat.

I looked at my dad. All my family could do was roar loudly with laughter. Everyone around us laughed hysterically because they all saw the clown steal my dad's hat. Shortly afterward, there was a tremendous ruckus by the other end of the tent and the car came in again. It went super fast and nearly hit an elephant on its way back to the center ring.

"Where is Dad's hat?" I wondered. The car stopped and out came one clown, then another, and then another. Fourteen clowns piled out of the car, and the last one that climbed out was wearing Dad's hat.

The King commanded that all young men report to his castle. He needed to build an army of men and train them to fight. A new challenge to the kingdom threatened from across the sea, and the King wanted to be prepared. The command from the King was carried throughout the land to every corner of his kingdom.	15 31 46 58
Young Abraham was a healthy boy, very big for his age, and very strong. He worked beside his father in the fields where he was able to lift two bales of hay at one time. He could cut down a small tree with one swing. He had a reputation in his village as being honest, strong, and quiet. When Abraham received the command from the King, he responded immediately. He packed food, a blanket, and warm clothing in an old bag and swung it over his shoulder. He bid his father farewell and journeyed off down the road towards the King's castle.	73 91 109 121 134 151 160
Abraham arrived days later with many other men. He received new clothes and a sword. The King's men trained Abraham to compete in battle. They showed him how to use his sword and demonstrated fighting techniques. The King's men later fed the soldiers and let them go to bed, whereupon they fell, exhausted, into a deep sleep on the soft hay of the barns.	173 187 200 216 224
In the morning, the soldiers awakened to the blast of trumpets. Invaders landed the night before and were headed to the castle to take over the country. The King commanded his new army to defend the country. The men lined up, tired and scared, unsure of how to fight the invading band of men.	237 253 267 278
Abraham led the men into battle. He swung his sword like he swung his ax, and the invaders fell like trees. He lifted men over his head and threw them the way he threw bales of hay. The invading forces were scared off by Abraham's mighty feats. They quit fighting and retreated to their boats. They never tried to invade the kingdom again. Abraham's bravery saved his country. Abraham was awarded the medal of bravery and was named a knight of the kingdom.	294 311 325 339 350 361

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During a thunderstorm last November, a tree fell on our house and our roof collapsed. My dad isn't very good with house repairs, so we had to call a carpenter.	14 30
The day after the storm, my dad and I waited for the carpenter outside on our driveway. We were both tired after spending most of the night trying to save our belongings. Our house no longer had much of a roof, and it had rained all night.	46 61 77
After a few minutes, a white van with "Carlson's Carpentry" painted in red letters on its side-door panels turned into our driveway and coasted toward us. My father and I were wet, tired, upset, and about to be surprised.	91 106 117
The carpenter who climbed out of the white van wasn't at all the repairman we were expecting. Instead, an old woman stepped onto our wet driveway. Her hair was in curlers, and she had a pair of safety goggles resting on top of her head. She shook my dad's hand in a no-nonsense manner, and with a frown, she turned to look at our house.	132 145 163 179 183
"Now I see why you were in such a panic on the telephone," she said to my father. "This place needs some major work."	200 207
The tree that had fallen on our house was at least two hundred years old. Its branches and leafy sections had completely destroyed our living room and breakfast nook. I didn't believe for one second that this little old woman was going to remove the tree and reconstruct the walls of our house. I could tell my dad wasn't sure either. He stared at the old woman in her work boots and carpenter's pants. He was totally amazed.	223 235 251 267 282 285
"My name's Harriet Carlson," she told us. "But I only respond to Harry."	298
"Sure thing," my dad muttered.	303
"Now where's my chainsaw?" said Harry.	309
"Are you sure," my dad said following after her in his bathrobe, "that you should operate such heavy machinery, Mrs. Carlson?"	324 330
"That's Harry," she grunted as she hefted the chainsaw in one hand and stalked up the driveway. "No one's called me Mrs. Carlson since my teaching days. This here's my second career choice."	344 358 363
The rest of her words were lost in the roar of the chainsaw as we watched in disbelief as she started to work. From then on, I remembered that first impressions aren't everything.	380 394 396

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The Minnesota ice fishing season began on a damp day with a bone-chilling wind. But a little inclement weather was not enough to spoil my seventy-eight-year-old Grandpa's plans! He got up earlier than usual and had a big breakfast of bacon, scrambled eggs, toast, and orange juice. Having organized his fishing gear the night before, he only had to grab a thermos of hot coffee before heading out on the ice in hopes of landing a big walleye.	14 29 45 57 74 82
Grandpa had a lot of patience and sat on his bucket patiently for an hour without a single bite. Jeff went down to check on Grandpa and see if he needed anything. It was so cold that Jeff could barely stand there for a few minutes of chatting before returning to the house with an update on Grandpa's progress. Dad felt bad that the fish weren't biting. As he looked out the window, he said with a gasp, "Oh no!"	98 114 131 146 162
Quickly, he opened the window and yelled out a warning. "Dad!" he shouted. "Be careful. The ice might crack beneath you."	175 183
But Grandpa had hearing problems, and in turning his head toward the window, the bucket slid towards the hole in the ice. Dad waited until Mom came into the room. She did not think Grandpa's situation was very safe. She went over to the window and yelled, "Grandpa! Get off the bucket."	196 212 227 235
Again, Grandpa did not hear her. Everyone agreed that Grandpa could fall in the water without getting hurt, but he would definitely be cold and wet, which would make him crabby. Mom and Dad started to argue over who should go outside and tell Grandpa of come in soon.	249 263 278 284
"Oh, for goodness sake," said Grandma, putting down her crossword puzzle and getting up from the sofa. She flung open the window and yelled, "Bob, LUNCH!"	296 310
And with that, Grandpa safely stood straight up, put down his pole, and walked up the hill. Shortly after Grandpa was in the house, he looked at the empty table and asked, "Where's lunch?" Mom and Dad looked at each other with disbelief.	324 340 353

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Trevor spent so much time in front of the television playing video games and watching MTV that his mother thought he was turning into a vegetable.	14 26
"Trevor," she said to her son one morning over French toast, "you have to stop spending so much time sitting on the couch watching TV. You're turning into a couch potato."	41 55 57
Trevor's father agreed. "Too much television isn't good for anyone," he said.	69
"Whatever," Trevor muttered under his breath as he retrieved his skateboard from the closet and whizzed off to school. All of his friends watched just as much television as he did, and nothing was wrong with them.	80 96 106
Maybe it was just because his mother had him thinking about kids turning into vegetables, but he started to notice odd things about his friends.	120 131
Igor Wagner watched TV all night on school days and all day and night on weekends. Trevor noticed that Igor had the nose of a turnip, and the skin around his knuckles was brown and looked like potato skins.	146 162 170
Molly Santana played video games all the time, and she seemed to be growing curly grapevines out of her head, sprouting bean sprouts out of her ears, and taking on an eggplant-shaped body.	184 199 204
Then Trevor noticed that his own skin was the color of cornhusks and that he was starting to grow a belly like a pumpkin.	219 228
After school, Igor and Molly stopped him near the cafeteria.	238
"Do you want to come over to my house?" Molly asked. "I just rented a new video game. We can play it all night!"	254 262
"No, let's go to my place," Igor said. "This weekend is movie madness on cable. My mom will make us pizza and popcorn, and we won't even have to get up off the couch. It'll be awesome!"	277 295 299
Trevor patted his pumpkin stomach and picked up his skateboard. He was going to need to spend a lot of time outdoors exercising in the fresh air to get back in shape.	312 330 331
"No, I think I'll take a rain check, guys," he told them and whizzed away quickly.	347

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Looking at John Cobb standing next to his racers with his helmet on inspired me	15
and my friend Marty to build our own go-cart. We were going to make history. We	32
took a board from Dad's lumber pile. The board measured two inches thick by	46
twelve inches across and eight feet long. Next we took apart my brother's wagon for	61
its wheels and sturdy axles. To attach the wheels, we laid the axles on the board	77
and drove 16-penny nails into one-inch centers on both sides. Then we bent them	93
over the steel axle. We also built a seat out of an old orange crate.	108
Finally we had a basic go-cart. It was nothing fancy, but with a fine set of	125
wheels, plenty of grease, and some kid-power or a good hill, she would fly!	140
We decided this machine would be a deluxe model, including steering. To	152
achieve steering control, we concentrated the nails at the center of the front axle.	166
You could accomplish a left or right turn by sitting on the board and placing your feet	183
against the axle on both sides near the wheels and using a reasonable amount of	198
pressure.	199
It was Marty's great idea to tie the go-cart to the white horse named Old Blue that	217
grazed in the field across the street. When Marty introduced the horsepower idea, I	231
became a little nervous. It didn't take long for me to suggest that he should be the	248
first test driver.	251
We fastened a rope to Old Blue's neck, and Marty climbed aboard and tied	265
himself in with a do-it-yourself seatbelt. Old Blue had no trouble pulling a piece of	282
wood through the field of hay. Marty was determined to ride as far as he could. He	299
was doing well until Old Blue jumped a ditch, sending the go-cart airborne. When it	315
hit the ground on the other side of the ditch, the wheels came off completely.	330
When I reached Marty, he didn't look very good. It took me a few minutes to help	347
him get out of the smashed go-cart. Luckily, Marty was able to walk home. I did not	365
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