

by Ann Cameron illustrated by Ann Strugnell

A STEPPING STONE BOOK™

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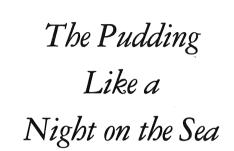
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"I'm going to make something special for your mother," my father said.

My mother was out shopping. My father was in the kitchen, looking at the pots and pans and the jars of this and that.

"What are you going to make?" I said.





"A pudding," he said.

My father is a big man with thick black hair. When he laughs, the sun laughs in the window-panes. When he thinks, you can almost see his thoughts sitting on all the tables and chairs.

"What kind of pudding will you make?" my brother, Huey, asked.

"A wonderful pudding," my father said. "It will taste like a whole raft of lemons. It will taste like a night on the sea."

Then he took down a knife and sliced five lemons in half. He squeezed the first one. Juice squirted in my eye.

"You okay?" he asked.

I nodded.

"Stand back!" he said, smiling, and squeezed again. The seeds flew out onto the floor. "Can you pick up those seeds, Huey?"

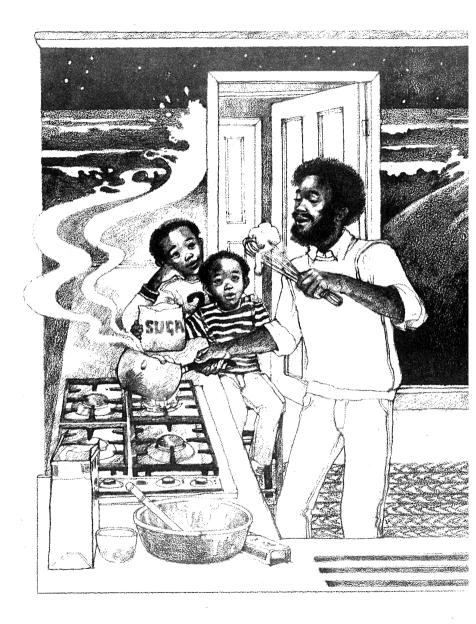
Huey took the broom and swept them up.

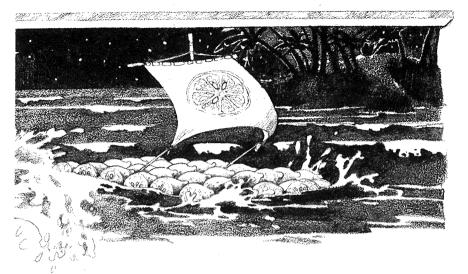
My father cracked some eggs and put the yolks in a pan and the whites in a bowl. He rolled up his sleeves and pushed back his hair and beat the yolks.

"Sugar, please, Julian!" he said, and I poured the sugar.

He went on beating the eggs. Then he put in lemon juice and cream and set the pan on the stove. The pudding bubbled, and he stirred it fast. Cream splashed on the stove.

"Would you wipe that up, Huey?" he asked.





Huey did.

It was hot by the stove. My father loosened his collar and pushed at his sleeves. The stuff in the pan was getting thicker and thicker. He held the eggbeater up high in the air.

"Just right!" he said, and sniffed in the smell of the pudding.

He whipped the egg whites with the eggbeater and mixed them into the pudding. The pudding looked softer and lighter than air. "Done!" he said. He washed all the pots, splashing water on the floor, and wiped the counter so fast his hair made circles around his head.

"Perfect!" he said. "Now I'm going to take a nap. If something important happens, bother me. If nothing important happens, do *not* bother me. And—the pudding is for your mother. Leave the pudding alone!"

He went to the living room and was asleep in a minute, sitting straight up in his chair.

Huey and I guarded the pudding.

"Oh, it's a wonderful pudding," Huey said.

"With waves on the top like the ocean," I said.

"I wonder how it tastes," Huey said.

"Leave the pudding alone," I said.

"If I just put my finger in—there—I'll know how it tastes," Huey said.

And he did it.

"You did it!" I said. "How does it taste?"

"It tastes like a whole raft of lemons," he said.
"It tastes like a night on the sea."

"You've made a hole in the pudding!" I said. "But since you did it, I'll have a taste." And it tasted like a whole night of lemons. It tasted like floating at sea.

"It's such a big pudding," Huey said. "It can't hurt to have a little more."

"Since you took more, I'll have more," I said.
"That was a bigger lick than I took!" Huey

said. "I'm going to have more again."

"Whoops!" I said.

"You put in your whole hand!" Huey said.
"Look at the pudding you spilled on the floor!"

"I'm going to clean it up," I said. And I took a rag from the sink.

"That's not really clean," Huey said.

"It's the best I can do," I said.

"Look at the pudding!" Huey said.

It looked like craters on the moon.

"We have to smooth this over," I said. "So it looks the way it did before! Let's get spoons."

We evened the pudding with spoons, and while we evened it, we are some more.

"There isn't much left," I said.

"We were supposed to leave the pudding alone," Huey said.

"Let's go away from here!" I said. We hid the pudding in the cabinet, then ran into our bedroom and quietly shut the door.

Huey looked up at me. "What do we do now?"

My father had taught me that when I got worried or upset, I should count. So that's what I did. "One, two, three, four . . ." By the time I got to ten, I had an idea. In a little while, we heard our father's voice. "Where are you boys?" he said. He sounded very stern.

"We're right here," I said, opening our door.
"Upstairs. We're just picking up our room. And

making our beds. The way Mom told us to do. And when we finish, we will take out the trash. And do anything else to help you."

"I don't want help! Come on downstairs!" our dad said.

Uh-oh, I thought. My plan was not working.

We went down to the kitchen.

"What do you have to tell me?" he asked.

"When we looked at the pudding," Huey said, "we felt sorry for it."

"We thought it might be lonely," I said. "Just one pudding, all by itself in the kitchen."

"We thought it would be less lonely if we tasted it," Huey said.

"So we tasted it," I said.

"Just tasted it," Huey said. "At first."

"We're sorry," we both said at the same time.

My dad shook his head.

"Where is the pudding?" he said.

"We put it in the cabinet next to the dishes," I said.

My father pulled open the cabinet door.

Sure enough, the pudding was right there, in the cabinet.

Only there wasn't much of it.

Our father groaned. He grabbed his hair in his hands. He took a deep breath.

Now it was his turn to count.

"One. Two. Three," he said. He continued counting, slowly. "Twelve. Thirteen."

That's when our mother came in, with two big bags of groceries.

"Hello!" she said. She set her bags down and stared into the cabinet.

"Your pudding?" she said with one hand on her hip.

"It used to be," our dad said.

"It looks like it was nice," our mom said.

My dad didn't answer her. He started counting again.

My mom picked up the little bit of pudding and set it on the kitchen counter. She shook her head, and then she scraped it into the trash.

"Julian and Huey," she said, "did you mess with this pudding?"

"Dad told us to leave the pudding alone," I said.

"We meant to," Huey said, "but we tasted it. And then—we kept on."

"I can see you made a wrong decision," my mom said. "I hope the next time you have a hard decision, you'll make the right one."

She said to my dad, "Please help me unload the groceries, Ralph." He stopped counting and helped her.

In the stuff he unloaded there were five lemons, and cream, and a dozen eggs.

"Everything we need for a new pudding!" my dad said.

Mom just smiled. "Maybe if the boys make

it, they won't be so tempted to mess with it. Would you make it, boys?"

We said we would.

So my mom and dad showed us how to do new things, hard ones like separating egg yolks from egg whites and beating them and adding sugar and lemon juice into them and beating everything more. And then letting it rest for a good long time.

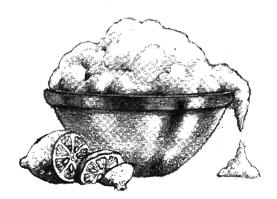
When the pudding was finished, my dad passed it to my mother to taste.

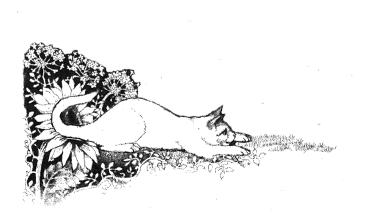
"Would you like some, boys?" my mom said.

"No thank you," we said.

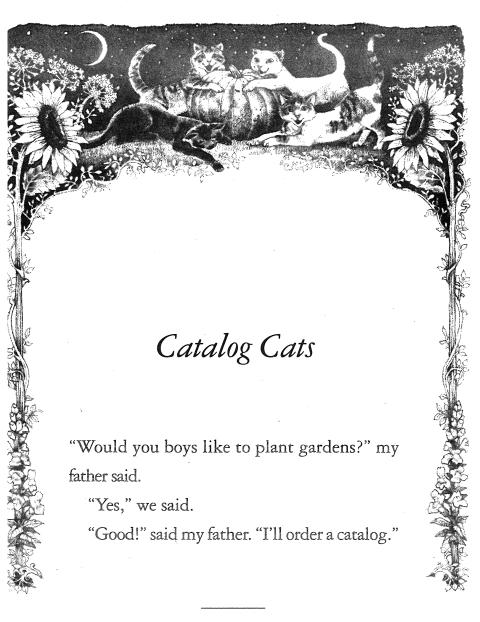
My mother picked up a spoon. "Why, this

tastes like a whole raft of lemons," she said.
"This tastes like a night on the sea."





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So it was settled. But afterward, Huey said to me, "What's a catalog?"

"A catalog," I said, "is where cats come from. It's a big book full of pictures of hundreds and hundreds of cats. And when you open it up, all the cats jump out and start running around."

"I don't believe you," Huey said.

"It's true," I said.

"But why would Dad be sending for that catalog cat book?"

"The cats help with the garden," I said.

"I don't believe you," Huey said.

"It's true," I said. "You open the catalog, and the cats jump out. Then they run outside and work in the garden. White cats dig up the ground with their claws. Black cats brush the ground smooth with their tails. Yellow and brown cats roll on the seeds to push them underground so they can grow."

"I don't believe you," Huey said. "Cats don't act like that."

"Of course," I said, "ordinary cats don't act like that. That's why you have to get them specially—catalog cats."

"Really?" Huey said.

"Really," I said.

"I'm going to ask Dad about it," Huey said.

"You ask Dad about everything," I said.
"Don't you think it's time you learned something on your own for a change?"

Huey looked hurt. "I do learn things by myself," he said. "I wonder when the catalog will come."

"Soon," I said.

The next morning Huey woke me up. "I dreamed about the catalog cats!" he said. "Only in my dream the yellow and brown ones were washing the windows and painting the house! You don't suppose they could do that, do you?"

"No, they can't do that, Huey," I said. "They don't have a way to hold rags and paintbrushes."

"I suppose not," Huey said.

Every day Huey asked my father if the catalog had come.

"Not yet," my father kept saying. He was very



pleased that Huey was so interested in the garden.

Huey dreamed about the catalog cats again. A whole team of them was carrying a giant squash to the house. One had his teeth around the stem. The others were pushing it with their shoulders and their heads.

"Do you think that's what they really do, Julian?" Huey said.

"Yes, they do that," I said.

Two weeks went by.

"Well, Huey and Julian," my father said, "today is the big day. The catalog is here."

"The catalog is here! The catalog is here! The catalog is here!" Huey said. He was dancing and twirling around.

I was thinking about going someplace else.

"What's the matter, Julian?" my father said.

"Don't you want to see the catalog?"

"Oh, yes, I—want to see it," I said.

My father had the catalog under his arm. The three of us sat down on the couch.

"Open it!" Huey said.

My father opened the catalog.

Inside were bright pictures of flowers and vegetables. The catalog company would send you the seeds, and you could grow the flowers and vegetables.

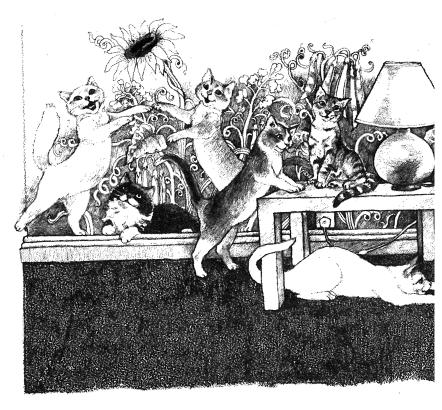
Huey started turning the pages faster and faster. "Where are the cats? Where are the cats?" he kept saying.

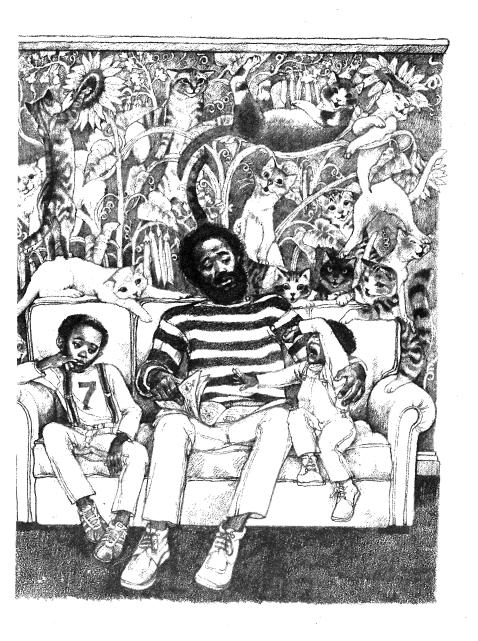
"What cats?" my father said.

Huey started to cry.

My father looked at me. "Julian," he said, "please tell me what is going on."

"Huey thought catalogs were books with cats in them. Catalog cats," I said.





Huey sobbed. "Julian told me! Special cats—cats that work in gardens! White ones—they dig up the dirt. Black ones—they brush the ground with their tails. Yellow and brown ones—they roll on the seeds." Huey was crying harder than ever.

"Julian!" said my father.

"Yes," I said. When my father's voice gets loud, mine gets so small I can only whisper.

"Julian," my father said, "didn't you tell Huey that catalog cats are invisible?"

"No," I said.

"Julian told me they jumped out of catalogs! He said they jump out and work in gardens. As soon as you get the catalog, they go to work." "Well," said my father, "that's very silly. Julian has never had a garden before in his life. I wouldn't trust a person who has never had a garden in his life to tell me about catalog cats. Would you?"

"No," Huey said slowly. He was still crying a little.

My father pulled out his handkerchief and gave it to Huey. "Now, blow your nose and listen to me," my father said.

Huey blew his nose and sat up straight on the couch. I sat back and tried to be as small as I could.

"First of all," said my father, "a lot of people have wasted a lot of time trying to see catalog

cats. It's a waste of time because catalog cats are the fastest animals alive. No one is as quick as a catalog cat. It may be that they really are visible and that they just move so quickly you can't see them. But you can feel them. When you look for a catalog cat over your right shoulder, you can feel that he is climbing the tree above your left ear. When you turn fast and look at the tree, you can feel that he has jumped out and landed behind your back. And then sometimes you feel all the little hairs on your backbone quiver—that's when you know a catalog cat is laughing at you and telling you that you are wasting your time.

"Catalog cats love gardens, and they love to work in gardens. However, they will only do half the work. If they are in a garden where people don't do any work, the catalog cats will not do any work either. But if they are in a garden where people work hard, all the work will go twice as fast because of the catalog cats."

"When you were a boy and had a garden," Huey said, "did your garden have catalog cats?"

"Yes," my father said, "my garden had catalog cats."

"And were they your friends?" Huey said.

"Well," my father said, "they like people, but they move too fast to make friends.

"There's one more thing," my father said. "Catalog cats aren't *in* garden catalogs, and no one can order catalog cats. Catalog cats are only

around the companies the catalogs come from. You don't order them, you request them."

"I can write up a request," I said.

"Huey can do that very well, I'm sure," my father said, "if he would like to. Would you like to, Huey?"

Huey said he would.

My father got a piece of paper and pencil.

And Huey wrote it all down:

REQUESTED:

I dozen catalog cats
all varieties
WHOEVER
Wants to come
IS WELCOME



We planted tomatoes, squash, onions, garlic, peas, pumpkins, and potatoes. Besides that we planted two special things we saw in the catalog, which were—



Genuine corn of the Ancients! It grows 20 feet high. Harvest your corn with a ladder. Surprise your friends and neighbors.

and

Make a house of flowers. Our beans grow ten feet tall. Grow them around string! Make a beautiful roof and walls out of their scarlet blossoms.

Huey was the one who wanted the house of flowers the most. I wanted the giant corn. My father said he wasn't sure he wanted either giant corn or a flower house, and if we wanted them, we would have to take care of them all summer by pulling weeds. We said we would. We planted everything one Saturday. We worked all day long, getting the ground smooth and even, and laying the little seeds down in rows. The whole time I felt the catalog cats were there, swirling their tails in the air.

We finished just before the sun went down.

My mother gave Huey and me baths. She said we were dirty enough that she could grow plants on our hands and knees.

When we were clean, we had supper, with chocolate pie for dessert, and went to bed.

Huey went to sleep right away. But I didn't.

I put my jacket on over my pajamas and went out the back door to the garden. In the dark it looked as if the garden was sleeping. I lay down on the grass. It was cold and a little wet.

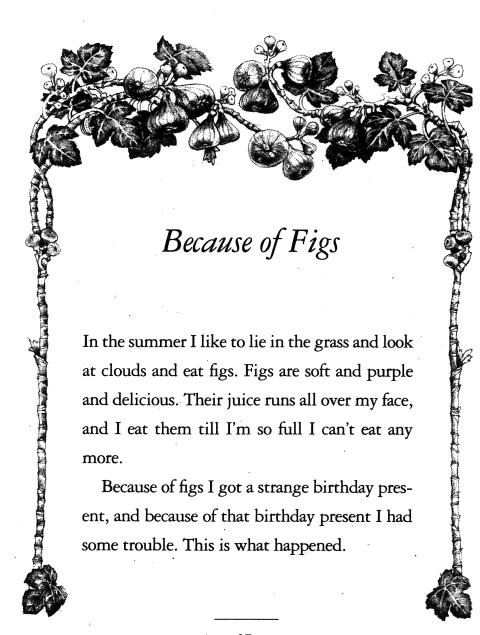
I looked up. I thought all the catalog cats were sitting on the roof of the garage, staring at me. Over the top of the garage was the moon, a little moon with sharp horns. There were birds rustling in the dark branches of the trees.

The seeds were dreaming, I thought. I put my mouth next to the ground, and I spoke to the seeds very softly: "Grow! And you corn seeds, grow high as the house!"

In just one week the seeds did start to grow, and we watered them and weeded them. By the end of the summer we had vegetables from the



garden every night. And the corn did grow as high as the house, although there wasn't very much of it, and it was almost too tough to eat. The best thing of all was Huey's house made of flowers. After a while the flowers dropped their petals and turned into beans, and we ate the beans for supper. So what Huey made was probably the first house anyone ever played in and then ate. Catalog cats are strange—but a house you eat for dinner is stranger yet.



It all started a long time ago when I had my fourth birthday. My father came home from work and said, "I have something for you, Julian! Go look in the car."

I ran to look, and Huey ran after me, tripping on his shoelaces.

When we looked in the back seat of the car, there was a tree! A small tree with just a few leaves.

We ran back to my father. "A tree for a birth-day present!" I said.

"A tree for a birthday present!" Huey said. He was two years old, and he always repeated everything I said.

"It's a fig tree," my father told me. "It will

grow as fast as you grow, Julian, and in a few years it will have figs that you can pick and eat."

I could hardly wait to grow my own sweet juicy purple figs. We planted the tree by our back fence, and I gave it water every day. And then one morning it had two new leaves.

"Fig tree, you're growing!" I said. I thought I should be growing too. There is a mark on the wall in the bathroom of our house, where my father measures us, and I ran into the house to measure myself against my old mark. I pressed my hand against my head, flat to the wall, and checked where my hand was compared to the old mark. I wasn't any taller.

I walked outside to the fig tree. "I'm not any

taller," I said. I touched the fig tree's new leaves. "I want to grow, too!" I said. "You know how to grow, and I don't!" I told the fig tree.

The fig tree didn't say a word.

"Maybe what makes you grow will make me grow," I told it. And very quickly, I picked the fig tree's new leaves and ate them. They tasted worse than spinach. I was pretty sure they would make me grow.

I did a little growing dance around the fig tree, with my hands raised high in the air.

It worked. I stayed taller than Huey. I got taller than my fig tree. And every time my fig tree got new leaves, I saw them and ate them secretly. And when nobody was looking, I did a growing dance.

"If you don't like this, fig tree, just tell me," I'd say.

The fig tree never said a word.

After a year my father looked at my fig tree. "It's a nice little tree," he said, "but it isn't growing." And he started putting fertilizer on my tree, and he looked at it more often.

But when new leaves showed, I saw them first. And I wanted to get taller, so I ate them.

Another whole year went by.

My mark on the bathroom wall went up three inches. I was four inches taller than Huey, and my arm muscle was twice as big as his.

The fig tree hadn't grown at all.

"Fig tree," I said when I took its new leaves, "I'm sorry, but I want to grow tall."

And the fig tree didn't say a word.

One day my father was in the garden. He walked over to my fig tree. "Julian," he said, "something is the matter with your tree. It hasn't grown. It hasn't grown at all."

"Really?" I said. I didn't look at my father. I didn't look at my fig tree either.

"Do you have any idea what could be wrong?" my father asked.

I looked straight at my feet. I crossed my toes inside my shoes. "Oh no."

"I think that tree's just plain no good. We'll pull it out of the ground and get another one."

"Oh no! Don't do that!" I begged.

"Julian," my father said, "do you know something about this tree that I don't know?"

I didn't say anything. And I was glad, very glad, that the fig tree didn't say a word. Finally I said, "It's my tree. Give it one more chance."

"No use waiting around!" my father said. His hand was around the trunk of my tree.

"Please!" I said.

My father's hand relaxed. "After all, it is your tree," he said. "Just tell me when you want another one."

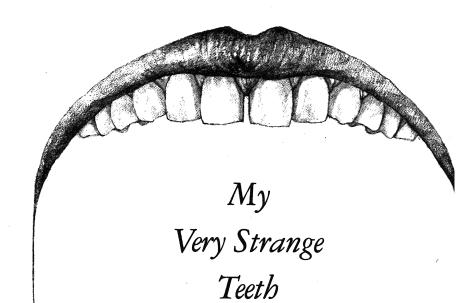
All afternoon I couldn't think of anything but

all the little fig leaves I'd eaten. I was pretty sure I knew why the fig tree didn't grow.

At bedtime I couldn't sleep, and when Huey went to sleep, I got up and sneaked outside to my fig tree. I told God I knew that the fig leaves belonged to the fig tree. I told the fig tree I was sorry, and I promised I would never eat its leaves again.

The fig tree didn't say a word—but the next week it got two new leaves, and kept them. That night I went to bed happy, and I dreamed a good dream. My fig tree was higher than the house, I was almost as tall as my dad, and there were big figs, juicy figs, sweet figs, falling all over the lawn.





My mother and Huey were listening. My father and I were talking.

"Well," my father said, "if you wait long enough, it will fall out." He was talking about my tooth, my right bottom front tooth.

"How long do I have to wait?" I asked.

Because I had *two* right bottom front teeth—one firm little new one pushing in, and one wiggly old one.

"I can't say," my father said. "Maybe a month, maybe two months. Maybe less."

"I don't want to wait," I said. "I want *one* tooth there, and I don't want to wait two months!"

"All right!" said my father. "I'll take care of it!" He jumped out of his chair and ran out the door to the garage. He was back in a minute, carrying something—a pair of pliers!

"Your tooth is a little loose already," my father said. "So I'll just put the pliers in your mouth for a second, twist, and the tooth will come out. You won't feel a thing!"

"I won't feel a thing?" I looked at the pliers—huge, black-handled pliers with a long pointed tip. I thought I *would* feel a thing. I thought it would hurt.

"Shall I?" said my dad. He raised the pliers toward my mouth.

"NO!" I said. "Not that way! Don't you know any other way to take out a tooth?"

"Well," he answered, "when I was a boy the main way was with a pair of pliers—but there was another way. Just you wait."

He jumped up again and ran to the closet. When he came back, he had a spool of black thread. Thread didn't look as painful as pliers.

"This is a simple way," my father said. "Just

let me tie this thread around your old tooth."

"All right," I said.

Very carefully my father tied the end of the thread around my old tooth. That didn't hurt.

"Now," my father said, "stand here by the door."

I stood by the kitchen door, and my father tied the other end of the thread to the doorknob.

"Now what?" I said.

"Now," my father said, "you just close your eyes. . . ."

"What are you going to do?" I asked. I wasn't going to close my eyes when I didn't know what was happening.

"This is a good method from the old days," my



father said. "You close your eyes. Then—very suddenly—I shove the kitchen door shut. Snap! The thread pulls the tooth right out!"

I looked at the kitchen door. It was a lot bigger than I was—and about 20 million times bigger than my tooth.

"Won't it—hurt?" I was really afraid I might lose my whole head with the tooth.

"Oh, just a little," my father said. "Just for a second."

"No thanks," I said. "Please take this thread off my tooth!"

"All right then." My father shrugged his shoulders and took the string off my tooth.

"Don't you know any other way?"

"There is one other way," my father said. "Go into the bathroom, stand over the sink, and just keep pushing the tooth with your finger till it comes out."

"Will that hurt?"

"You can stop pushing when it hurts," my father said. "Of course it takes longer—I would be very glad to do it with either the pliers or the doorknob."

"No thanks," I said. I started pushing on my tooth with my finger. "Why can't I push it out here?" I asked. "Why do I have to do it over the sink?"

"When you get the tooth out," my father said, "it'll bleed. That's why you take the tooth

out over the sink—so you have cold water to rinse your mouth and stop the bleeding."

"How much bleeding?"

"Some. Enough so you should use the sink."

I decided right then that my old tooth could stay in my mouth right beside the new one as long as it wanted—two months, two years, any time.

"I've changed my mind," I said. "That tooth can stay, even if it is silly to have two teeth where one should be."

"It's not silly," my mother said, "just unusual. You have very special teeth. I bet prehistoric cavemen would have liked to have your teeth." "Why?"

"They ate a lot of raw meat," my mother said.

"It must have been hard for a cave boy to eat raw meat with teeth missing. But you have two teeth in the space of one. You could have eaten mast-odon meat or saber-toothed tiger meat, or anything the hunters brought home."

A cave boy with two teeth in place of one. I wished I had a time machine to go back to the *very* old days—before pliers and before doorknobs—back to the caves. I curled my lower lip under.

"You look like a cave boy," my mother said.

"You should show the kids at school your teeth," Huey said.

"Maybe I will," I said.

I went to my room and made a sign for myself. It read—

I wore the sign at recess the next day.

My friends came around. "What does *that* mean?" they asked.

"Uh. Uh." I grunted and held up a penny. I couldn't explain. If I talked, they'd see my teeth for free.

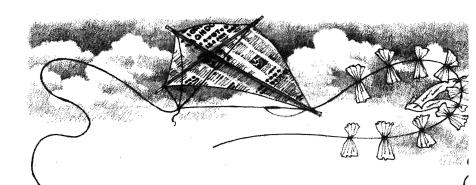


After a while one girl gave me a penny, and I showed her my special cave-boy teeth. Some of the other kids had missing teeth, but nobody had two teeth in one space like mine.

I ran all the way home after school to tell my mother what happened. I said, "Tomorrow I'll show more kids!"

I picked up an apple that lay on the kitchen table and took a big bite.

"Ow!" I said, because I could feel my old tooth twist in my mouth. In a minute, without too much blood, it was lying on my hand. "OW!" I said again, not because it hurt, but because right then was the end of my special, mastodoneating, double-biting, cave-boy teeth.



Gloria Who Might Be My Best Friend

If you have a girl for a friend, some people find out and tease you. That's why I didn't want a girl for a friend—not until this summer, when I met Gloria.

It happened one afternoon when I was walking down the street by myself. My mother was visiting a friend of hers, and Huey was visiting a friend of his. Huey's friend is five and so I think he is too young to play with. And there aren't any kids just my age. I was walking down the street feeling lonely.

A block from our house I saw a moving van in front of a brown house, and men were carrying in chairs and tables and bookcases and boxes full of I don't know what. I watched for a while, and suddenly I heard a voice right behind me.

"Who are you?"

I turned around and there was a girl in a yellow dress. She looked the same age as me.

She had curly hair that was braided into two pigtails with red ribbons at the ends.

"I'm Julian," I said. "Who are you?"

"I'm Gloria," she said. "I come from Newport. Do you know where Newport is?"

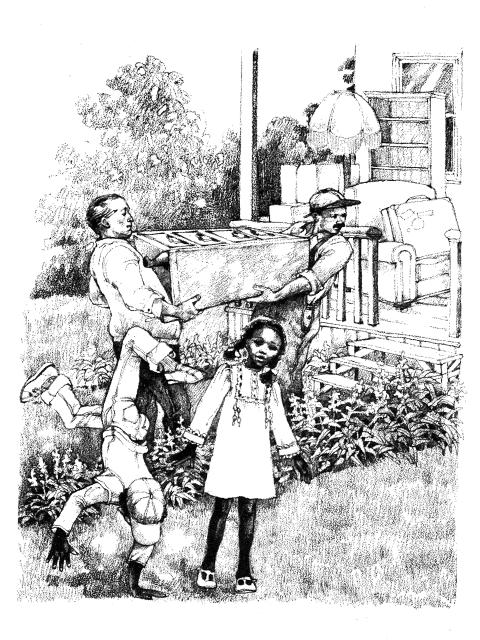
I wasn't sure, but I didn't tell Gloria. "It's a town on the ocean," I said.

"Right," Gloria said. "Can you turn a cartwheel?"

She turned sideways herself and did two cartwheels on the grass.

I had never tried a cartwheel before, but I tried to copy Gloria. My hands went down in the grass, my feet went up in the air, and—I fell over.

I looked at Gloria to see if she was laughing at



me. If she was laughing at me, I was going to go home and forget about her.

But she just looked at me very seriously and said, "It takes practice," and then I liked her.

"I know where there's a bird's nest in your yard," I said.

"Really?" Gloria said.

I showed her where a robin lives and has eggs. Gloria stood up on a branch and looked in. The eggs were small and pale blue. The mother robin squawked at us, and she and the father robin flew around our heads.

"They want us to go away," Gloria said. She got down from the branch, and we went around to the front of the house and watched the moving men carry two rugs and a mirror inside.

"Would you like to come over to my house?" I said.

"All right," Gloria said, "if it is all right with my mother." She ran in the house and asked.

It was all right, so Gloria and I went to my house, and I showed her my room and my games and my rock collection, and then I made fruit punch and we sat at the kitchen table and drank it.

"You have a red mustache on your mouth," Gloria said.

"You have a red mustache on your mouth, too," I said.

Gloria giggled, and we licked off the mustaches with our tongues.

"I wish you'd live here a long time," I told Gloria.

Gloria said, "I wish I would too. I know the best way to make wishes."

"What's that?" I asked.

"First you make a kite. Do you know how to make one?"

"Yes," I said, "I know how." I know how to make good kites because my father taught me. We make them out of two crossed sticks and folded newspaper.

"All right," Gloria said, "that's the first part of making wishes that come true. So let's make a kite."

We went out into the garage and spread out sticks and newspaper and made a kite. I fastened on the kite string and went to the closet and got rags for the tail.

"Do you have some paper and two pencils?" Gloria asked. "Because now we make the wishes."

I didn't know what she was planning, but I went in the house and got pencils and paper.

"All right," Gloria said. "Every wish you

want to have come true you write on a long thin piece of paper. You don't tell me your wishes, and I don't tell you mine. If you tell, your wishes don't come true. Also, if you look at the other person's wishes, your wishes don't come true."

Gloria sat down on the garage floor and started writing her wishes. I wanted to see what they were—but I went to the other side of the garage and wrote my own wishes instead. I wrote:

^{1.} I wish I could see the catalog cats.

^{2.} I wish the fig tree would be the tallest in town

 $^{^3}$ I wish I'd be a great soccer player.

^{4.} I wish I could ride in an airplane.

^{5.} I wish Gloria would stay here and be my best friend.

I folded my five wishes in my fist and went over to Gloria.

"How many wishes did you make?" Gloria asked.

"Five," I said. "How many did you make?" "Two," Gloria said.

I wondered what they were.

"Now we put the wishes on the tail of the kite," Gloria said. "Every time we tie one piece of rag on the tail, we fasten a wish in the knot. You can put yours in first."

I fastened mine in, and then Gloria fastened in hers, and we carried the kite into the yard.

"You hold the tail," I told Gloria, "and I'll pull."



We ran through the back yard with the kite, passed the garden and the fig tree, and went into the open field beyond our yard.

The kite started to rise. The tail jerked heavily like a long white snake. In a minute the kite passed the roof of my house and was climbing toward the sun.

We stood in the open field, looking up at it. I was wishing I would get my wishes.

"I know it's going to work!" Gloria said.

"How do you know?"

"When we take the kite down," Gloria told me, "there shouldn't be one wish in the tail. When the wind takes all your wishes, that's when you know it's going to work." The kite stayed up for a long time. We both held the string. The kite looked like a tiny black spot in the sun, and my neck got stiff from looking at it.

"Shall we pull it in?" I asked.

"All right," Gloria said.

We drew the string in more and more until, like a tired bird, the kite fell at our feet.

We looked at the tail. All our wishes were gone. Probably they were still flying higher and higher in the wind.

Maybe I would see the catalog cats and get to be a good soccer player and have a ride in an airplane and the tallest fig tree in town. And Gloria would be my best friend. "Gloria," I said, "did you wish we would be friends?"

"You're not supposed to ask me that!" Gloria said.

"I'm sorry," I answered. But inside I was smiling. I guessed one thing Gloria wished for. I was pretty sure we would be friends.