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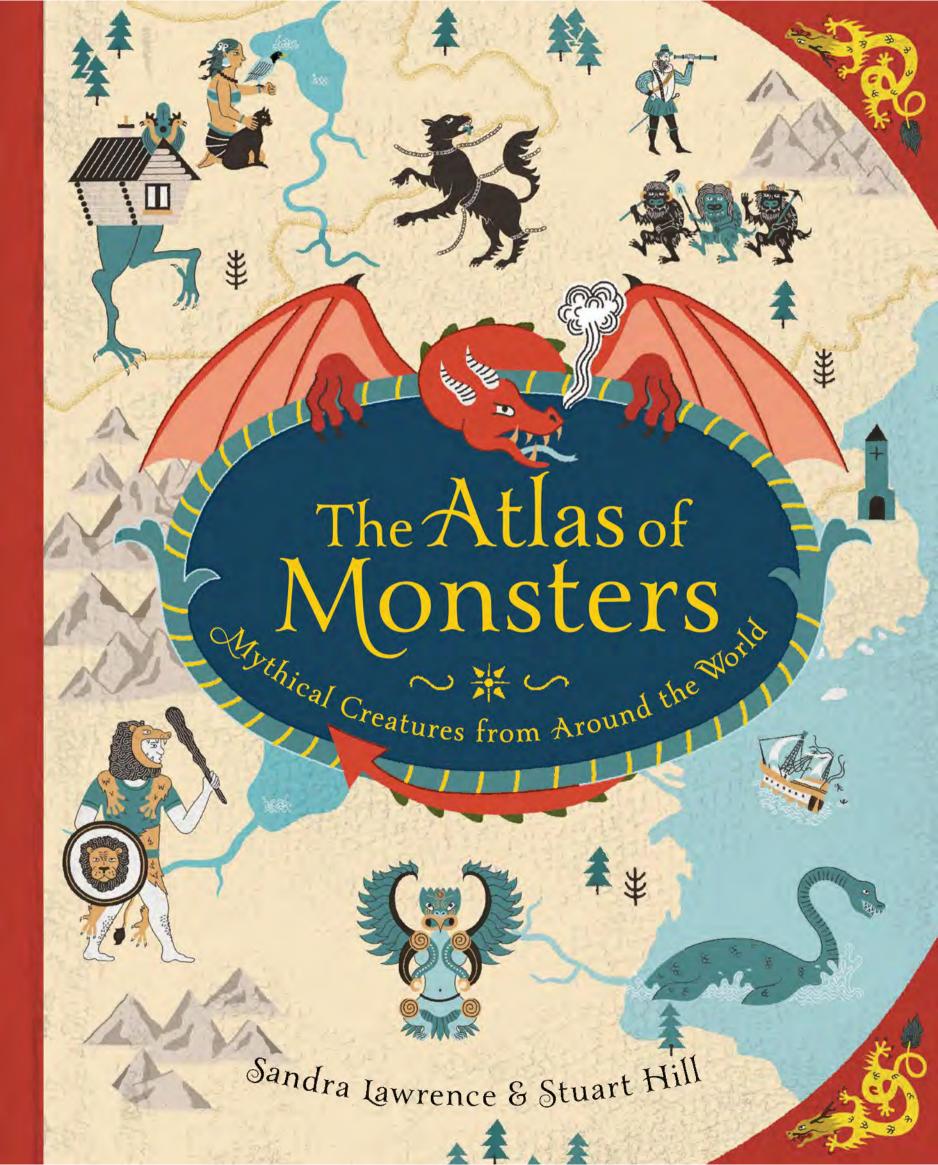
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Ruth Briggs Librarian Hardaere Manor Berkshire

Mr. Edmund Wright, Editor Mercator and Co Mapmakers Bloomsbury London

2 July

I am writing to you as librarian of Hardacre Manor, Berkshire, about an extraordinary discovery that I have made on the estate. Dear Mr. Wright,

Hardacre's late owner, Professor Magnus Hardacre, was a great collector of antique manuscripts, especially the poetry of the 16th century recluse, Cornelius Walters (1542-1616).

Sadly, Professor Hardaere passed away a year ago. We had seen little of him before he died; he seemed preoccupied with a matter he did not disclose to his staff. After a quiet funeral, I began cataloging the professor's collection of Cornelius Walters's poetry for auction. It was not expected to fetch a large sum; Walters was not considered the best poet of his age—in fact, he is often considered a very bad one.

While cataloging, I tripped and fell against a Tudor beam. To my astonishment, the wall gave way, revealing a secret

The space was dusty, dirty and filled with cobwebs. As my eyes adjusted to the light, they fell upon an ancient chest, secured with iron bands and a large padlock. Recent fingerprints around the keyhole showed I was not the first person in 400 years to stumble on this place. Professor Hardacre had gotten there first.

The box contained a bundle of papers from Cornelius Walters's youth. To my great excitement, this was not more poetry but an atlas, written and illustrated by Walters himself. In it, Walters describes strange, secret creatures from all over the world-almost as though he had seen them himself.

Authors going all the way back to ancient Greece and Rome filled gaps in their knowledge using travelers' tales and their imaginations. The most famous is probably the ancient Roman historian Pliny the Elder (AD 23-79), who wrote Naturalis Historia (Natural History), which has a section on animals that contains many fantastical beasts. I expected a similar work.

Reading these pages, however, I found myself puzzled. Cornelius Walters writes as though he really had traveled the globe, logging the Earth's mythical creatures. Surely this is impossible; the monsters he describes are the dragons and vampires of myth, folklore, and imagination.

Walters clearly intended to share his atlas with the world, so why did he hide it away and spend the rest of his days writing dreadful poetry? I am puzzled. Even though few believe these creatures are real today, the extent of Walters's travels would have made him as famous as Sir Walter Raleigh or Sir Francis Drake, the great explorers of this era.

I enclose here the results of my research. I have reproduced Walters's maps and log, overlaying modern international borders and names of places for clarity. Among Walters's descriptions of monsters, there are bizarre symbols, as you will see for yourself.

My first thought was that the entire thing was a forgery. Now, I am not so sure. There is a mystery within these pages that eludes me. I find myself believing more and more . . . but no, you will think me fanciful. Sometimes our minds play tricks on us.

I am passing my discoveries to you in the hope your experts may be able to make more sense of them than I have managed. Should they prove of interest, perhaps it is time to publish them so the world can read this extraordinary document. I remain

Yours Truly,

Ruth Briggs

1st Fuly, 1563, Mermaid Inn, Southampton



This day is cause for great celebration. I, Cornelius Follywolle Montague Walters, of Great Walters Estate, Berkshire, have at 21 years of age come into my inheritance.

My parents desired me to study the law, but I yearn for adventure and have done since I was a boy, when a wandering poet came to our door. The tales he spun by the fireside were wild stories of fabulous creatures and distant lands.

I have commissioned a ship, the Dragon, to take myself and a crew of hearty souls upon a voyage of discovery.

All are hardy sea dogs, save Hal, the young son of my cook, Will Hardacre, who begged to accompany us. I fear he will be a burden, but in my own youth I would have given my eyes to make such travels. His father promises he is a quick-witted boy, I can only hope this is true.

My intention is to create a mighty volume, an "atlas" of all the beasts of this earth to share with my fellow human beings.

As yet I know not what my travels will bring. They will certainly not be without danger, and it is possible I will not return. I cannot be content until I have seen the marvels of the world with my own eyes.

Cornelius Walters

5=H

I must add one more thing. This very evening, one night before our departure from Southampton, a messenger knocked at my door with an uncommon note. It is in a script that I have never encountered:

I will mention this to no one; it is bound to be nothing—perhaps a practical joke.





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Is it really possible Walters traveled so far? This is farther and wider than anyone had traveled at this time.

—RB



Great Britain and Ireland



The wild and mysterious monsters of these islands have haunted my nightmares since boyhood.

If such creatures walk my own homeland, what marvels might be found in the wide world?

- 1. Dobhar-Chú This "water hound" of Ireland travels great distances across land or water, searching for human prey.
- 2. Finn McCool This Irish warrior giant was born of ancient fairy blood. He is best known for defeating the Scottish giant, Benandonner.
- 2. Leprechaun Found in Ireland, leprechauns may be dressed in red or green with leather cobblers' aprons, for they are shoemakers. They hide treasure at the end of rainbows. Some will grant wishes, but beware! They love to trick humans.
- 4. Nuckelavee This creature of the Orkney Islands resembles a horse joined with its rider. The Nuckelavee has neither skin nor hair; instead it is all raw, oozing flesh.
- 5. Loch Ness Monster This notorious beast lives in the waters of Loch Ness, Scotland, and was first seen by St. Columba in AD 565. It has a large body and long, snake-like neck.

There are more Loch Ness

Monster sightings than

ever today. The human desire to believe in the supernatural is nothing new! -RB

6. Trow - Trows come from the northernmost islands of Britain. They are like Nordic trolls, but smaller and they lure human fiddlers to play music in their underground dwellings. Trows cannot live in the sun, so come out only at night.

- 7. Green Man A spirit of the woodlands, the Green Man is wreathed with leaves and branches. Throughout Britain he is known by many names. including Green George, the Holly Man, and Jack-in-the-Green.
- 8. Landlocked Mermaids Mermaids dwell within the pools of the Peak District. On the high Kinder Scout plateau is a mermaid that will grant immortality. Another, in Black Mere Pool, drags mortals to their deaths.
- 9. Gog and Magog Gog and Magog are two great giants who guard the City of London. Some say they were captured by the warrior, Brutus, and brought in chains to serve the city.
- 10. Cornish Pisky Tricky creatures, piskies have red hair and pointed ears. They steal horses and ride them in circles, making fairy rings called "gallitraps." Placing both feet in a gallitrap will make you the piskies' prisoner.
- 11. Knucker This water dragon lives in pools called "knucker holes." The knucker hole at Lyminster, West Sussex, was home to a fearsome dragon, which was defeated by a local fellow called Jim Pulk. Jim killed the dragon with a Sussex pudding laced with poison.

12. Welsh Dragon - The red dragon is the symbol of Wales. When the fifth-century British king, Vortigern, attempted to build a castle, the building collapsed every night. A young boy called Merlin explained that beneath the tower fought two dragons, red and white. The red dragon eventually defeated the white.

I cannot remain here. My great desire now is to study the creatures of every part of this earth and record them. I purchased a consignment of vellum for this purpose, but it was consumed by a strange fire. The ashes arranged themselves in a curious fashion:

> **光元米** 本 本 本 本 本 \$ † ¥ ×+ すた◆章で●

Our ship, the Dragon, left Southampton on the second day of July, 1562. I am certain new wonders await.



The Tale of the Giant's Causeway

The giant Finn McCool made a great pathway, or "causeway," to Scotland, throwing rocks across the sea. He retreated when he realized how big the Scottish giant Benandonner was. Benandonner crossed to look for Finn, but Finn's wife dressed him as an infant. Benandonner ran away, for if this monstrous baby was the child, how big was the father?

The Giant's Causeway may be seen in County Antrim, Northern Ireland.



Walters appears to have been convinced these markings were a sign! Records confirm a ship called the Dragon left Southampton in July 1563. Was it Walters's vessel? -RB





NAOMI MILLINER

SUPER JAKE & THE KING OF CHAOS



SUPER JAKE & THE KING OF CHAOS

CHAPTER ONE

It doesn't matter if my audience is made up of nine-year-old superheroes with plastic hammers and shields, or ninetyyear-old great-grandparents with white hair and walkers. Everybody loves magic. Especially me.

I've been doing magic shows for more than a year now, since the beginning of fifth grade, and I love every second of it. Today's show is in a living room decorated with pink streamers and pink balloons for a dozen three-year-old girls. Princess Jasmine is poking Pocahontas; Belle is whacking Sleeping Beauty with a balloon; and Snow White is screaming for her mommy.

Welcome to my world.

The birthday girl, Jenny, is a blue-eyed blonde dressed as Cinderella (except for the pink ribbons in her hair). Since I always do my research ahead of time, I knew what her costume

† 1 **†**

would be. So, the first question I ask the group is: "Have any of you heard of Cinderella?"

Jenny gives me a giant smile while the girls around her shriek, "Jenny is Cinderella!"

I act surprised. "Wow! No way!" More shrieks. "Anyone know what Cinderella left at the ball?"

"Her glass slipper!" Princess Jasmine shouts.

"Exactly. And I happen to have a glass slipper right here in my hat. Who wants to see it?"

The twelve girls squeal and rush toward me for a better view. I raise my wand, tap it over my sparkly black top hat, and pull out...

"SpongeBob!" The girl dressed like Belle giggles and points.

I turn to my seven-year-old brother, Freddy, who's busy eating candy from my stars-and-moons-covered box.

Mom "suggested" I make him my assistant a few months ago when summer started and he had nothing to do.

"Ethan, why don't you put Freddy in your act?" Mom had asked.

Faster than you can say "Abracadabra," I gave a dozen reasons why this was a terrible idea. My favorite was, "What if I accidentally saw him in half?" No loving parent could possibly argue with that, right?

The next day Freddy pranced into the living room wearing a top hat, black shirt and pants, and a red bowtie. The top hat practically covered his eyes and the bowtie was crooked. It was like staring at myself in a fun-house mirror, everything exaggerated and strange-looking.

"Doesn't he look wonderful?" Mom gushed.

"He certainly does." Dad smiled, then put his arm around Mom's waist, pulling her close.

I usually hate sappy stuff, but it was kind of nice seeing my parents like that. They used to be like that all the time . . . until Jake was born and Mom got nervous and Dad got sad and everything changed. I guess I got a little sappy, too, because I agreed to give Freddy a chance. Turns out, my act's a lot funnier now (though I'll never tell him that).

Jenny and her friends laugh as I glare at Freddy and say, "Give me that candy!"

It's all part of our routine.

He shuts the box. "What candy?" He opens the box again, and it's empty.

I take the box, wave my wand over the lid, and the candy's back. I promise the girls they'll get plenty of candy soon, then ask the birthday girl what her favorite color is.

As predicted, she says, "Pink!"

Freddy starts pulling plastic rings and bracelets from my

Sorcerer's Apprentice hat: red, blue, purple. As the girls dive for the jewelry, Freddy cries, "Hey, there's no pink here!"

"Are you sure?" I ask. "I know I had something pink. Where did it go?" I turn my back to the audience, pretend to search, then turn around, one hand on my stomach and one over my mouth.

"Ethan?" Freddy asks. "You look kinda funny. Are you okay?"

I shake my head and scrunch my face up like I'm gonna be sick. Then I open my mouth and pull out a forty-six-foot-long coil of pink paper. Jenny and her friends laugh until their faces are pinker than the paper.

The show's gone perfectly, and I feel great. Freddy and I finish with our usual crowd pleaser: a magic hat full of lollipops. After the girls grab all the candy they can hold, they follow their moms and dads to another room for cake, and Freddy tags along with them.

I toss the last few items into my magic bag, then join the others. As Jenny's mom lights the first candle, the doorbell rings. Since the candle lighting is in full swing, I offer to get the door.

I squeeze my way through a waist-high maze of cardboard crowns and glittery tiaras and open the front door to see my mom. And Jake.

My great mood vanishes, because I know what's going to happen. In two seconds flat, my tricks will be as forgotten as the candy wrappers in my hat. Everyone will stare at Jake and try to figure out what's wrong with him. And, if things go really badly, someone will say something dumb and Mom will start crying.

"I thought Dad was supposed to pick us up." Without Jake.

"I know. But I wanted to see the little girls all dressed up. Besides, it was a good excuse for Jake to wear his new shirt. Isn't it cute?" Mom leans over and kisses him on the forehead.

Jake's wearing a Cookie Monster shirt, silently taking in the action all around him through his turquoise-framed glasses.

"Hey, Jake." As I lean over his purple-and-green Kid Kart—a cross between a stroller and wheelchair that helps him sit up—and ruffle his soft curls, somebody tugs at my shirt: it's birthday-girl Jenny.

"Who's that?" she asks.

And, here we go. My shoulders tense and my stomach tightens. "My other brother, Jake." I look around the room, hoping no one else will come over.

"How old is he?"

"He'll be two soon."

"Hi!" Jenny waves at him.

Jake watches her with his usual calm expression, only she wants more. People always do. She waits for him to answer or at least wave back.

He doesn't. He won't.

She tries again. "Hello?"

Jake is silent.

"Are his ears okay?" Jenny asks.

I want to leave. Now. I don't even care about my pay. I look at my mom. "Y'know, I don't feel so good. Can we—"

"Jake's ears are fine," Mom tells her. "But his brain was hurt before he was born, so some things are hard for him. Like waving or saying hello."

I hate when she does that. Why can't she just say his hearing is fine and leave it at that?

Jenny stops waving, looks at Jake for a few seconds, and runs away. Typical. Sometimes people a lot older look like they want to run, too—like brain damage is contagious or something.

"Jakey!" Freddy flies over, pink frosting all over his face, and gives Jake a hug. "I like your new shirt. Are you a Cookie Monster?" He squeezes Jake's hands and Jake rewards him with a big open-mouthed grin.

I feel another tug on my shirt. Jenny's back, and there's something in her hand: a Sleeping Beauty Band-Aid.

She holds it out for me to see. "For Jake's hurt brain," she says.

Mom takes the Band-Aid. She presses her lips together and her forehead crinkles, and I can tell she's about to cry. I close my eyes, wishing I could disappear, like the candy in my trick box.

"Jakey likes Spider-Man better than Sleeping Beauty," I hear Freddy say.

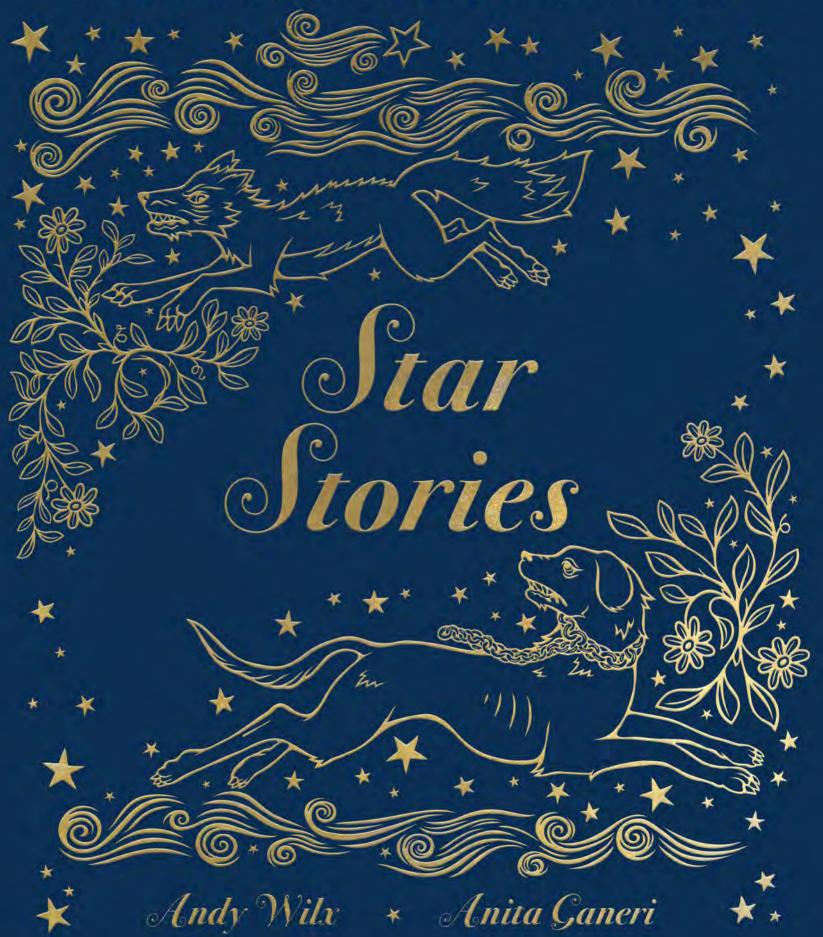
I open my eyes.

Jenny cocks her head like a puppy. "How do you know? He doesn't talk."

"Sure he does," Freddy tells her. "You have to know how to listen." He grabs Jake's hand and helps him wave. "See? He says hi."

By now, Mom has pulled herself together. She bends over to give Jenny a hug and wishes her a happy birthday while I do a major exhale. I feel like Houdini—another narrow escape . . . for now.

Constellation Tales From Around the World



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CYGNUS

Phaeton and the Swan

A TALE FROM ANCIENT GREECE

Among the stars of the northern skies is a majestic swan, its long neck and wings outstretched. Long ago, the swan was a man who lived on Earth. Today, it glides through the Milky Way, for all eternity.



At the far end of the Earth, the golden palace of Helios, the Sun god, was a magnificent place. With each new dawn, as the stars faded and the night sky grew pale, Helios burst through the fortress gates and drove his gleaming chariot through the sky, bringing light to the world once more. The chariot was pulled by four fiery horses and was so bright that few could bear its glow.

Day after day, Helios's mortal son, Phaeton, had watched his father race across the heavens. Now, he had a request to make: "Please, Father," he said, "let me drive your chariot. Just for one day."

Shaking his head, Helios turned blazing eyes on his son. "I cannot grant your wish," he said. "The path through the sky is too dangerous for you. At first,

Phaeton and the Swan

it rises so steeply that my horses can hardly climb. Then, it soars so high that even *my* heart trembles with fear. Finally, it charges down—one false move and you would dive headlong into the sea. Ask me for anything, but not this."

But Phaeton had been waiting for this day for years and, besides, there was no time to lose. The gates of dawn were already peeking open, spreading its rosy glow across the world. So, reluctantly, Helios agreed. The horses were yoked to the chariot, and, taking the reins, Phaeton sped off, dizzy with delight.

Suddenly, disaster struck. The horses were used to a heavier load and, unburdened, they ran wild. From high to low, low to high, the chariot veered, and where it touched the Earth, it set it ablaze. Mountains erupted with fire, rivers and lakes dried up, deserts were scorched, and whole forests burned to the ground. Swept along by the fiery will of the horses, terrified Phaeton called on the gods for help.

The gods knew that they must act quickly if they were to save the Earth. Mighty Zeus seized a thunderbolt and hurled it at the chariot, shattering it into pieces. Wreathed in flames, Phaeton was thrown through the sky until he plummeted to his death in the river far below.

When Cygnus, Phaeton's closest friend, learned of his fate, he searched for many days until he came upon the Sun god's chariot, lying broken and burned. Again and again, Cygnus dived into the water, yet however how hard he tried, he could not swim deep enough to reach Phaeton. Exhausted, and overcome with grief, Cygnus wept for his dead friend. Phaeton's sisters, too, gathered on the riverbank and wept, until eventually they were transformed into poplar trees and their tears turned to golden amber.

Moved by Cygnus's sadness, great Zeus took pity and appeared before him. "If I transform you into a swan you shall be able to swim more strongly than

Phaeton and the Swan

any man," he said, "but never again will you take human form."

Cygnus paused, imagining living his life forever more as a swan. Then, he remembered his dear friend, and solemnly he agreed. As he stood at the water's edge, his mouth became a rounded beak and white feathers hid his hair. His neck grew long, and his arms became powerful wings, while his feet were now gray and webbed. This time, when he plunged into the raging waters he could swim with ease. And so, swiftly, gently, he retrieved Phaeton's body.

Zeus had been watching from the heavens and was so impressed by Cygnus's sacrifice that he placed him among the stars. There, he flies, still, through the Milky Way, singing his sad swansong in memory of his friend. And, to this day, earthly swans can be found ducking their slender necks beneath the water, while poplar trees grow tall beside the riverbanks.



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PEGASUS

The White-Winged Horse

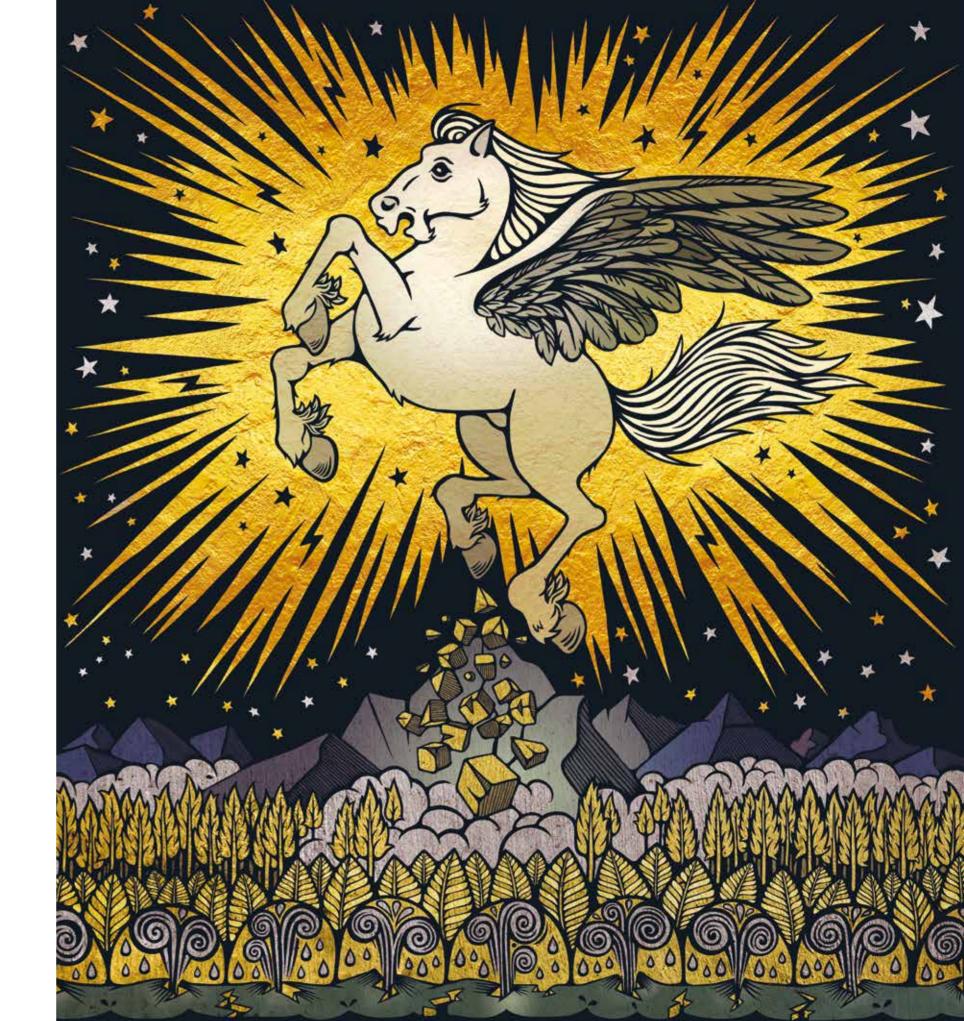
A TALE FROM ANCIENT GREECE

Soaring high among the stars shines Pegasus, the white-winged horse. Ridden by heroes on their daring adventures, he carries thunderbolts for the king of the gods. The rising of his constellation marks the coming of spring and, in Greece, the season of thunderstorms. His story begins long ago, in the kingdom of King Polydectes.



For many years, Perseus lived in Polydectes's palace and was eager to repay the king's hospitality. At a great feast held in the king's honor, Perseus promised to bring him a priceless gift—the head of Medusa. This would be no easy task, even for the greatest of heroes. For Medusa was a hideous monster, with scratching claws of bronze, scaly wings, and fangs like great boar tusks. Worse still, around her head writhed a ring of snakes, flickering and hissing like living flames. Anyone who dared to look at her would instantly be turned to stone.

It was Athena who had transformed Medusa and her two sisters into monsters, and it was Athena who now came to Perseus's aid. Along with magic



The White-Winged Horse

winged sandals, a sickle, and a helmet of invisibility, she gave him a gleaming bronze shield, as well as a piece of advice.

"Never look at Medusa directly," she told him, "only at her reflection."

So, Perseus sailed to the farthest edge of the Western Ocean and the entrance to the Underworld. The air was thick with the stench of sulphur, and lava spewed from cavernous cracks in the Earth. All around stood the petrified remains of unwary visitors, frozen still like sinister statues. It was in this dreadful place that Perseus discovered Medusa's lair.

He waited until the sisters were sleeping. Then, hovering above Medusa in his winged sandals, he lifted Athena's shield to catch the monster's reflection and carefully took aim. Lightning fast, he brought down the sickle and cut off Medusa's head. Medusa's sisters sprang up, roaring with fury, but Perseus, wearing his magic helmet, escaped unseen, carrying his gruesome gift. And from the blood of slain Medusa, two magical beings appeared—one a warrior, Chrysaor, golden sword in hand; the other Pegasus, a gleaming white horse, with a mane that flowed like snowfall.

Gliding through the skies on feathered wings, Pegasus never faltered or grew weary. Once, landing high on Mount Helicon, he stamped his hoof on the ground, causing a spring to burst up. From this spring came the nine Muses, goddesses of music and poetry. When the Muses began to sing, the sound that filled the air was so beautiful that the land, sea, and sky all stood still. Even mighty Mount Helicon began to rise into the air until Pegasus brought it back down to Earth with a kick of his heel.

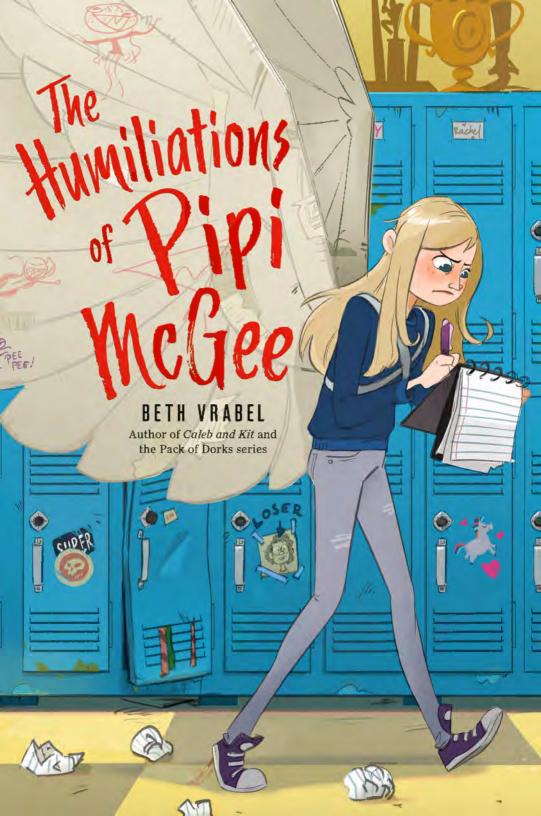
For years, the fearsome Chimaera—part-lion, part-goat, part-snake—had terrorized the land of Lycia, snorting great flames that scorched the countryside.

The White-Winged Horse

In despair, the king sent the hero Bellerophon to kill the beast. No one had ever approached the Chimaera and survived to tell the tale but, once again, Athena stepped in to help. In a dream, she appeared to Bellerophon, holding a gleaming golden bridle. When Bellerophon awoke, he found, to his great surprise, that the bridle lay in his hand. He tracked Pegasus down to a mountain stream, slipped the bridle over the horse's head, and leapt on to his back. Then, whisper quiet, Pegasus spread his soft, white wings and rose into the air, parting the clouds with his hooves.

On they flew through the skies to the Chimaera's cave. Pegasus swiftly swooped down on the creature, while Bellerophon plunged his spear into its throat. The Chimaera was dead. To show his gratitude, the King of Lycia showered Bellerophon with honors and gifts, but all was not well. As Bellerophon's fame grew, so did his pride, until he thought of himself as equal to the gods. One day, he put the golden bridle on Pegasus and set off to fly to Mount Olympus, the home of the gods, where no human was allowed. Zeus was furious at Bellerophon and decided to teach him a lesson. He sent a fly that buzzed around Pegasus, biting him and tormenting him, and driving him quite mad. As Pegasus reared up, Bellerophon was thrown from his back, landing down on Earth in a thorn bush and in disgrace.

As for Pegasus, the white-winged horse continued his journey to Olympus where he was taken to live in the heavenly stables of Zeus. As Zeus's bearer of thunderbolts, he served the king of the gods long and loyally. Eventually, to reward Pegasus's faithful service, Zeus turned him into a constellation, one of the largest in the sky. And, on the day he took his place among the stars, legend says, a single, pure-white feather fluttered gently down to Earth.



The Humiliations of Pipi McGee

Beth Vrabel





Chapter One

This year would be different.

I was sure of it.

"Welcome, students!" Principal Hendricks raised her arms in a cheer from her spot on the auditorium stage. Her red power suit gleamed in the spotlight. "We're so excited to have you back at Northbrook Middle School!"

Next to me, my best friend Tasha pretended to puke into her backpack.

"Stop it." I elbowed her. "This year is going to be different."

Tasha raised her eyebrow. She had the best you'redelusional look aside from my mom, whose facial expressions were expert level.

"I mean it, Tasha." I folded my hands on my lap and pasted a smile on my face, despite feeling Tasha's stare burn into me.

"You curled your hair, didn't you?" Tasha asked.

My shoulder-length brownish-blond hair was naturally wavy, but only parts of it. Most of it was stick straight. So, picture chunks of straight hair with random curlicues. Normally, I deal with it, shoving it back into a ponytail and moving on with my life. But this year was going to be different. This year, I'd do what Mom was always yakking about—take time with your appearance, Pipi. Make an effort. I'd wake up fifteen minutes early every day and curl my hair so it'd all be bouncy and exciting, like my brand new, different self.

Now both of Tasha's eyebrows were peaked. She pulled on one of my curls and then watched it bounce back. "Every year, you start off like an innocent little lamb thinking this time, everything's going to be so new and grand. Every year, I've got to come pry you out of the bathroom stall you're crying in by the end of September."

"That's not fair." I crossed my arms. "You know perfectly well that everything that has happened to me was not my fault."

"Mm-hmm."

"Tasha!"

"Pipi!"

I glanced around, holding up my hands. "That's one of the things that's going to be different this year. I'm not going by Pipi anymore. I'm Penelope."

Tasha closed her eyes and shook her head. This time, I guess facial features weren't enough to convey her thoughts. "You're delusional."

"I've been Pipi McGee for four years—"

"Yep, ever since you-"

"Don't say it!" I put my hand over Tasha's mouth and she batted my arm away. Tasha crossed her own arms and stared at me. "Sorry," I mumbled. "But just, please. Don't say it. I mean it, this year's going to be different."

"Whatever." Tasha shifted in her seat and slipped earbuds into her ears. She thumbed at her audiobook app.

"That again?" I pointed to the picture of the book cover on the app. "Haven't you got the whole thing memorized?"

"Course, I do." Tasha grinned. "But the final installment—
Crow Reaper: Reaping Death—releases next week. Just enough
time to listen to the first book."

I sighed.

Tasha shook her head, her long braids rustling against each other. "Uh-uh. No judgment, Pi—*Penelope*. You might be changing. I'm staying the same."

I glanced at Tasha, who closed her eyes as she listened, and I knew that wasn't exactly true. While each year I somehow managed to stay right where I was on the social hierarchy of Northbrook Middle School (the bottom rung)—always due to some unfortunate event *that was never my fault*—Tasha bumped up a few pegs.

That wasn't even true, really. She built her own ladder. Her ridiculously overachieving brain and athleticism put her in a league of coolness totally of her own, despite being totally obsessed—to the point of dress up—with a book series about a demon-hunting boy whose brother turned into a crow. And then there was the fact that she was gorgeous, tall and athletic with dark brown skin and eyes.

Principal Hendricks's smile seemed to stretch the auditorium. "As you know, this is my first year as principal of Northbrook Middle. As such, we're going to kick off things a little differently."

"Told you." I nudged Tasha, who just shook her head and bumped up the volume on her phone. My nose tickled, so I sat on my hands, keeping my smile firmly in place. I never touch my nose if I can help it. It's my least favorite feature. Plus, the whole first-grade thing...

My smile was smacked straight off my face when Frau Jacobs, the seventh-grade Intro to Languages teacher, shuffled forward and whispered in Principal Hendricks's ear.

Remember that part in *Harry Potter* where the old lady was actually a snake? Like the giant snake was just living inside the old lady's skin? I'm pretty sure J. K. Rowling must've met Frau Jacobs when she thought about that snake lady.

Frau Jacobs was about five feet, two inches tall, all sweet smiles and curly brown hair. She smelled like freshly baked cookies and clasped her hands together in delight while verbally carving your soul into confetti. Even though she was probably the same age as my dad, she looked like grandma material. Which, strictly speaking, also includes my dad.

Principal Hendricks's red lipsticked smile wavered a little at whatever Frau Jacobs whispered in her ear. Slowly, Frau Jacobs backed away and sat down, a satisfied little smile on her face. "Yes, well, before I begin with what we're doing *differently* this year" (I didn't even bother to elbow Tasha this time) "the other teachers and I would like to remind you all about the dress code." A low rumbly groan rippled over the auditorium. Principal Hendricks held up her hand. I swallowed down the sour taste that flooded my mouth whenever I saw Frau Jacobs.

"Okay, girls. No exposed shoulders. No low-cut blouses. No tank tops. No leggings without a top that goes to mid-thigh. No shorts that are higher than finger length when your arms are by your side." Principal Hendricks rattled off the dress code like a grocery list. Behind her, Frau Jacobs cleared her throat. Principal Hendricks turned halfway toward her, listening to whatever she muttered, then turned back with a tight smile. "Frau Jacobs would like to add a few words."

My breath seeped out, and I fought the urge to cover my ears.

"Yes, *ladies*. As the famous soprano Frau Greta Mila von Nickel was fond of saying . . . well, I can't actually repeat it because even in German, an insult is an insult. But it comes down to this, ladies: each of us has an inner swine-dog that we must vanquish."

Principal Hendricks cleared her throat. Frau sighed and continued, "None of you are, of course, swine-dogs. It's an imperfect translation. In any case, remember you are here to learn. Not to be caught unawares at the distraction you are causing among others. I *will* dress-code you. I *do* expect you to

be ready to learn at all times while you're here in this building, prepared and ready without excuse." I pulled up my knees and burrowed my head into them. Tasha, earbuds removed, stirred a little closer to me and hissed something under her breath about Frau shutting her pie hole.

Frau Jacobs smiled at all of us. "And, *gentlemen*, be clean and neat." She looked over the audience full of students, as though expecting applause.

Principal Hendricks stood back in front of the microphone as Frau Jacobs returned to her seat. "You likely don't remember that, at the beginning of kindergarten, you drew portraits of what you hoped your future selves would be, what you would look like at the end of middle school. Today, we're going to reveal those wonderful portraits and see how far you've come in seizing your dreams!"

Something cold crackled through my chest. My fingers stretched out and squeezed Tasha's knee.

She pulled out an earbud again. "What?"

"Bad," I muttered.

"How bad?" Tasha bit her lip. "Like, fourth-grade bad?"

I didn't answer.

Tasha's eyes turned to marbles. She looked toward Frau Jacobs, then back at me. "Pipi—is this *seventh-grade* bad?"

I didn't answer.

I didn't talk about seventh grade.

Ever.

My eyes darted around the room. No way could they show everyone's kindergarten portrait. There were, like, two hundred kids in my class. The lights dimmed and a screen lit up.

"No, no, no, no, no."

Tasha looked at the screen, her mouth stretching into a relieved smile. "Come on, Pipi. It can't be that bad. All of the drawings are goofy." Flashing across the screen were scribbly sketches of big bobblehead humanoids next to the artist's seventh-grade school picture. A few people laughed at Robert Andrew's portrait—a giant head with arms and legs stretching out of it.

Now, maybe most people don't remember their kindergarten self-portraits. Not me. How could I forget my first humiliation? Miss Simpson had held up my drawing in front of everyone, her face screwed up and red to hold in her laughter, as she told everyone to remember "sometimes the best thing to do when we make mistakes is to use an eraser or start over. *Don't* just keep going."

I bit my lip to keep from screaming. My eyes scoured the crowded auditorium. Maybe no one would be paying attention. No such luck. Everyone stared up at the screen with little grins. Each time a new portrait appeared, a little cooing sound would bubble up from spots in the crowd and everyone around that person would *ooh* and *aah*.

This was a disaster!

Three rows ahead of me, Ricky Salindo half twisted in his

seat. When his eyes locked with mine, he quickly looked away. He remembered my kindergarten portrait, too.

I whimpered. Tasha elbowed me.

When I could be sure I could speak without screeching, I said, "There are two hundred kids in our grade. They won't get to everyone, right?"

Tasha shrugged. "Two hundred and nineteen kids. Pictures are up for about three seconds, so it'd take six hundred fifty-seven seconds to get through everyone, or roughly ten minutes. And probably ten percent of the student body moved here after kindergarten." My best friend has one of those super quick, bizarrely accurate math brains. I do not. "Oh!" she squealed. "It's me!"

Tasha's kindergarten portrait flashed on the screen. She had a red triangle dress, with brown arms and legs peeking out from the sides. Her hair was a lighter brown puff around her head. In careful writing, she had written her name, *Tasha Martins*, under her picture. She looked adorable and somehow exactly as I remembered her from when we first met, thanks to standing in alphabetical order in line for bathroom breaks. She had drawn herself holding a stack of books.

So cute. Alphabetical order. That meant I'd be—

It was worse than I remembered.

Let me set the scene, heading back in time eight years to tiny, poor Kindergarten Penelope dooming her future self.

Five-year-old Penelope sat at her table with colored pencils

and crayons in a Tupperware container in front of her. She thought about her future self, what the Penelope of Eighth Grade would be like. She drew a pink face and yellow hair. And then Miss Simpson said, "Now, class, think about what you really, really love in life. And then think about all the choices you'll get to make when you're a big thirteen- or fourteen-year-old middle schooler!"

What do I really love in life? Kindergarten Penelope really loved bacon.

Sweet, innocent Penelope was so proud of her drawing. Then Miss Simpson made her trying-not-to-laugh face. And she held up the drawing and everyone in the classroom laughed. Kara Samson said something about Penelope being a sillyhead.

Penelope stood up and screamed that she was *not* a sillyhead, and someday she *would* be bacon, and then Kara would be sorry.

Miss Simpson talked then about fantasy versus reality and that no one could grow up to be bacon. But she was wrong, Kindergarten Penelope vowed, and wrote in careful letters: *Penelope WILL be bacon*. And then Penelope screamed that she would be drippy and delicious one day, and kicked Miss Simpson's shin.

I remembered everyone's faces, all twisty and eyes squinty, their hands covering their mouths as they whispered and laughed. My own face had flushed so red I could see it flaming.

It looked like . . . well, it looked exactly like what was

happening right now, this very second. Because it was happening all over again.

"No!" Tasha gasped as the portrait took shape on the screen. She wrapped her arm around my shoulder and squeezed. "Pipi. Pipi, why did you put boobs on the bacon?"

"Because it's older me," I whimpered and looked down at my still-mostly-flat chest.

I was too numb to react. Just stared at the screen, both reliving my first humiliation and then experiencing it fresh all over again.

Know how long it takes for the entire eighth grade to turn on a kid?

Three seconds.

First it was a buzz. Then a guffaw. Next laughter.

"It's Pipi McGee!" someone a few rows behind me called out.

"Sizzling hot!" shouted someone else.

Tasha jumped to her feet. "Shut it! Leave her alone!" Tasha pointed to Wade Michaels, a meathead jock who was laughing loudest. "Your drawing had ears bigger than your head, Meatlobe." Wade covered his ears with his hands and closed his mouth. Tasha jabbed a finger in nasty-laughing Patricia Reynolds's direction. "And, you! You didn't even draw a body, Patricia. You were just a blob girl. A *blob girl*." Patricia rolled her eyes but stopped laughing.

Still standing, Tasha turned to me as the people around us finally quieted. "Don't listen to them, Pipi," she said. "Everyone loves bacon!"

"Especially booby bacon," Wade called in a wheezy laugh. And the auditorium erupted again.

"It's fine," Tasha whispered as she sat back down. "I'm sure everyone will forget soon."

"Booby bacon! Booby bacon! Booby bacon!" the class chanted.

"It's okay," I whispered back. I grabbed my backpack and pulled it up my arm. "It's me. I'm a walking embarrassment."

"That's not true."

"It's like Kara Samson said last year. I'm a virus." I wiped at the pathetic wetness on my cheeks. "I'll be in my office. The third stall."

"Oh, Pipi," Tasha said. "It's not even September."

I shimmied past her, my head ducked low.

"Now, now," Principal Hendricks said from the front of the room as I exited, interrupting the slideshow. "Isn't it wonderful to see how far we've all come?"

"Booby bacon! Booby bacon!" chanted the crowd, led once again by Kara Samson.

So much for this year being different.

Just like every other year, eighth grade was going to be an education in public humiliation.



"I'm sure it wasn't *that* bad." Mom sat across from me at the kitchen island.

When I didn't answer, without looking she grabbed a brownie from the tray between us and shoved it into her mouth. Mom, a fitness instructor, almost never ate sugar. She only wore leggings that molded to her toned legs and tank tops that showed off the way her lean arms rippled with muscles. Her constant ready-to-go-for-a-run attire was in contrast to the way her dark brown hair with blond highlights was always styled perfectly and her makeup was always perfectly done.

Since opening her gym downtown, Mom said she had to protect her "brand" and "look the part." But every now and then she'd bake treats for special occasions—such as the first day of school—that weren't made from black beans and agave nectar. She always tried not to sample them and was usually pretty successful.

This time, as soon as the sugar hit her tongue, her fitnessinstructor self turned into someone just interested in fittin' sugar into her mouth. Alec, my stepdad, smiled at the back of Mom's head from where he leaned against the counter. Alec's always doing that, smiling at Mom like everything she does is wonderful, even shoving a brownie into her mouth. He saw me looking at him and winked. I tried to smile back, but it was wobbly. Then Alec wasn't smiling but looking at me with concern.

While Mom was all spandex and lipstick, Alec was suits and polish. He was about six feet, almost always either in a suit or a white button-down shirt. He worked as a financial adviser; that's how he and Mom met, back when she was finalizing details for opening her gym.

They were so in love it was disgusting.

Alec pushed off the counter and planted a kiss on the top of Mom's head. She handed him a brownie, and he shook his head. Mom shoved it into her own mouth without a second glance, then pushed the tray toward me.

It was kind of funny—Alec was pretty much the exact opposite of my dad, who was a soft, pale Irishman with thinning red hair and a potbelly, and who was more than ten years older than Mom. Meanwhile, Alec was a tall, broad black man with abs that rivalled Mom's. He was also about ten years *younger* than Mom, which was a topic she never wanted to discuss.

Speaking of my dad, he stretched out his hand to pat my arm. "Was it *that* bad, Penelope?" (Yeah, he was there, too. The divorce happened about five years ago, and honestly it wasn't all that traumatic. So much had been happening then at our

house that Dad going from sleeping on the couch like he had since I could remember to sleeping in his own apartment didn't seem like a big deal. He and Mom might not have stayed *in* love, but they still loved each other and loved us. Dad even seemed to really like Alec; they played racquetball together in Mom's gym a couple afternoons a week.)

Dad was a newspaper reporter and had a way of asking questions that made you start blabbing even if you didn't want to. I nodded. "I think it ranks about third on The List."

"The List?" Alec asked.

"The List of Humiliations of Pipi McGee," supplied my older sister, Eliza. She placed a brownie on a little plate and handed it to Annie. "It's long and pathetic."

I nodded.

Annie glanced at Mom, who smiled, and then Annie dug in. Eliza's mouth set into a hard line at the silent exchange, but she didn't say anything.

I should probably explain this a little more before moving on with my story. Annie is actually Eliza's daughter—my sister had her when she was sixteen years old. It really messed Eliza up for a long time. Now, Annie was four and a half, and Eliza was a lot stronger as a person—she is about to graduate college (mostly through taking online courses at a local university) and has a job at a makeup shop next to Mom's gym. But for the first few years after Annie was born, Eliza was in pretty bad shape emotionally. Mom was the one who really took care of

Annie, getting up in the middle of the night to feed her, singing her silly songs, and teaching her how to use the bathroom. You know, mom stuff. Annie even calls Mom "MomMom" and Eliza, well, "Eliza," even though Eliza does most of the mom stuff now.

"Remember my humiliations when you have to do your self-portrait," I said to Annie.

"How was your first day of preschool?" Dad asked Annie to try to change the subject.

She shrugged. "We had to eat Joe's slop for lunch."

"Sloppy Joes," Eliza corrected. Annie sighed.

Annie was what a lot of people called an old soul. She had wide green eyes and my hair color, but hers was styled in a little pixie cut after an incident where she played barber in the bathroom with a pair of cuticle scissors. (Amazing how much damage cuticle scissors could do, especially if you cut your hair straight down the middle.) I had a pixie cut once, thanks to Vile Kara Samson, but Annie's hairstyle was much cuter. She had Eliza's perfect heart-shaped face. Picture a delicate angel—blue eyes, blond hair, pretty little nose, and dainty little features. That's Eliza. Like, so pretty that people bumped into each other on the street when she walked by, hoping she'd bless them with a smile or something. Or, at least, that's how she used to be. Now the first thing you'd see when Eliza walked by was her stop-sign scowl. Think, I don't know, of an avenging angel who might smite you for no reason at all.

Turning back to me, Alec said, "It can't be that bad, Pipi."

Dad turned to the side and raised his eyebrow. Mom eyed another brownie. "Come on!" Alec glanced at all of us.

"Pipi pees her pants," Annie said.

"That is *not* true!" I slammed my hands on the counter. "I *peed* my pants. Once." I looked to Alec. "That's the fourthgrade entry." His eyes widened and I knew he was doing the math, figuring out that fourth graders are at least nine years old and definitely shouldn't be peeing their pants. "And ever since, everyone—even my own *family*—has called me Pipi."

"It's catchy," Dad said. Eliza nodded.

I sighed.

"Okay," Alec said. "So, you had an accident in fourth grade and in kindergarten, you drew yourself as a breakfast meat—"

"With boobs," I added.

Alec continued, "How bad could the rest be?"

"Bad," Eliza said.

"Real bad," Mom added.

Alec crossed his arms. He and Mom had been married only a year, and apparently the courtship didn't include a rundown of her daughter's pathetic nature. Mom sighed. "It's like this: every year, something happens to Pipi. Something awful. And then that event is like the sun—everything else that happens to her that year revolves around the event."

Alec nodded. "Sounds a bit like a self-fulfilling prophecy. You think something bad will happen, so as soon as something bad happens, it becomes that thing." I blinked at him.

"So, maybe," he continued, his eyes drifting toward Dad and back, "it's not that whatever happened is all that bad. You're just so prepped for it to be awful, that no matter what it is, it's inflated to feel that much worse."

"Eh." Dad cleared his throat. I used to go with him on story assignments when I was a little kid. Reporters don't make a lot of money, and neither do fitness instructors, so I'd tag along if my grandparents couldn't watch me. This "eh" wasn't just a casual throat-clearing thing. This was a reporter tactic of Dad's. It was questioning someone's comment without straight-out casting doubt.

Sure enough, Dad pulled his reporter's notebook from his back pocket. "Let's go over the facts."

I grabbed the notebook and a pen from him and flipped to a blank page. I spoke as I wrote. "Kindergarten, drew myself as bacon with boobs, thanks to poor instructions from Miss Simpson."

"Another thing you'll notice," Eliza piped in, "is that it's never Pipi's fault, whatever happened. It's *always* someone else's."

I stuck my tongue out at her. Annie giggled.

"First grade." I scrawled a number one on the page and wrote *class picture* next to it. "My nose itched on the inside during the class picture. It was *just* an itch!" It itched again, just thinking about it, but I ignored it.

Mom was the one giggling now. She reached into a kitchen cabinet, way to the back, and pulled out a mug with my picture on it—one of those gifts you can order along with school pictures. And there I was, forever immortalized with my finger up my nose.

"Must've been quite an itch." Alec laughed. "Your finger's up to the knuckle."

My chin popped up. "Vile Kara Samson had a lot of hair-spray in her hair. A lot. It irritated my nasal passage. Anyway, I was *not* a nose picker. I swear! But all of first grade, no one would invite me to sleep over or to play after school because I had 'boogie fingers." For months after that, I'd fall asleep rubbing my nose like I could somehow smudge it right off my face. Now, I never touched my nose if at all possible. It didn't help, of course, that my nose was long and wide.

I drew a number two for second grade. Next to it, I wrote *vomit-a-thon*. Eliza shuddered.

"Do I want to know?" asked Alec, reading the paper upside down.

"It was the second week of school. My allergies—again!—were bothering me on the bus. I coughed, and it led to a little throw-up. It wouldn't have been so bad if Sarah Trickle hadn't turned around to hand me a tissue. I sprayed her with Eggo."

"It was like dominos," said Dad, his mustache awfully twitchy for discussing something traumatic. "The bus driver called the office and said all the parents had to pick up their kids. Sarah Trickle must've let loose on the kid next to her. The next person puked on the person in front of him, on and on. Only one kid—Ricky Salindo—was vomitless. Steel stomach, that kid."

"And," I said, "every time Kara Samson so much as looked at me that year, she'd make gagging sounds. Like my face was a finger down her throat. She wasn't even on the bus! And since she's Vile Kara Samson that meant everyone else followed her lead. Can you imagine that? Everyone gagging when they see you? Even Sarah Trickle gagged around me."

Vile Kara Samson. Ugh. Picture a tall, curvy girl with long brown hair. A smile with full lips and perfectly straight white teeth. Blue eyes that always look mean, even while blinding a person with that perfect smile. The girl no one actually likes but whom everyone desperately wants to like them. She's paper-cut mean—leaving a sting that seems to go away, but brings tears to your eyes all over again as soon as it's reopened.

And joined at her hip is Sarah Trickle. Kara and Sarah, don't you just want to puke? (Don't—it has lifelong social ramifications.) They're cousins, and their moms are twins, so they practically are twins, too. But no one would mistake them as being identical. Sarah was everything Kara wasn't—quiet and kind, like a little doll with a tiny little smile. She wore her long red hair in braids down the sides. Everyone wanted to be Sarah nearly as much as they wanted Kara's approval. And Sarah was constantly trying to show that Kara wasn't as vile as she made

everyone think. "She didn't mean it like that" and "She's just joking around" and "That's just Kara, just how she is" were phrases constantly dripping from Sarah's lips.

Mom pushed the brownie tray toward Annie and Eliza. "Well, when it comes to Sarah, it really wasn't her fault, lovey."

"Yeah," Dad said, "you should've seen her get off the bus. Head to toe covered in vomit. You really sprayed her."

Annie pushed the brownie tray back. "That's disgusting." "Second grade also led to," I lowered my voice, "The Touch." "The Touch?" Alec echoed.

Mom handed Annie a napkin. "Sort of like tag, but Pipi's always 'It.' If anyone touches her, they have to pass The Touch onto someone else."

Alec whistled low. "That's awful."

"Moving on. Third grade." I wrote *basketball mistake* next to the number.

Eliza snorted. "Pipi made the first basket of her entire life. For the wrong team."

"That's not that big of a deal," Alec mused.

I crossed my arms. "It was the boys versus girls match. Girls were ahead. *I'm* the reason they lost. Even the principal heckled me. I'm *still* picked last every gym class. Whenever someone makes a ridiculous sports mistake, it's called making a McGee. It was a big deal."

Alec grabbed a brownie.

Fourth grade. I wrote peepee beside it.

Mom patted my hand.

Without looking up, I said, "My zipper was stuck. And Kara Samson refused to get me help."

"For months, they called her PeePee McGee," Eliza added.
"Now it's just Pipi."

"Penelope. This year, I'm going back to Penelope," I said. I wrote Jackson Thorpe on the paper next to the number five. My voice was super light as I said, "Some of the girls played a trick on me. I thought Jackson liked me. He didn't." I ran my hand along my neck, feeling how long my hair had grown since fifth grade. Dad sighed. His mouth was set in a line, but he didn't say anything. Alec didn't either. Mom muttered a nasty word under her breath.

"Sixth grade. Makeover issues," I mumbled.

Eliza laughed, and Mom stomped on her foot. To Alec, Mom said, "Turns out eyebrows take a long, long time to grow back."

"Eyebrow," I corrected as I wrote a seven on the next line.

Mom and Dad stiffened. Even Eliza didn't say a word.

Alec said, "Wh-"

"We don't talk about seventh grade," Mom cut him off.

Alec closed his mouth, realization dawning on him as he remembered. After a moment, he said, "But, Pipi, everyone has things like this happen to them. All of us have. I went to class once with two different shoes on, totally different pairs of sneaks. People busted me for weeks, but we move on."

"My list isn't like that," I insisted.

"The thing is," Dad said, still in his reporter's voice, "this is your last year in middle school. Next year, you'll be in high school. There are how many middle schools that funnel into that one building?"

"Five," I answered.

"Right, and each of those schools has about two to two hundred fifty kids. So *most* of the kids you're going to meet next year won't know Pipi McGee as the girl who picks her nose, pees her pants, pukes on her friends, and draws herself as bacon with . . . you know. You get a fresh start. A clean slate."

I slumped over in my seat with a groan. "No, instead I'll get . . . like . . ." I wish I could do math in my head like Tasha. Instead, I guesstimated. "A thousand people who can jump in on the fun of humiliating Pipi McGee."

"I'm sure it's not that bad," Alec muttered. Mom coughed on her bite of brownie.

"Someone tripped getting off the bus this morning," I said. "He recovered, straightened himself up, and said, 'Nearly pulled a McGee there.' My name is a synonym for doing ridiculous stuff. It's *that* bad." I swiped a fingerful of frosting from the pan and shoved it into my mouth in despair. "I'm going to be a laughingstock for the rest of my life."

Alec put his elbows on the counter next to Dad. "Or," he said slowly, "you can do things differently. Make a change."

Dad nodded. "This thing today that happened? That's, eh, not a *new* embarrassment. It's an old one you're just feeling

again. So, nothing really happened this year, right?"

"Stop feeling sorry for yourself. If you don't like the way things are, change them," Eliza snapped. "Make it better."

Mom nodded.

"You guys act like changing is easy. That's not the way it works."

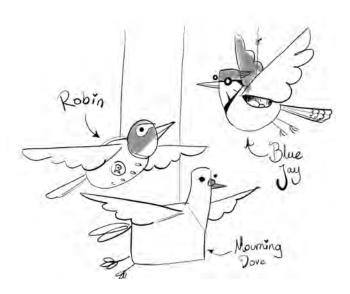
Everyone in the room except for Annie stood up. Each of them crossed their arms. Mom raised her eyebrow. "Look around, Pipi."

I scanned the kitchen. My plump dad was standing next to a much younger, much hotter stepdad in the same kitchen with Mom, who went from teaching classes at the YMCA to owning her own gym, across from my sister who had a baby at age sixteen and was soon going to be a college graduate. Okay, so maybe I wasn't going to get a lot of sympathy from this crowd on how hard it was to make some changes.

But the thing was, while their hurdles might have been a lot bigger than mine, that didn't mean mine weren't steep.

How do you stop being a joke? I was a literal joke in my school. Except for Tasha and maybe sometimes Ricky, no one saw *me* when they saw me. They saw Pipi McGee and waited for me to do something ridiculous so they could keep right on laughing. I didn't even know what I could be known for aside from a social virus.

I ripped out the sheet from the reporter's notebook, folded it in half, and put it in my pocket.



I paced around my bedroom, trying to get my thoughts to flow in a steady current instead of in thousands of ripples.

My room wasn't exactly a sanctuary for clear thinking. It used to be Eliza's, but after Annie was born, we switched bedrooms. While her room (now my room) was bigger, my old room had a door that opened to the smaller guest room. Mom had turned that smaller room into Annie's. When Eliza had this room, she had painted the ceiling a light blue and had darker blue walls. I added big white fluffy clouds across the ceiling when I moved in. Hanging down, attached by clear fishing line, were birds. My birds. I started making them in fifth grade, I think. I molded them with papier-mâché and painted them in super bright colors like teal, orange, and purple. Each one took a super long time to make, which is probably why I started doing it. When I'm making them, I'm not thinking about what everyone else is doing without me or saying about me.

Here's something no one knew: when you lifted the wings of each bird, no matter how small they were, you'd find a little compartment. I hid beads or pretty stones in there like a secret. I liked the idea that there was more to them than people thought.

Mom, Dad, and Alec were always on me to make the birds for art class. Alec even said he'd rent a stand at the arts festival for me to sell them, but I liked having my little flock around me. I was running out of ceiling space, though. Near the end of the first semester, Northbrook Middle School held a talent show. A little bit of me—small enough to fit into one of the bird's hidden compartments—thought about showing one of my creations at the show as my official talent.

Today, though, I ignored the birds, not even glancing at them as I closed the door to my room. People would only laugh at them so long as I was Pipi McGee, aka middle school laughingstock. I stopped in front of the giant corkboard over my desk. I ripped off the scraps of paper about last year's assignments, pictures of me and Tasha, and participation certificates from field day. Once everything was off the board, I reached into my pocket, smoothed out the sheet of paper, and tacked The List of Humiliations right in the center.

Dad was right. Alec was right. Mom was right. Even Eliza was right.

I picked up my phone. Tasha answered on the third ring. "What, your thumb's broken? Calls are for emergencies only.

I just got to the chapter where Finn realizes the truth about Maeve."

"This is an emergency!"

"Emergency like finding out your adopted mother is a witch?"

"This year's going to be different, Tasha."

"Yeah, yeah. You said that."

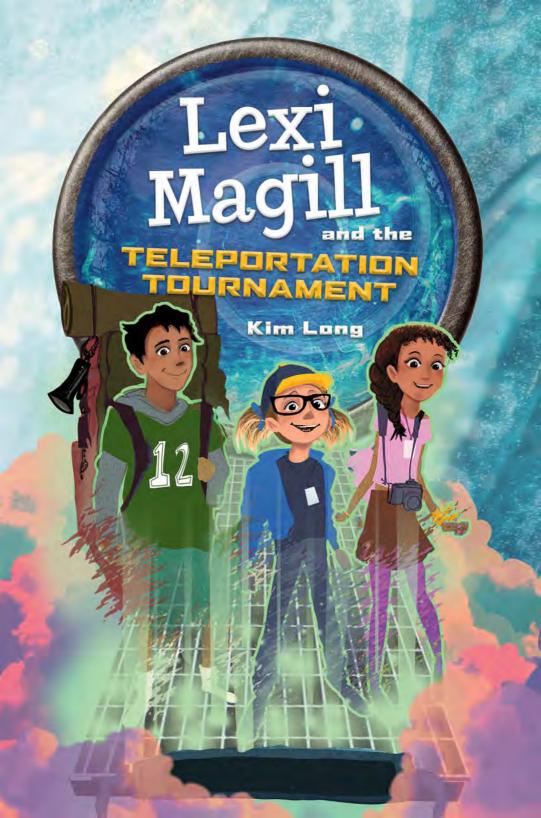
"I mean it. I have a plan. I mean, I've got the beginnings of a plan."

I heard a *whooshing* sound and knew Tasha was sitting up on her bed. "What kind of plan?"

"I'm going to right the wrongs of my early education. I'm going to set things right. When I enter high school next year, it will be with a clean slate. I, Pipi McGee, have a year of redemption ahead of me. No one is going to laugh at me. In fact, this year? *They*'re going to be the embarrassed ones."

Tasha breathed in and out deeply. "Maybe it's this book getting to me, but it sounds a little to me like you're talking about revenge."

"I'll be at your house in six and a half minutes."





CHAPTER ONE

Lexi snatched the teleportation medallion off the counter and flipped it into the air. The half-dollar-sized gray medallion landed in her palm, and she clenched her fingers over it. A Tel-Med was the last thing she needed to enter the Teleportation Tournament, and now she had one. Granted, she had to blow her birthday dough and an entire year's allowance to rent it, but it's not like she had a choice. There was no way that she, Alexis Theresa Magill, teleport science whiz and Wisconsin's top junior scientist, was missing the chance to race around the world in *the* student science competition of the year.

"You're all set," the rental store employee said as he handed a smiling Lexi the receipt. "The store's closed Monday for the Memorial Day holiday, so it needs to be back on Tuesday to avoid a late fee."

Lexi nodded. "Got it. Thanks."

Tel-Med tucked safely in her pocket, Lexi strode to the exit. She checked her watch. 6:10 a.m. Right on schedule. In a few minutes, she'd be at the high school, where she'd grab a spot in the tournament check-in line and wait for her teammates. Sure, she was a tad

early, but it was worth it. Fifty teams of three kids each meant 150 entrants—the check-in line was going to get majorly long in a hurry.

Besides, early meant she'd get a chance to talk to Haley. Although they'd chatted on the phone and texted a few times, Lexi hadn't been able to spend any real time with her best friend since moving across town. There was so much Lexi wanted to catch up on—like finding out who Haley picked as her new lab partner after Lexi switched schools. Or if Haley *finally* figured out how to program Gary, the robotic grasshopper, to jump over a box of paper clips. Giggling to herself as she turned the corner, Lexi guessed a big "No" on that one. Lexi had created the original code, and Haley wasn't great at—

"Hey, Lexi!"

"Look! It's Lexi!"

Lexi glanced ahead. Down the block, kids from her former science academy waved from the parking lot. "Hey, everyone!" she yelled, picking up the pace.

Three boys wearing blue jeans and blue T-shirts with "Physics Phenoms" emblazoned across the front ran toward her. "You're here!" the middle boy said, eyes wide.

Lexi threw back her shoulders and grinned. "Hi, Tomoka! Of course! You didn't really think I'd miss this, did you?"

More kids rushed to greet her, and soon Lexi felt like her old-self, chatting away about advancements in teleport science (underwater telepods for divers exploring the ocean floor!) and the newest tech gadgets (bionic gloves!). But as the conversations continued, a lump

formed in her throat. She missed this. When her dad lost his job and moved her family to a smaller house across town, the pricey science academy was one of the first things to go under her parents' "major downsizing initiative."

Now Lexi was stuck at West Elm Middle School, where fitting in was like sound waves traveling in a vacuum: impossible. Not only wasn't there anyone who wanted to discuss the finer points of quantum physics, but the school didn't even have a science club. Plus, moving midyear made it impossible to find friends. So far, her semester had been filled with lonely lunch periods and loads of free time after school.

Lexi tightened her hands into fists, willing herself to stay focused. *Follow the plan.* She'd win the tournament and use the prize money to re-enroll in the academy. In the fall, she'd have her old life back.

A speck of a silver T-shirt and, bobbing blond ponytail flashed in the distance. Instantly brightening, Lexi dashed toward the sparkly target.

"Haley!" Lexi shouted.

"Lexi!" Haley cried, wrapping her arms around Lexi's shoulders.

Lexi returned her friend's hug. "I've totally missed you."

"I know," Haley said. "Me too." Then, in a whisper, "I can't believe we're not racing together. It stinks that teammates have to be from the same school."

Lexi puffed out a breath. "Tell me about it. You would not *believe* what I had to go through to find teammates."

Haley peered past Lexi. "Oh no. Who did you end up with?"

"Just two kids from my history class." Lexi sighed. "They're nice and all, but they're not into science in the least. No science explorer camps, no junior science club... not even a science fair."

Haley winced. "Ouch. That doesn't sound good, though I suppose \dots "

"What?"

"Well, if they don't know anything about science, you won't have anyone to fight with over the answers."

Lexi laughed. Haley always had a way of twisting things around to find an advantage. "Yeah, well, maybe—"

"Sure," Haley said. "A bunch of us have been doing practice tournaments on the weekends, and OMG. Lexi, Andre argues about *everything*—even what telepod line is shorter! If I'm going to have to battle him on every puzzle, it'll eat up tons of time." She clutched Lexi's forearm. "I *so* wish you were still on my team. We'd be unstoppable!"

Haley continued her rant about Andre, but Lexi's mind drifted to the practice tournaments she had missed. She wished Haley had invited her. Even though they weren't teammates, it would have been fun to hang out like they used to. Lexi opened her mouth, but then closed it, remembering the stupid rental Tel-Med in her pocket. A year ago, she had her own, shiny gold Tel-Med and could go teleporting whenever she wanted. The new Magill family budget put an end to that.

A spinning Haley jolted Lexi out of her thoughts.

"Aren't our shirts awesome?" The shimmery letters "Haley's Comets" blurred as Haley spun past Lexi.

"Oh wow. Yeah," Lexi answered half-heartedly. "Good idea with the glitter." She glanced away, trying to shake off the uneasy feeling that had taken root in her stomach from missing out. It wasn't Haley's fault she didn't have a Tel-Med anymore. In fact, that was probably why Haley hadn't bothered asking her—she knew Lexi wouldn't have been able to go.

Haley whirled to a stop and spread her arms out wide as she wobbled in place.

Laughing, Lexi gripped Haley's elbow to help her friend regain her balance. "Hey," she said. "So, tell me about Gary? Did you guys get him to jump?"

Haley steadied and tilted her head to the side, looking confused.

"You know, how we were trying to program him to hop over the box?" Lexi straightened her glasses. "And what's the new class project—"

"Attention, competitors!" an official announced over the speakers. "It's time to check in. Everyone, get in line with your teams!"

Haley jumped free of Lexi's grasp. "This is it! I have to find Emma and Andre. See ya!"

"Yeah, okay," Lexi mumbled, watching her friend dart through the crowd. "Hey!" she called. "We can catch up at the rest area! Save me a seat!" Haley didn't turn, and Lexi frowned. Oh well. She should find her teammates, too. Lexi scanned the parking lot. Not surprisingly, nearly every team was color-coordinated, matching their shirts, pants, windbreakers, and sometimes even their gym shoes. More than half the teams had also sprung for identical backpacks. But as the teams assembled and check-in started, Lexi's team consisted of a single member: her. She scowled. *Two late teammates. Fantastic start*.

The line inched forward, and soon Lexi stood three back from the counter. As she turned to scour the area again, a tittering pulsed through the crowd. Lexi looked across the parking lot, where kids who had checked in were waiting. Teams gathered together, hands partially covering their mouths, whispering. Every few seconds, an arm shot out of a huddle with a finger pointed toward the circular drive reserved for buses. Wondering what the commotion could be, Lexi followed one of the fingers to its target.

She sighed with understanding. Her teammates were crossing the driveway, and if there were awards for oddest-looking racers, Bon and Mal would have won in a landslide.

For starters, Ron had to be carrying the largest backpack in the world. Bulging at every side, it seriously looked like his backpack had left a buffet where it had eaten all the other backpacks. Not only did it extend above his head to all the way down to his waist, but it was as wide as his body—his five-foot, five-inch, 160-pound body. And it didn't end there, as Ron was dressed as someone headed to tryouts: baggy green basketball shorts, loose-fitted green Green Bay Packers shirt, and gym shoes.

Mal, on the other hand, wore a pink T-shirt with, "Eat, Draw, Sleep, Repeat" scrawled across the front, a brown miniskirt, fuchsia leggings, and lime green ballet flats. Her long, glossy black hair was set in an elaborate braid, and a camera hung around her neck. A stylish purse backpack dangled over an arm, and to top it off, a gold scarf circled her wrist. She could have been going to a tea party or a fashion show, or, really, anywhere other than a teleportation tournament.

Lexi waved. "Hey, Ron. Hey, Mal."

"Lexi!" Ron boomed as he extended his arm over his head. "Never fear, the Filipino Flyer is here!"

"Sorry we're late," Mal said as she joined the line.

Thunk.

Ron dropped his pack onto the pavement. "Nah, it's perfect timing. Looks like we're next, huh?"

"Um, yeah," Lexi mumbled without looking. She pointed to the Milwaukee Brewers logo on her T-shirt. She'd used her favorite baseball team as inspiration for her team's wardrobe. "So, uh, I thought we were going with Brewers gear—or at least their colors of blue and gold? And pockets are kind of important—quick access to our Tel-Meds, IDs, and stuff."

Mal pinched her T-shirt. "Sorry. I really wanted to wear my drawing shirt." She raised her arm. "But I added a gold scarf, and I do have a pocket." Mal turned and directed Lexi to the back of her skirt, where the smallest heart-shaped pocket in the world resided.

"Oh," Lexi said.

"Yeah, and I looked for something Brewers, but no dice," Ron said. He stuck out his chest and smoothed the front of his shirt. "So, I went with Packers." He surveyed the crowd. "This is unbelievable. Almost everyone has team uniforms."

"I know," Lexi grumbled. "That's why I said—"

"Next!" shouted a tournament official at the counter.

Lexi nudged her teammates to the recently vacated station. "Names?" a voice from behind a box of file folders asked.

"Alexis Magill, Ronald Quinto, and Malena Moreno," Lexi answered.

The man raised his head, revealing a red handlebar mustache and big blue eyes. "Lexi! We've missed you!"

"Dr. Harrison! I miss you, too!" Lexi said. "Your physics classes are the best."

Dr. Harrison picked out their folders. "IDs and Tel-Meds, please." Lexi retrieved her Tel-Med, noticing the bright blue "RENTAL" stamp for the first time. Deftly flipping it to the other side, she handed it over with her school ID. Dr. Harrison opened the lid to a small black box and inserted the Tel-Med into a compartment. He closed the lid and pressed a button. *Click*. A second later, after checking the lights on the side of the machine, Dr. Harrison opened the lid and returned the Tel-Med.

"What's that for?" Lexi asked.

"We've installed a tracking and disabling chip," Dr. Harrison replied. "You'll hear more about it in a few minutes."

"Oh." Lexi studied the medallion. She didn't see any marks. Whew. There was no way she could afford a charge for damaging it.

Dr. Harrison repeated the process with Ron's and Mal's Tel-Meds. "Okay. Team name?"

"Team RAM," Lexi said, hoping Dr. Harrison wouldn't comment on how dorky it sounded. Most teams picked science-themed names, but Ron and Mal had nixed all of her suggestions.

"R-A-M?"

"Yeah, it's our initials," Mal offered. "Ronald, Alexis, Malena."

"Gotcha. Team RAM." Dr. Harrison handed them three navy blue-and-gold ribbon necklaces. "Go ahead and tie your badges through the ribbons."

"Brewers colors. Cool," Lexi said as she secured the badge with her name and photo to a necklace and hung it around her neck.

"And here's your first clue," Dr. Harrison said, passing a notebook-sized manila envelope to Lexi. "Don't open it until you're told to do so. It's an automatic disqualification."

"Okay," Lexi said, grabbing the envelope.

"All right, you three can wait in the main parking lot. We'll start the formal rules explanation in a little bit." He winked at Ron and Mal. "You guys really lucked out with Lexi. She knows her stuff. Good luck."

"Thanks," Lexi said, and she led Mal and Ron to a grassy area bordering the parking lot. Mal aimed her camera at the check-in booth and snapped a few photos.

"What are you doing?" Lexi asked, unshouldering her pack.

"Grabbing a couple shots. I probably won't use them, but you never know."

Lexi squinted toward Mal, confused. "What do you-"

"Man, is this heavy," Ron interrupted. He hoisted his pack onto a picnic table and opened a few zippers. Hoodies, caps, and T-shirts spilled out.

"Holy cow!" Lexi said. "What's all that?"

Ron rocked back on his heels. "Swag, man. You know, merchandise. Merch. Haven't you heard? Europe's in love with the NFL. I've got jerseys, hoodies, hats—tons of Green Bay Packers stuff." He rubbed his hands together and pointed his thumbs to his chest. "This guy's gonna make a nice little profit this weekend."

Lexi stared at him, mouth agape.

"What?" Ron said. "I told you I'd do your science tournament thing *if* I got a chance to make some money. Football camp's this summer. My parents will pay for a week, but if I get more dough, I bet I can get them to let me go for two weeks. High school and college coaches love that stuff."

"I . . . uh, yeah," Lexi mumbled. "I remember you saying the money would come in handy, but I thought you meant *prize* money, like when we win. It's a race, remember? There's not going to be time to sell stuff."

Ron brushed her off. "No worries, Magill. My *swag's* gonna go quick. I'll need maybe five, ten minutes at each stop."

"But-"

Mal shrugged. "That works for me. That's when I'll take photos." Lexi's breath caught in her throat. "Photos?" she croaked.

"For the state photo contest." Mal waved her arm to the side as if she were a model displaying a prize on a game show. "Around the World' by Malena Moreno." She grinned. "Everyone's gonna have photos from around Wisconsin, *maybe* somewhere from a summer vacation, but all of Europe? No way. I'll definitely be the one to beat, not to mention I'll get automatic extra credit for my art class."

Lexi squeezed the back of her neck. "Oh yeah," she muttered as her conversation with Mal rushed back to her. "When you said you'd enter for extra credit, I thought you meant in science—you know, a report on physics..."

Mal laughed. "Nah, I meant art class. Why? Does it matter?"

"No. It's just . . . I know teleport science isn't your thing. And believe me, I'm grateful you guys said you'd come, and I'm all for, you know"—she pointed at Ron—"selling stuff"—she gestured to Mal—"and taking photos, but . . . we have to keep up with everyone else. They eliminate teams each day, and if we get cut, there'll be no swag or photos."

Ron cocked his left eyebrow. Then his right. Then his left. He switched back and forth at a steady pace. After the sixth or seventh time, Lexi couldn't help but laugh.

"Seriously," she said, lightly punching her fist into her palm.
"I'm all for having fun, but we have to concentrate on the tournament. That's the whole point."

"Got it," Ron said. "Don't worry, Magill. It'll be fine. I'm looking forward to it. I love logic puzzles and stuff like that."

Mal adjusted her scarf. "Yeah, and I love traveling through Europe. I want to go to as many places as possible. We'll be super-fast."

Lexi let out a breath, feeling a little better. While she didn't expect Ron or Mal to know enough science to actually help during the tournament, there was a difference between not helping and slowing her down. "Okay. Thanks, guys."

Ron hopped onto the picnic bench and stepped atop the table. He looked over the crowd. "All right, so let's talk about this tournament. Who's our fiercest competition?"

"Good question," Mal said as she joined Ron on the tabletop.

Smiling, Lexi climbed up, too. She noticed Haley's Comets, the Physics Phenoms, Tesla's Techies, and several other teams of former classmates or summer science camp pros mingling in the lot. Jealousy rumbled through her. She'd give anything to be down there, laughing and talking about potential science problems they'd encounter in the tournament.

Next year. Next year, that'll be me.

"Earth to Lexi," Mal said, giving her a poke. "What do you think? Who do we have to watch out for?" Everybody. Lexi motioned to the middle of the lot. "Well, everyone from the academy and STEM competitions will definitely be good."

"STEM?" Mal said. "That's Science, Tech-"

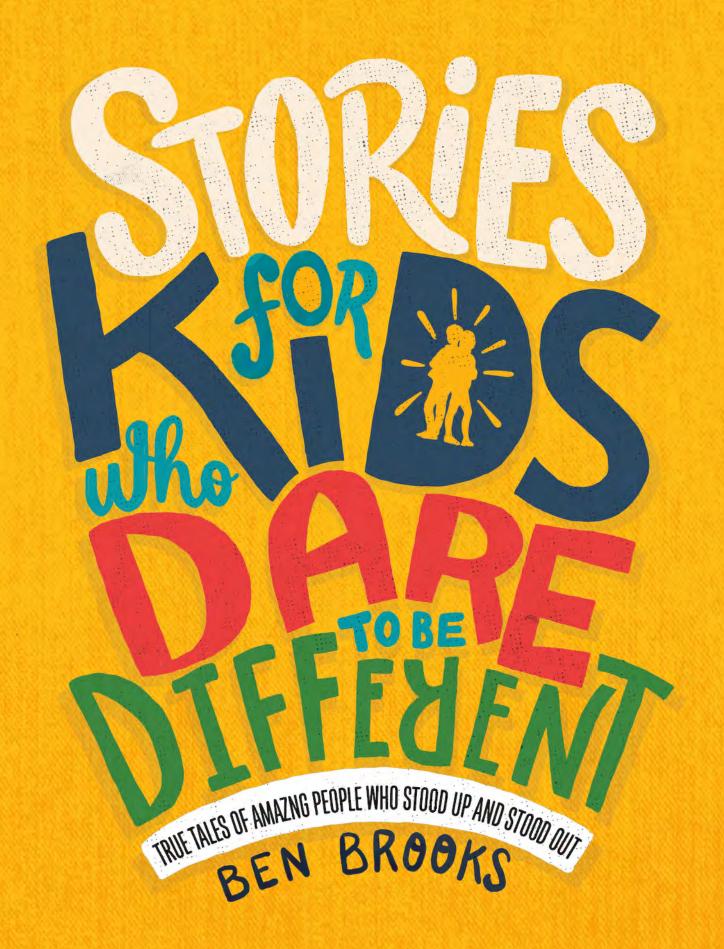
"—nology, Engineering, and Mathematics," Lexi interrupted. "There are competitions throughout the year." She identified the main teams before flipping her hand toward three sparkling silver shirts. "And that's Haley's team. She's my best friend and real smart, too."

"Hmmm," Ron said. "Who won last year?"

Lexi stared into the crowd. "The Mighty Sanbornes. David and Daniel are twins. They just turned fourteen, so this is the last year they can run. They're entering with their sister, Ashley. She's twelve, like us, so this will be her first tournament. I don't see them yet, though."

"Mighty Sanbornes," Ron murmured. He smoothed his hands together. "Good to know."

A horn blared, and Team RAM jolted. Lexi watched as Dr. Harrison proceeded to a make-shift stage at the front of the parking lot. With a squeal, she hurriedly leaped to the ground and grabbed her notebook. The tournament was about to start.





Deng grew up happily on his family's banana farm in a fishing village beside the river Nile. One day, when he was six, everything changed.

War was raging in Sudan and the generals were desperate for recruits. Soldiers arrived in Deng's village and dragged him away. For thirty-three days, he marched alongside thirty other children. Some boys were savaged by wild animals. Others were shot. And some boys just fell down dead, unable to carry on without food or water.

Deng made it to Ethiopia, where he was shown how to use an AK-47 and forced to fight for the Sudan People's Liberation Army. He was so small that the first time he fired the gun, it tore his arm out of its socket.

During the fighting, Deng saw and experienced unthinkable things, including children being blown up with grenades and others dying from dehydration. Deng himself was severely wounded and almost bled to death.

Somehow he managed to reunite with his brother, John Mac. By hiding Deng under sacks on the back of a truck, John smuggled him to Kenya. From there, the brothers secured passage to Australia, where they hoped to leave behind the brutality of war and start their lives again.

Deng earned his law degree and became a defense lawyer. He now represents many of the Sudanese population in Australia, often for free.

In 2014, John Mac returned to Sudan to try to aid those still trapped there. He died while helping people escape across the Nile River. To make sure John Mac's never forgotten, Deng has established a charity in his name. The John Mac Foundation aims to educate and empower people whose lives have been torn apart by war.



8



ANNA AKHMATOVA

(1889-1966)

If you wrote a poem in the Soviet Union at the beginning of the twentieth century, you may have been putting yourself in terrible danger. The government, ruled by a brutal dictator named Stalin, might ransack your house, kidnap your relatives, and even make you disappear if you wrote anything that spoke against it.

Anna had been writing poetry since she was eleven. She'd never let anything stop her before. When her father said he didn't want his surname connected to her silly scribblings, she started using her grandmother's instead, and then she moved away.

She traveled to St. Petersburg and met a group of other young poets who shared the same ideas and hopes. They wrote together, creating their own movement and magazines, and soon the whole city was talking about them.

Then, when Stalin came to power, people were taken away in the night simply for talking out about the government. Expressing an opinion was forbidden.

Anna hated Stalin and his brutality. So the government filled her house with microphones, stationed spies outside to watch her, and threw the people she loved most into prison.

She was living in terror, and poetry was the only way she had of fighting back. But it had become too dangerous to write poems. Even if you wrote them down and hid them under your pillow, the police might search your house and find the evidence.

To get around this, Anna stopped writing her poems on paper. Instead, she created them in her head then taught them to women she could trust. She would recite them over and over again with her friends, until she was sure someone would always remember them.

Anna would not forget the people who had died, and she didn't want the world to forget either.

"You will hear thunder and remember me," she wrote.

After the Soviet Union collapsed, Anna became one of Russia's most loved poets.

LOUJAIN AL-HATHLOUL

(BORN 1989)

For a long time, women in Saudi Arabia have struggled to gain the rights given to the men. They weren't allowed to vote until 2015, compete in the Olympics until 2012, and still aren't allowed to open their own bank accounts.

Until 2017, women were also forbidden A few days after her wedding, she to drive. Loujain set out to change that. drove from Abu Dhabi across the

She had grown up in a conservative area of Saudi Arabia but moved to France as a teenager. While an adult in Canada, she made videos on an app called Keek, which would allow thirty-second recordings. She posted videos of herself with her face uncovered and her hair flowing free as she drove a car, all of which were illegal for women in Saudi Arabia. Loujain believed that the ability to drive could be the symbol that would give women there more independence and lead to unlocking further freedoms.

Some people criticized her for posting from the safety of a country where the Saudi authorities couldn't reach her. So Loujain flew home. Her father met her at the airport and gave her the keys to his car and she drove, filming the whole thing. The authorities called in her father and made him swear never to let his daughter drive again. Loujain didn't give up.

A few days after her wedding, she drove from Abu Dhabi across the desert to Saudi Arabia and demanded to be let across the border. This time she was arrested and put in jail for seventy-three days. To be released, Loujain had to sign a document saying she wouldn't make any more videos discussing women's rights in Saudi Arabia. She signed it, happily, because the document didn't say anything about speaking out in writing. And she carried on doing just that.

On May 15, 2018, Loujain was once again arrested at her house because of her fight for equality. But thanks to the awareness she's raised about the plight of her country's women, the eyes of the world are on the Saudi Arabia government, and they are being urged by organizations everywhere to release peaceful protestors and grant women the rights they deserve.

19





One night, Luke Ambler was at his brother-in-law Andy's house, laughing, messing around, and playing games. A few days later, Andy took his own life.

It broke the hearts of everyone who knew him.

Though shocked, Luke knew how it felt to be down. He'd struggled with his own issues growing up, including an eating disorder and bullying. As a professional rugby player, he'd also felt the pressure of acting tough and manly, even while he'd been struggling with feeling sad or stressed.

He thinks that sometimes men and boys can feel too embarrassed or afraid to talk about their feelings, bottling them up instead. Holding in all those feelings can become too much for a person. It can make them feel as though they can't go on. That's what had happened to Andy.

Wanting to help other people who might be having similar trouble, Luke started the Andy's Man Club. The aim of the club is to provide a place for men to come and openly talk about their feelings, without fear of being judged or made fun of.

He also started a campaign on social media. He took a picture of himself doing an OK symbol and captioned it: It's Okay To Talk. Since then, celebrities from all walks of life have posted images of themselves in the same pose, trying to spread the word that there's no shame in speaking up about how you feel.

There's an old saying that goes "a problem shared is a problem halved." And there's even science to back it up! Experiments have shown that just talking about our problems can help us calm down and put things into perspective.

Luke's already had messages from people saying that he's saved them. Just remember, he says. It's okay to talk.

15







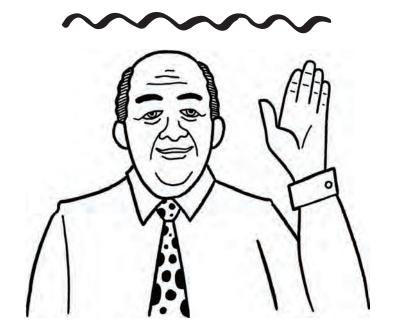
Super and Strange Facts about 12 Almost Famous History Makers

by ALAN KATZ
Illustrated by CHRIS JUDGE

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A NOTE FROM ALAN KATZ



he way I see it, there are three types of heroes.
There's the fictional, cape-wearing, web-shooting kind. Very exciting, but also very not real.

There's the real-life, military, nation-saving type.

Worth saluting, to be sure.

And then there's a giant list of heroic figures that are unknown to most people. Top achievers whose work hasn't been properly celebrated. They're people who've given us important inventions or technological developments we may have taken for granted. I'm absolutely fascinated by folks who have done so much but have generally lived without fanfare. That's why I'm about to give these people the attention and praise they deserve.

Of course, I should also tell you this: when I find out about one of these Awesome Achievers, my mind forms a ton of questions. Questions such as . . .

How did they do what they did?

What would it be like to be them?

How would I have handled the challenges they faced?

Then, I come up with some answers.

I'll tell you about many of these people on the following pages. And I'll share some thoughts about their accomplishments and how they've changed my life.

Warning: some of my thoughts might get pretty outrageous. But, hopefully, you'll find these people and their very real discoveries as fascinating as I do. And, hopefully, you'll laugh along with me.

Enjoy . . . and thanks!

MEET MARY ANDERSON

ow would you feel if I told you that one of the most technological advancements in our lives was something that was invented back in the early 1900s?

It's not computerized. It doesn't make or receive calls, and it won't help you even a little at homework time.

It's...

... the windshield wiper.

That's right; back in 1903, Mary Anderson received a U.S. patent for what she called "a window cleaning device for electric cars and other vehicles to remove snow, ice, or sleet from the window." (The patent was issued to protect her idea from being stolen by others.)

AWESOME ACHIEVERS IN TECHNOLOGY

It all started on a snowy, icy day in New York City. Ms. Anderson was a passenger on a city trolley car, and she noticed that the driver had seeing through the window. In fact, he had to keep sticking his head out of the side window—or get out of the trolley car and clean the snow from the windshield—to see where he was going.

It's said that Ms. Anderson began to sketch an idea right there on the trolley car, conceiving what we now call windshield wipers. Her initial design featured wood and rubber wiper arms attached to a lever near the streetcar's steering wheel. Pulling the lever caused the springloaded arm to drag back and forth across the window, thus clearing any precipitation. And she made the wipers removable, because she reasoned they weren't needed when the bad weather season ended.

Sadly, people laughed at Ms. Anderson's invention; they thought the movement of the wipers would be distracting and would possibly even cause accidents. Besides, since early vehicles didn't travel at today's high speeds, many didn't even have windshields! Ms. Anderson's patent expired in 1920, and as the number of personal cars on the road increased, many companies later copied her idea (once the patent had expired, others were free to create similar products).

Ms. Anderson never succeeded in marketing her

MEET MARY ANDERSON

innovation, which is ironic considering today's cars cannot legally be driven without them.

Reverend Sara-Scott Wingo, Ms. Anderson's greatgreat niece, had this to say: "We're all really proud of her. I have three daughters. We talk about Mary Anderson a lot. And we all sort of feel like we want to be open and receptive to sort of our own Mary Anderson moments."

Mary Anderson moments. Brilliance out of the blue. What a nice thought. Put your thinking cap on and try to have at least one today.

WHO NOSE WHERE GREAT IDEAS COME FROM?

After researching Ms. Anderson's story, I felt very inspired. And that very week, I was riding on a New York City bus (they don't have trolley cars anymore). It was a rainy day, and the bus driver was using her windshield wipers; they were greatly improving her visibility. I nodded to the man sitting across from me, as if to acknowledge that Ms. Anderson's invention was doing a terrific job.

He had apparently never heard of Ms. Anderson, and he didn't nod back. In fact, he sneezed. And I immediately began to sketch an idea right there on the bus. After getting off the bus two miles past my stop (that's how excited I was!), I applied for a U.S. patent for what I called "a nose cleaning device for sloppy people to remove mucus from the face, shirt, and pants."

The woman at the patent office said my invention was nothing to sneeze at. I took offense and told her yes, it was. She said, "No, it's not. 'Nothing to sneeze at' means I think it's a good idea." I said thank you, but she still refused to give me the patent. Here's my design:



AWESOME ACHIEVERS IN TECHNOLOGY

I'm going back to the U.S. patent office with an even smarterer brillianter better idea that will put windshield wiper companies out of business! It's my . . .

Car Umbrella!

To test it, I got the biggest umbrella I could find. My wife drove the car, and I opened the sunroof and stuck the giant umbrella up through it. I opened the umbrella and the car stayed dry for the whole trip! Not a drop of water on the car!

Amazing, right?

Well, it's not *that* amazing. See, it actually wasn't raining that day.



MEET MARY ANDERSON



ON (FFBRUARY) 2ND THOUGHT

I've always known that whenever we set the clocks ahead or back for daylight saving time, it's also a good idea to change the batteries in our home smoke alarms. That's certainly a good way to stay on top of an important task.

But it was only while researching the life of Mary Anderson that I learned that in the United States, February 2 is National Change Your Windshield Wipers Day. Why February 2? It's Groundhog Day, and it's said that whether the groundhog sees his shadow or not, new wipers will properly prepare your car for winter weather or spring showers. (Of course, it's not necessary to wait until February to change your wipers if they get streaky or smeary at other times of the year.)





MEET MARTIN COOPER

hen I was a kid, telephones were wired to the wall; you could walk and talk as far as that wire would allow. And outside of the house, if you needed to make a call, you had to use a pay phone. That meant you needed to have coins to drop into the slot, and often, you had to have patience as well—because the person using that pay phone was gabbing and chatting and blathering and jabbering . . . on and on and on.

Personal cell phones? They were only mentioned in sci-fi conversations.

Martin Cooper changed all that.

An electrical engineer who served in the U.S. Navy

AWESOME ACHIEVERS IN TECHNOLOGY

during the Korean War, Mr. Cooper joined the Motorola Corporation in 1954. There he worked to introduce the first radio-controlled traffic-light system, as well as the first handheld police radios. He also built the first electronic device for enabling a telephone to ring in the car

In the early 1970s, Mr. Cooper led Motorola's team in the development of the DynaTAC phone, a portable cell phone that weighed two-and-a-half pounds and was nine inches tall (the name stood for Dynamic Adaptive Total Area Coverage). The phone was heavy (and gigantic) by today's standards, and its battery only allowed thirty-five minutes of talk time on a charge.

On the day that the DynaTAC was introduced at a New York City press conference, Mr. Cooper made the first public cell phone call ever—to brag about the new phone to Joel Engel, head of a similar project at AT&T, Motorola's chief rival. His immortal words: "I'm calling you from a cell phone . . . a handheld, personal portable cell phone."

The phone stayed in development for another ten years; in 1983, Motorola introduced the more advanced DynaTAC8000X, the first consumer portable cell phone (its price was about \$4,000!).

Since then, Mr. Cooper's breakthrough technology

MEET MARTIN COOPER

has been adapted and improved by many companies. Today's mobile phones are also cameras, video recorders and game machines, with fitness and health technology, calendars, and so much more built in. And, best of all, they're much smaller and weigh considerably less than the DynaTAC.

As for Mr. Cooper, he went on to play an important role in the introduction of Wi-Fi, liquid-crystal displays, and two-way pagers. He is widely considered a visionary leader in wireless technology. Mr. Cooper was quoted as saying, "I'm not that great an engineer, but I'm a very good dreamer . . . the skill is ignoring reality and thinking about what could really be."

Mr. Cooper, thank you for dreaming big. With more than half of the people in the world owning cell phones and using Wi-Fi daily, your dreams have changed lives everywhere.

Wi-Fi is not an abbreviation; it's a made-up term that doesn't actually stand for anything. And by the way, the same is true for Häagen-Dazs (the words don't translate into any language).

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, IT'S HOW FAST YOU SAY IT

The first mobile phone I ever bought weighed a couple of pounds. But it wasn't the heaviness of the phone that upset me, it was the fact that I paid about fifty cents for every sixty seconds I used it (there were no unlimited calling plans then, and you paid that much whether you made or received the call). And even if you spoke for one second over the first sixty, both the caller and the recipient would each be charged another fifty cents.

When I'd call my wife's mobile phone from my mobile phone, we'd always have a speedy conversation. Like this . . .

"Hihowareyou?"

"I'mfinehowareyou?"

"I'mfinetoo. Whatdoyouwantfordinner?"

"Ziti." (It took too long to say "spaghetti.")

"Metoobye. I'llseeyoulater."

"Okaygreat. Bye."

Yes, we'd pay a total of one dollar for that conversation. Which, when you think about it, is probably more than the ziti cost us.

CONNECTION CORRECTION

Cell phones can be important when you need a ride or when you need to find out on which field the soccer game is being played. But they can also be annoying . . . which was the case with the call I recently got from Jessie:

Jessie: Hi, this is Jessie. Can I talk to Jordan?

Me: May I talk to Jordan?

Jessie: I'm sorry. *May* I talk to Jordan? I heard he wasn't feeling good.

Me: You heard he wasn't feeling well.

Jessie: I'm sorry. May I talk to Jordan? I heard he wasn't feeling well, and Sue and me want to see how he's doing.

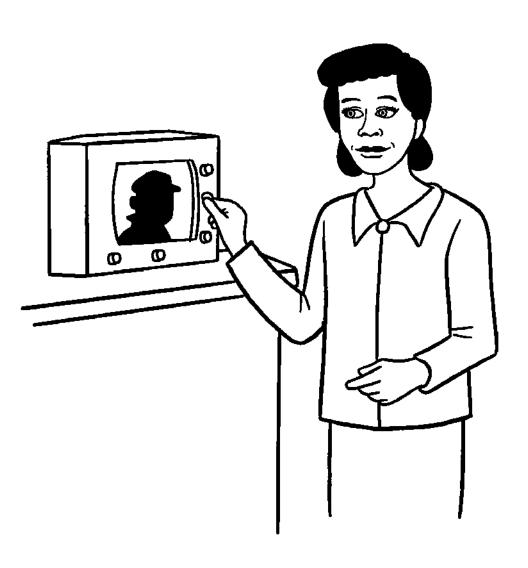
Me: Sue and I.

Jessie: I'm sorry. May I talk to Jordan? I heard he wasn't feeling well, and Sue and I want to see how he's doing. I hope he's better then yesterday.

Me: Better than yesterday.

Jessie: I'm sorry. May I talk to Jordan? I heard he wasn't feeling well, and Sue and I want to see how he's doing. I hope he's better than yesterday.

Me: Very well said. But . . . there's no Jordan here. You've got the wrong number. Good-bye.



MEET MARIE VAN BRITTAN BROWN

I t was 1966. Nurse Marie Van Brittan Brown lived in Jamaica, New York, with her husband, Albert, who was an electronics technician. Because Mr. Brown worked during the day and Ms. Brown worked at night, she worried about her personal safety, and she always wanted to know who was at her door when she was home alone.

Not satisfied with the traditional front door peephole, Ms. Brown—who was not an inventor at that point—conceived the first home security system. Albert's knowledge of electronics came into play and here's what they devised:

Multiple peepholes were drilled into the front door. A

AWESOME ACHIEVERS IN TECHNOLOGY

cabinet was affixed to the inside of the door, and in the cabinet was a camera that could be moved up and down remotely to scan the peepholes and send a video image of the visitor to a monitor in the bedroom (the camera moved up to get a look at tall visitors, and down to look at shorter people).

So, in the comfort and security of her bedroom, Ms. Brown could see who was at her front door. The bedroom technology also included a two-way microphone and speaker so that Ms. Brown could communicate with the person at the door, and featured buttons so that she could remotely lock the door or sound an alarm.

Three years later, Ms. Brown and her husband received a patent for her ingenious device, then called a "Home Security System Utilizing Television Surveillance."

What Ms. Brown had invented was a means of feeling secure at home. But in doing so, she actually pioneered the use of closed-circuit television—with an audiovisual signal sent to a specific monitor (as opposed to broadcast TV, which offers pictures and images that millions could receive and watch at once).

This provided the foundation for security camera systems now used to monitor visitors to countless airports, banks, and shops. And of course, though more modern in shape, form, and functionality, they're still

MEET MARIE VAN BRITTAN BROWN

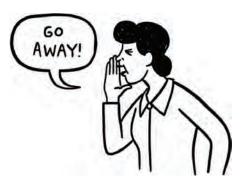
widely used in homes and apartments around the globe. Today, with iPhone and iPad technology plus an additional device, you can see who's at your front door and communicate with that person even if you're *not* at home. And though you may not have to stand behind a closed door and ask, "Who's there?," now you know who was there *first*... Marie Van Brittan Brown.

THE JOKE'S ON YOU

Though I'm sure Ms. Brown had a good sense of humor, I'd also bet she didn't enjoy hearing knock-knock jokes. I'd imagine if you'd tried to tell her one, it'd go something like this . . .

You: Knock, knock.

Ms. Brown: I already *know* who's there. I can see you on the monitor in my bedroom. Please go tell that joke to someone else!



A CLOSED CIRCUIT SENSATION

When my daughter was a little girl, I'd take her grocery shopping every Saturday morning. As we entered the market, she'd see herself on the monitor and we'd have to stop for a few minutes so that she could "do a show."

I'd say, "Live, from Peter's Market . . . it's the Simone Show!"

She'd sing. She'd wiggle out of the shopping cart and dance. She'd do magic tricks, such as making our shopping list disappear by crumpling it up and throwing it off camera.

People would walk by and tell me how cute she was (even if she was blocking the entrance). I'd tell them thank you, but she'd let them know that they couldn't see her in person—they had to watch her "show" on the TV monitor.

Her weekly performances were adorable, and frankly, they were much better than most of the shows currently on TV.

Stay tuned. Simone will be right back. And be sure to catch the special sale on onions in the produce aisle!



GREATNESS CONTINUES ...

Mr. and Ms. Brown had two daughters, one of whom (Norma) became a nurse and an inventor. She also specialized in the area of personal well-being.

I'm sure that in the case of her daughter Norma, Ms. Brown was very pleased that her daughter followed in her footsteps as a nurse and inventor.

I'm very hopeful that someday, one of my kids will follow in my footsteps and replace me . . . as the best author on earth.



IMPORTANT TIP

If you have a security camera, and you notice there's someone at your front door who you don't want to see, just remain silent. Because if you yell, "There's nobody home!" that might give them the idea that there *is* somebody home.

Tusk www.tusk.org

Louise McNaught
Text by Anna Claybourne



Louise McNaught

Text by Anna Claybourne



I would like to dedicate this book to my husband and soulmate, Rob, my amazing daughter, Autumn, my wonderfully supportive parents and my brother, Pete—LM



To find out more about Tusk and the wildlife projects they support, visit www.tusk.org

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Running Press Kids
Hachette Book Group

1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10104 www.runningpress.com/rpkids

@RP_Kids

Printed in China

Originally published in hardcover September 2018 by Big Picture Press in the UK

First Running Press Hardcover Edition: August 2019

Published by Running Press Kids, an imprint of Perseus Books, LLC, a subsidiary of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

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This book features original artwork by Louise McNaught created under the following names: Page 8 Burned too Bright; 10 Unforgettable; 12 Fragmented Freedom; 14 Bananas; 16 True Blue;

18 From the Ashes; 20 Man of the Forest; 22 Born Slippy; 24 One Last Look; 26 Before Religion II;

28 Pandaemonium; 30 In the Red; 32 The Luzon Peacock Butterfly; 34 Paradise Lost; 36 Exhale;

38 Shellshocked; 40 Circle of Love; 42 FIN; 44 God's Last Lovesong; 46 Falling For You

Map image vectorEps/Shutterstock.com

Made with paper from a sustainable forest

Consulted by Dr. Philip Wheeler

Edited by Carly Blake

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Print book cover and interior design by Adam Allori.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019930178

ISBNs: 978-0-7624-9637-2 (hardcover), 978-0-7624-9639-6 (ebook),

978-0-7624-9641-9 (ebook), 978-0-7624-9640-2 (ebook), 978-0-7624-9638-9 (ebook)

LSC-C [insert different printer if not at LSC-C]

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The publisher would like to thank Tusk, in particular Dan Bucknell and Charlie Mayhew, for their valuable contribution to this book.

Publisher's Note: Conservation statuses and population information is taken from the last available assessment information on the IUCN Red List™ (www.iucnrdlist.org) at the time of publication.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

"I became drawn to endangered species because I was feeling more and more strongly that I wanted to highlight the issue of conservation."

Louise has been illustrating animals for as long as she can remember. She completed a degree in Fine Art at the University of Greenwich in 2012, and she has continued to work as a professional artist ever since, exhibiting both at home in the UK and internationally. In 2016, Louise had her first solo show focusing on endangered species, called "Survival," at the George Thornton Gallery in Nottingham. Some of the art from that show features in this book.



When Louise depicts these beautiful creatures that we are in danger of losing forever, her aim is to draw the viewer's attention to the animals' presence and energy. She paints by hand in high detail, creating each hair with a brush stroke. Louise sets each animal against a brightly colored background to create a vivid contrast, bringing the creature into sharp focus. The upward drips and fading color of the animals hint at the delicate balance between nature and humans.

"Nature always has, and will forever be, my inspiration, and I hope my art inspires people to protect it before its too late."—Louise McNaught

To find out more about the artist, visit www.louisemcnaught.com

FOREWORD FROM TUSK



The world is experiencing an extinction crisis. We are losing species between 1,000 and 10,000 times faster than the natural extinction rate, caused almost entirely by human activity.

the greatest threat to wildlife, and is the number one cause of decline for 85 percent of threatened species. This will only worsen as the human population continues to grow and consume ever more natural resources. Tusk works in Africa, where the human population is set to double by 2050 and quadruple by the end of the century—the fastest population growth in the world. Finding space for both people and wildlife to coexist is the ultimate conservation challenge, not just for Africa, but the world over.

It may not grab the headlines in the way poaching does, but habitat loss remains

All is not lost, at least not yet. All the amazing, unique and incredibly special animals featured in this book are still with us. Some had been predicted to have gone extinct already, but still they cling on. Tusk has been involved in countless conservation successes through our partners and projects in Africa, and we know that animals can be pulled back from the brink of extinction if there is enough support to do so. We have seen it before with the black rhino, which features in this book as its numbers plummet again.

We all have a fantastic opportunity to do more for wildlife right now. We must not leave it too late: extinction is forever.

Charlie Mayhew, MBE Co-Founder and Chief Executive of Tusk

About Tusk

Tusk is a charity set up in 1990 to help protect African wildlife, including the African elephant, black rhino, and mountain gorilla.

organizations make an even greater difference, and supports more than 60 field projects in over 20 African countries. It not only works to protect wildlife, but also helps reduce poverty through sustainable development.

HRH the Duke of Cambridge became the charity's Royal Patron in 2005 and has been a proactive supporter ever since.



THE STORY OF CONSERVATION

Earth is home to millions of species of living things, that can be found in every kind of habitat, from scorching deserts to freezing polar lands. New species are being discovered every day, but, sadly, many are being lost, too, as a result of human activity.

BIODIVERSITY

The huge variety of life, including animals, plants, fungi, and bacteria, is known as biodiversity. Biodiversity is important because every single species, or type, of living thing, is connected to many others through different food chains. So. when species die out, or become extinct, their ecosystems—habitats and all the living things found there—become unbalanced and can be damaged.

Like all species, humans rely on the world's ecosystems being healthy. A balanced soil ecosystem means crops can grow, and a thriving ocean ecosystem means there are plenty of fish to catch.

Conservation is the practice of caring for living things and ecosystems, in order to protect life on Earth now and in the future.

HUMANIMPACT

Humans have only existed for a relatively short part of Earth's history—around 200,000 years, but in that

1800s

time we have had a huge impact. Our success at hunting, farming, mining, building, and expanding the human population has changed vast areas of our planet. Wild land has been made into farmland, cities, and roads; factories, vehicles, and waste have created pollution that has harmed ecosystems; and over-hunting, over-fishing, and habitat destruction has caused many species to go extinct.

THE MODERN CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

In the 1800s, growth in industry and the rapidly rising human population made these problems

worse, and people soon began to realize that they should try to protect ecosystems and species for future generations. This was the start of the modern conservation movement, which has been growing ever since.



CONSERVATION STATUS

Founded in 1964, the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species[™] has become the world's most comprehensive information source on the conservation status of species. Each species is allocated a status, according to its population and how likely it is to die out.

Find out more at www.iucnredlist.org

EXTINCT LEAST THREATENED CONCERN No known individuals Lowest risk

EXTINCT IN THE WILD CRITICALLY ENDANGERED Known only to survive **ENDANGERED** High risk of in captivity, or as an Extremely high extinction in introduced population risk of extinction the wild

in the wild

VULNERABLE High risk of endangerment in the wild

NEAR THREATENED Likely to become endangered in the near future

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

With more and more awareness of wildlife conservation, there are many ways we are helping animals. Around the world, conservation operates on many levels, using a combination of laws, scientific studies, education, protected areas, and breeding programs.

In the Arctic Circle, education on climate change and how it affects polar bears is helping to encourage people to support conservation and live in more environmentally friendly ways.

ECOTOURISM Responsible tourism

driven by wildlife, such as whale watching off Northwestern USA, encourages countries to preserve species and wild areas.

> **PROTECTED AREAS** National parks and nature reserves provide safe, wild areas of habitat for species. The Rana Terribilis Reserve in Colombia is helping to protect the golden poison frog.

REWILDING Campaigns in Europe encourage people to keep gardens wild and bee-friendly.

LAWS Governments in Africa have agreed international laws to ban trade in endangered species.

outside its original range

CAPTIVE BREEDING **PROGRAMS**

Breeding species, such as pandas, in zoos and reserves can help increase their numbers and rebuild wild populations.

REDUCING CONFLICT

farmers grow as mint.

People are striving to live alongside animals with less conflict. In India, crops elephants don't like, such

due to

Extinction of the dodo, hunting and ecosystem changes

Writers and politicians

The Industrial Revolution debate leads to an conservation increase in pollution and habitat loss

1820s World's first nature reserve at Walton Hall,

1850s Extinction of the great auk due to hunting and egg

collecting

1851 American writer and naturalist Henry Thoreau argues for conservation

of wilderness

World's first national park opens at Yellowstone, USA

1883 Extinction quagga due to hunting

Many cities are badly affected by pollution from burning

founded

3 billion

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

founded damage

Rachel Carson's book Silent Spring raises awareness of caused by pollution

1970s Extinction Caspian tiger due to habitat loss and hunting

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of global established

The influencial Stern Review describes the effects

7 billion

2018

Last male

northern



Aa LATIN NAME Panthera tigris altaica

EN STATUS Endang

POPULATION Around 500, stable

SIZE 8–10 ft from head to tail

HABITAT Temperate, often snowy forests

Eastern Russia, with pockets in China and

SIBERIAN TIGER

The world's biggest cat, the Siberian or Amur tiger is one of five surviving tiger subspecies. It lives the furthest north, mainly in eastern Russia, and it's well-adapted to this region's snowy forests, with large paws and thick fur. The Siberian tiger was hunted heavily for its fur and body parts such as bones and teeth in the early 1900s, and human conflict in their range during the Russian Civil War (1917–1922) also saw the loss of many tigers. By the 1940s, there were fewer than 50 left. In 1947, the former Soviet government stepped in and banned tiger hunting, becoming the first country to do so. Today, large-scale logging threatens to destroy tiger territories, which can be up to 186 sq miles each (three times the size of Paris).

Thanks to a program of careful monitoring of tiger numbers and guarding against poaching, the Siberian tiger—though still rare and listed as Endangered—has come back from the brink of extinction, with a stable population of around 500 as of the last census (population count) in 2010.





LATIN NAME Elephas maximus

STATUS

POPULATION Around 50,000, decreasing

SIZE

Up to 12 ft tall; up to 21 ft in length (including trunk)

Forests, scrubland, and grassland

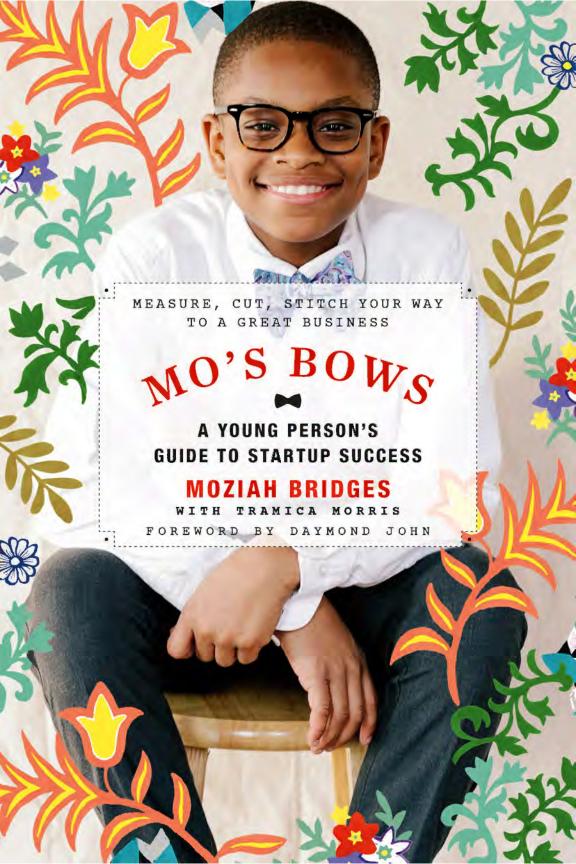
Parts of Asia, from India

ASIAN

Smaller than their African cousin, this species once roamed across much of Asia, with an estimated population of 100,000 in the early 1900s. Since then, numbers have dropped by half, with the biggest cause being habitat loss, as towns and farmland have replaced and broken up its forest home. With elephants and humans living so close, there is competition for food and space. Elephants increasingly raid crops, which farmers rely on for their livelihoods, and sometimes cause harm to people, resulting in human retaliation. Although a smaller problem in Asia than in Africa, illegal poaching for ivory, to be carved into ornaments, is still a threat to males.

Linking wild habitat areas with "wildlife corridors" and managing humanelephant conflict are key to helping this species. Planting crops that elephants dislike, such as mint, can help locals protect farmland. An international ban on the sale of ivory went into force in 1989, and more recently, conservation projects have supported a bigger number of local patrols to enforce anti-hunting laws.





MO'S BOWS

A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO STARTUP SUCCESS

MEASURE, CUT, STITCH YOUR WAY
TO A GREAT BUSINESS

BY MOZIAH BRIDGES

FOREWORD BY DAYMOND JOHN



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FOREWORD BY DAYMOND JOHN

he first time I met Mo Bridges, he was eleven years old. It was 2013, and from the second he walked onto *Shark* Tank to pitch his company, Mo's Bows, I knew Mo was unique. Mo was smart and well spoken; I could tell he had a purpose. Even at eleven, he understood his business better than adults who have pitched me for years. (Just don't let them know that.) I saw the passion he had for his work and was impressed by his commitment. In the Tank, Mo was offered a deal by none other than Kevin O'Leary, a.k.a. Mr. Wonderful (and for anyone who has seen the show, you know Kevin's offers aren't always wonderful). I advised Mo not to take the deal. I could see he was on the brink of growing Mo's Bows into something huge. If he accepted the money from Kevin, he'd also have to pay him a royalty from every bow tie sold (typical O'Leary offer!). I wanted to help Mo grow his business in a way that kept him in control of the company and its profits. I wanted to offer him guidance I didn't have when I was starting out. As I told him right then on Shark Tank: the mentoring I could offer was more valuable than just taking the money.

Mo reminds me of myself in many ways, with his innovation, his determination, and, gotta say it, his style. But I'm most impressed by Mo's hustle. He got himself on *Shark Tank* at a young age and didn't let surprises stop him from achieving his dream. Mo's success proves that you can find the resources to start a company at any age, even as a kid. You just have to know where to look. For Mo, that meant reaching out to his mom and grandmother. His mom helped promote Mo's Bows on Facebook and drove Mo to trunk shows in the early days of his business. His grandmother helped him make his first two thousand ties by hand, right in their kitchen. Making it a family effort didn't make it any less Mo's business. Asking for help when he needed it—and, better still, recognizing a smart collaboration when it was in front of him—was another necessary step.

It takes time for most to realize there's more to building a business than being a friendly person or a sharp dresser. You need the drive to succeed. I always say that entrepreneurs aren't visionaries, but at the same time they don't hesitate to do whatever it takes to make their idea a reality. That is exactly what Mo did, and today he is running his own company. Being an entrepreneur isn't like any other job, because you're never really "done." The moment you complete a project, it's on to the next thing. Great CEOs can think about multiple steps at the same time. The best CEOs are always growing, always finding new ways to create and reach new consumers. That's why when you're young, it's important to get yourself moving early.

Even today, I see more of myself in Mo. He's hardworking, he's dedicated, and he loves the work that he does. His success is no accident. Young entrepreneurs can learn from Mo's experiences, and I'm pleased to say that I have as well. He's an inspiration for the next generation of creators—a true force for change. Mo sets goals for himself that he finds ways to exceed. I can't

think of any other entrepreneur his age that has been honored by the White House, has deals in place with the National Basketball Association (NBA), and whose book is in your hands right now. From his earliest days in business, Mo understood his customers, and he continues inventing ways to keep them coming back to Mo's Bows. He has a knack for **sales**, and plenty of flair, and he has the product to back it up.

Listen to Mo's story. Learn his experiences. If you're an aspiring entrepreneur, don't let your age make you feel like your dreams are out of reach. As you're about to read, Mo was lucky to find success at a young age, but he worked hard for it, too. It's never too early to find confidence in yourself and to start building your empire. Start out early like Mo did, and soon you'll develop your own strategies for success.

I'm honored I've had the opportunity to mentor such a bright, skilled, and creative young man, and I can't wait to see what Mo does next.

Daymond John New York City 2018



HANDCRAFTED

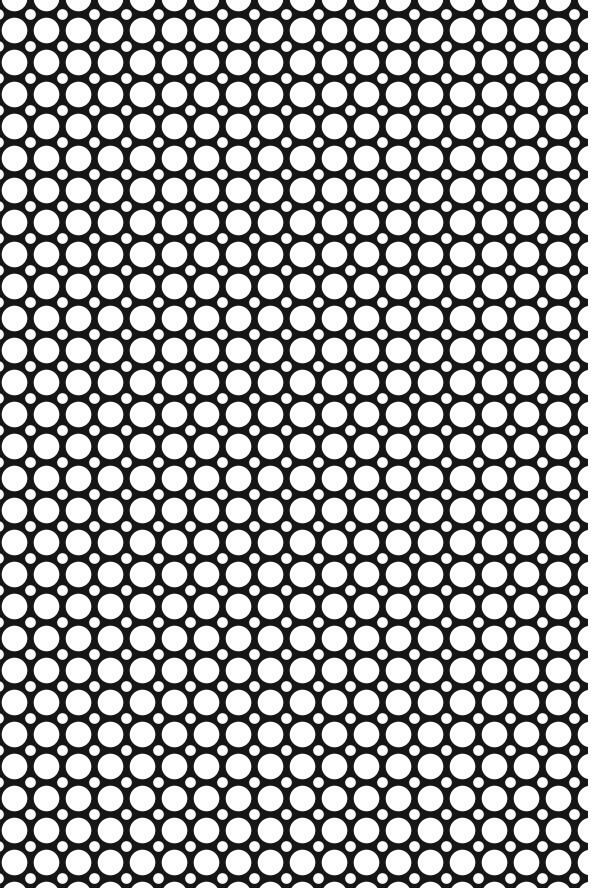
MO'S BOWS

BOW TIES



EST. 2011

A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE
TO START-UP SUCCESS



CHAPTER

1

START TODAY!



ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS THE PURSUIT OF OPPORTUNITY WITHOUT REGARD TO RESOURCES CURRENTLY CONTROLLED.

-PROFESSOR HOWARD STEVENSON, HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

ello there, young **entrepreneur**! I'm going to call you that a lot because that's how I see you, and soon you will see yourself as that, too. What I need to tell you right now will change your future and put you on a path that everyone wants but few are willing to work for. We all come from different places and different backgrounds. But if you look at successful inventors and entrepreneurs, what's the only thing they have in common? They were all kids once, just like us. And they all had a dream, just like we do.

Do you have an idea for a business, an app, or a **service**? Are you always thinking of inventions that you wish were in the world already? Then this book will hopefully help you by being a step-by-step guide on how to turn those dreams into reality.

I am fired up and ready to share with you the secrets of business that took me a long time to learn. In fact, this is the book that I wish I had read before I became an entrepreneur. When I started my company, Mo's Bows, in 2011, there were no real resources for young entrepreneurs on the market, and it seemed like every time I thought I got somewhere, I had to start all over. But lucky for you, we have each other. And I'm here to help give you the tools you need to start *your* business and to help it thrive.

. .

Maybe you're asking yourself, *Why should I listen to some kid?* Who is this guy anyway to give me advice? Let me give you a little bit of backstory, so you know more about who I am and what advice I have to offer you.

Eight years ago I started a small bow tie business—Mo's Bows—with the help of my mom and granny. One day I was out trying to sell my product, one bow tie at a time, and suddenly the next day I found myself sending hundreds of bow ties to places like Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's, Cole Haan, and the Home Shopping Network. Today, I continue to partner with major companies that believe in my work and vision (organizations like the NBA and St. Jude's Children's Hospital, to name two).

Between being a creative director, acting as the face of my own fashion brand, and traveling around the world meeting new people, I've learned so many skills that have made me a successful kidpreneur—skills like great communication, creativity, and having the desire to help others by giving back to the community. The lessons I learned early in my career were so powerful that even at eleven years old, I blew away some of the biggest names in business when I appeared on the hit ABC TV show *Shark Tank*. I have grown and learned even more since then, and I can't wait to tell you all about it so that when you are on *Shark Tank* someday, pitching your business to a panel of successful businesspeople, you will be even better prepared than I was.

Long before *Shark Tank*, though, Mo's Bows did have a small customer base that followed me on social media. And people started contacting me with orders from all over the world as they heard about what I had to offer through the Internet and by word of mouth. Over the years, business writers have also wanted to feature Mo's Bows in the *New York Times*, *Forbes*, and *O: The Oprah Magazine*.

Writers and interviewers always asked me a similar question when I first started Mo's Bows: "What's the secret? What do you know at ten that most adults haven't even figured out?"

The short answer is that everything you need in order to succeed already exists inside of you. Your talent, your passion, and your determination are the biggest keys to your success.

The long answer is everything we will talk about in this book. These are the tools you can use in order to succeed.

I want to share with you my business secrets, because I know that success breeds success. People will tell you that you're just a kid and that starting a business is super hard. But I'm also a kid. And when I started my business, I could never have dreamed of where I would be today. If I could go back in time and tell my younger self all the bright things in my future, even little Mo

wouldn't believe it (after he got over the whole time-travel thing, of course). He would probably fall over in shock hearing future Mo say, "A year from today one of your ties will be on display in the Tennessee State Museum, but you'll be too busy getting to work the red carpet as a fashion correspondent for the NBA Draft to fully appreciate it."

Unfortunately, I don't have a time machine (yet). But if that changes, I would absolutely go back in time and give myself this book. That's because I used the secrets I have outlined here, and I was able to start from nothing, turning a small idea for a bow tie business into an international brand with a very loyal Instagram following as well. I've had the chance to travel to the White House and meet President Barack Obama, giving him a special satin royal-blue bow tie called the "Obama Blue Bow Tie." I've gotten to go on several TV shows, like *The Steve Harvey Show*, *Wonderama*, and Good Morning America. I was also featured in O: The Oprah Magazine and was twice on Time's list of "30 Most Influential Teens." This year I was asked to share my story onstage in front of more than five thousand people at the CUNA Government Affairs Conference. That was my biggest crowd so far, and after leaving the stage I was even able to meet and talk with former president George W. Bush, who was speaking after me.

These days, I travel around the world selling bow ties and sharing my story with young and old entrepreneurs—and with parents and children. I like to share my story and encourage others—especially young people—to dream big and not to wait until they get older to figure out what they want to do. As a young person, you have to strike while the iron is hot, and so if creating your own business is what you want to do now, I say, "Start today!"





Whether you're fifteen or fifty-five, you can pick up this book today and start building the future that you want for yourself. Yes, I mean you! You can have an exhibit dedicated to you in your home state or see your face in magazines, even though you have no formal training in business.

In the following pages, I'm going to show you how to pursue your dreams and to reach your goals in business. It's my promise to you—kid to kid.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The hardest part in business is figuring out how to take a good idea you have and make it even better. Through a lot of trial and error, I have come up with a system that will help you start with nothing and chase your dreams, making them a reality. I call my system Measure—Cut—Stitch. Whether you're making a bow tie or creating a new app, you can learn the process right away, but only if you measure out what you need, cut it into parts, and then stitch it together. For that reason, this book is divided into three parts to help explain how to get your business up and running: "Measure," "Cut," and "Stitch."

To begin, in "Measure" I'm going to tell you a little bit about how I first got started with my business. I will show you how I was able to get my business going from zero dollars to making a profit. In this first part you will find ways to get hold of the resources you need to get your business ideas out of your head and into the hands of your first customers.

Being able to spot opportunities for your business will make your career as an entrepreneur flourish from day 1. The advice and tips I provide in "Measure" will tell you how to get your business off the ground starting today by helping you find *free* resources. Anybody anywhere, with little or no money, can start a business, take stock in what resources they have available, and start building upon existing dreams. You just need to measure out your goals or reasons for wanting to start a business. I'll also help you to measure the time it will take you to meet your goals and to also assess what you want your life to look like once you have succeeded in starting your very own business.

"Cut" is the next part, and in it I will help you to get your business in motion. Making decisions and planning ahead and then evaluating the success of what you are doing are all an important part of this process. This section will help you to break down what kind of business you want to start based on the things you like or are passionate about.

Finally, "Stitch" offers tips and advice on how to put everything together. I'm going to show you everything I know and how I learned it. And in the end, you are going to put it all together so you can get your first **venture** off the ground.



When I started Mo's Bows, I didn't really have the tools that I now use to run my business. Even worse, I thought I could never get started unless I had everything in place at the very start. A lot of people have an idea for a business or an app or a service, but they never see it realized because they don't know where to start. Every business needs tools to get going; just as a builder uses tools to construct a house, you will need tools to build your business. So I'm going to give you a tool for free right now.

All you have to do is remember the following: Mo's **BOWS** of **Business**.

Whatever challenge you're facing today—in school, life, or business—you can improve your position by checking in with the following BOWS:

BELIEVE in yourself

OPPORTUNITIES—find ways to give back

WORK hard

SUPPORT from friends and family

We'll come back to Mo's BOWS of Business again and again throughout the book, so don't worry about remembering them right now. You'll be an expert by book's end.

So, without any more delay, let's get going!