

McFeeglebee's Pond

by Carol Moore

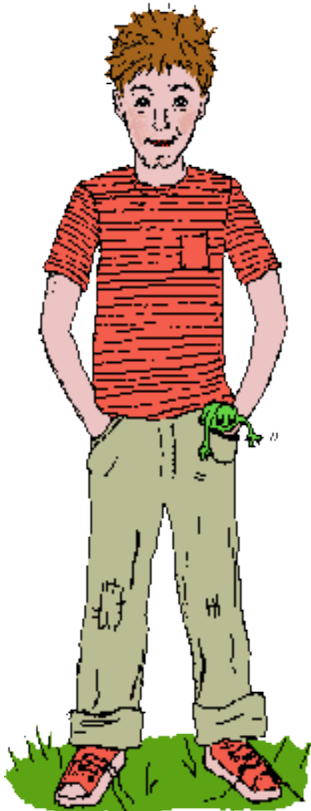


Out behind the big red barn at the edge of the walnut grove is a most magnificent pond shaded by an old oak tree. I'll tell you right now, before it's too late. It belongs to McFeeglebee.



And McFeelebee absolutely forbids fishing in that pond. He's put up five signs to prove it. "Before I'll allow any little boys to fish in there," he says, "I'd rather remove it."

"Little boys make too much noise. They'd scare the fish, being shouters and laughers and slappers. They'd muddy the water, and leave gum wrappers. No -- I'd be a fool to let them fish in my pool."



So for a long time nobody dared to fish in that pool. That is, not until little Georgie P. Johnson decided to break the rule. "I'm gonna fish there," he said, "under the oak, where it's cool."

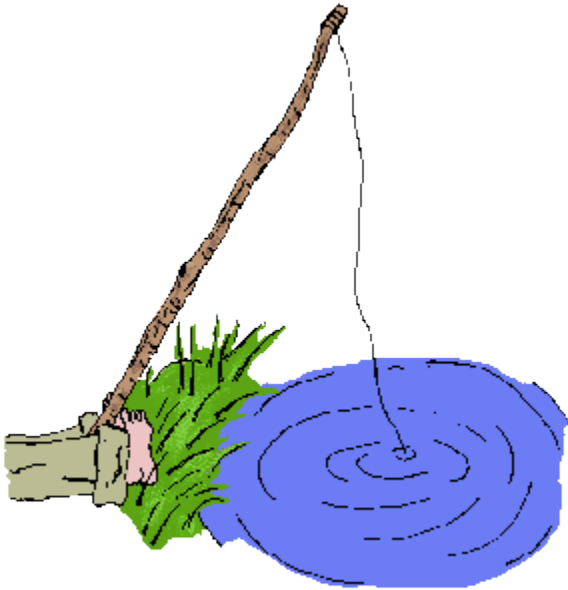
"I'm gonna lie down with my knees in the air and the pole through my toes and doze like a lazy catfish in summer. Nobody will catch me. I'm a fast runner."

Everyone warned him. "A pool is not the sea.

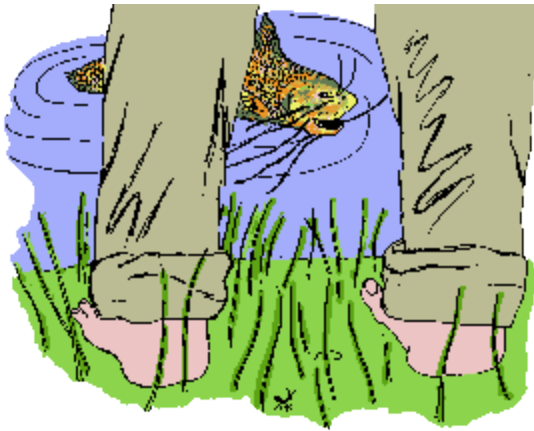
You can't fish for free, it's stealing. Besides, there are all

sorts of surprises in McFeelebee's pond. Nobody knows just what is in there besides fish and old shoes and the things people lose. You'll catch something dangerous so you'd better beware. Fish in that pond? I wouldn't dare!"

But little Georgie P. Johnson just wiggled his nose and pretended not to hear, as if he had molasses stuck in his ear. Of fishing he was very fond, why should he fear McFeelebee's pond?



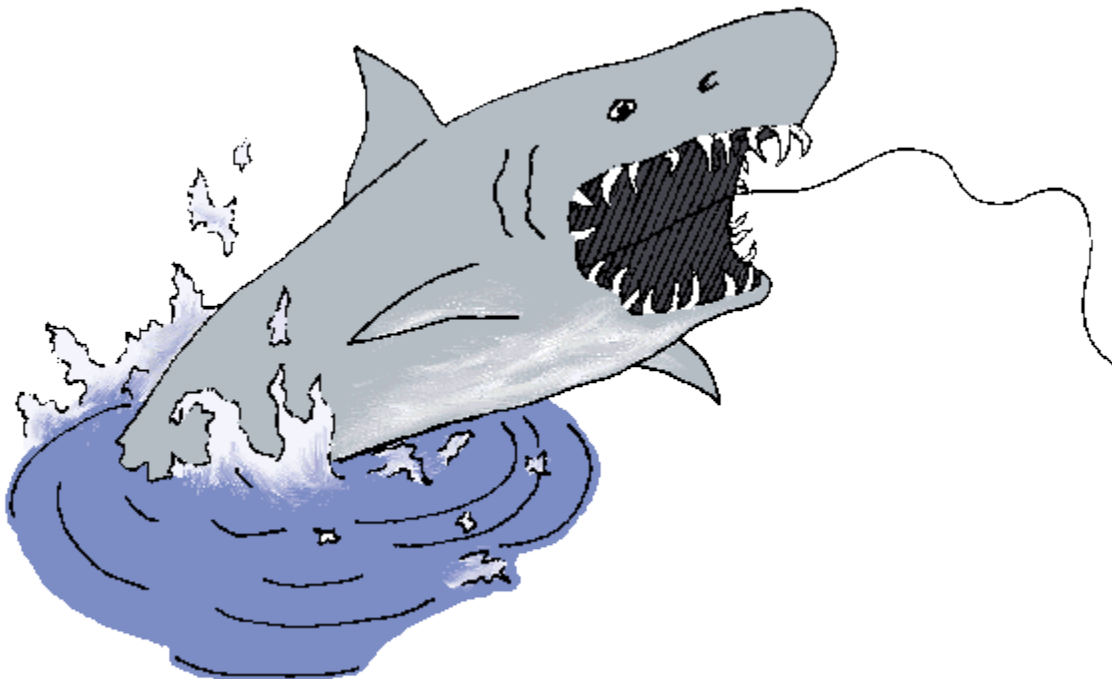
So early one morning with his pole in his hand, he crept past the red barn on McFeelebee's land out to the edge of the grove to the pond, where he baited his hook, sinking it deep. Then Georgie P. Johnson fell asleep.



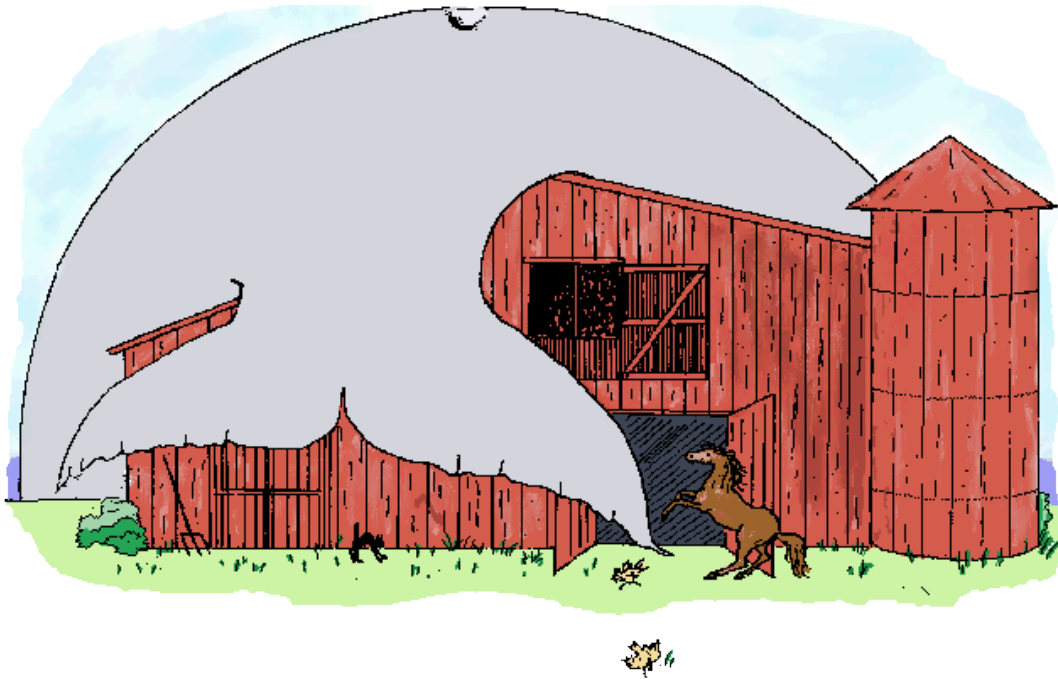
All of a sudden with a bob and a jerk, the fishing line woke him. Grabbing the pole and holding on tight he used every muscle to fight what was without doubt the biggest of trout.

He pulled ten minutes before seeing that what he had caught was not a trout, but a huge grisly catfish. How could he have been so wrong? Its whiskers alone were a foot long!

He dug in his heels, held on even tighter; nobody could say he wasn't a fighter. The water seething and boiling, turned bright red then dark as that grisly catfish became a shark.



A shark twenty feet long with a mouth like a barrel and teeth that could bite. That was a sight! But with a splash of its tail it turned into a whale.



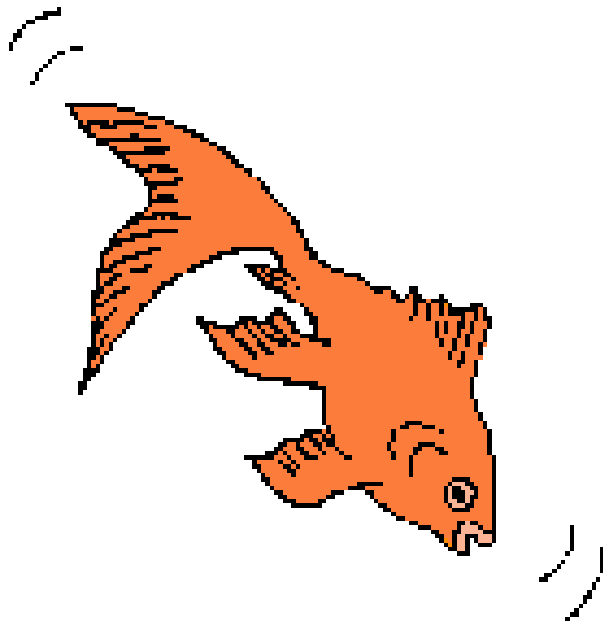
Now a whale in McFeeglebee's pond, that's really something! As big as three houses with breath like a gale, it looked rather hungry which made Georgie pale.



When the question becomes who's catching who, little Georgie knew what to do. It's silly to fish when fishing's no fun, so he dropped his pole and started to run.



**But it was too late. That whale became a sea dragon.
It slosed out of that pond with its slimy scales,
reaching for Georgie with crooked nails.**

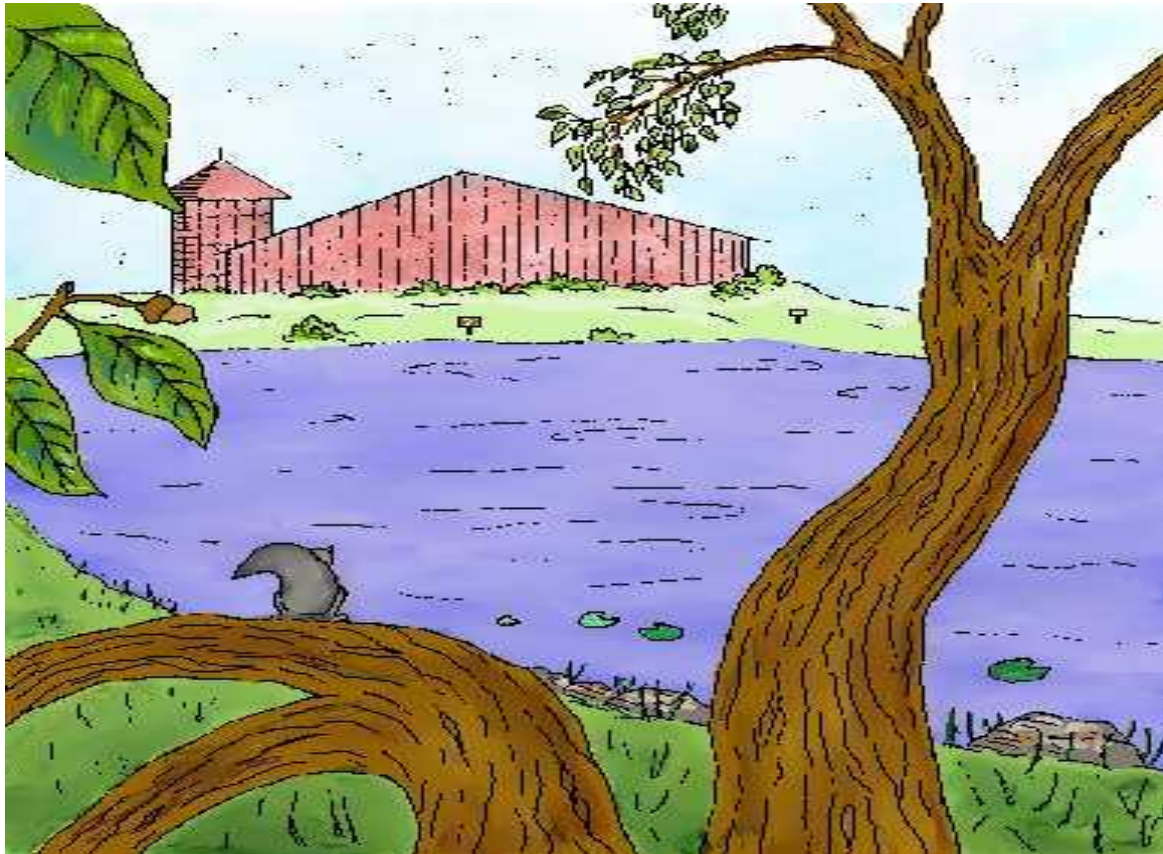


Now he wished he'd taken his friends' advice. At any price it was better than this. Just as the dragon was about to sup, little Georgie P. Johnson woke up.

It was after all only a dream though there was a fish on his line. But catching it was a cinch. It was only a goldfish, barely an inch.

And after that dream it hardly seemed worth it. So releasing the hook he threw it back where it belonged, in McFeelebee's pond.

Now when friends ask him what happened out there, he wiggles his nose and gives them a stare. "Of fishing I'm particularly fond. But there's just too many surprises in McFeelebee's pond."



Out behind the big red barn at the edge of the walnut grove is a most magnificent pond shaded by an old oak tree. I'll remind you right now, before it's too late. It belongs to McFeelebee.

Mr. Coyote Meets Mr. Snail

by Storie-Jean Agapith

Dedication: This story is dedicated to my wonderful son, Leon W. Weed, 1971-1997; he was my inspiration for telling stories. I will always love my beloved and only child, and with each story I will have wonderful memories of when I told them to him.

Illustrated by Michael S. Weber



Mr. Coyote was getting very old and had to be more careful for his own safety. He had been walking for hours and hours through a beautiful valley when he came upon a large tree. Mr. Coyote was very tired and wanted to rest but he also needed to be safe. He kindly asked the tree, "Please open up so I can rest safely in your care".



The tree opened up so that Mr. Coyote could go inside to rest, then it closed to keep him safe. Mr. Coyote slept for hours. When he woke up he could not remember what he had said to make the tree open. He said, "Let me out Mr. Tree", but nothing happened. He said, "Please let me out now!" and again nothing happened. The tree didn't even creak. Mr. Coyote knocked on the tree, but it would not open up. Mr. Tree was upset with Mr. Coyote for not having said *please* the first time he spoke to the tree! It let him rest a little longer.

Because the birds heard Mr. Coyote banging on the inside of the tree, they came down to peck on the tree to help get him out. But they were too small and the tree was just too big! Finally Mr. Woodpecker came down and pecked a hole in the tree. Although it was a very small hole, it caused Mr. Woodpecker to get a bent beak! This meant he couldn't peck on the tree any more.

Mr. Coyote put one hand out the hole but he could not fit through. He then tried his leg but still he could not fit through. He had to come up with a way to escape since Mr. Woodpecker's beak was now bent. Mr. Coyote knew there had to be a way. "Ah, come on you old ugly tree," he cried, "Just let me out!" But still nothing happened, just the silence around him.



Mr. Coyote decided to take off his arms one at a time and put them through the small hole. He then put his legs through one at a time by taking them off. He put his body through by taking it off. This was working out fine. I'll show you Mr. Tree, you can't keep me in here, he thought.

Next Mr. Coyote tried to put his head through the hole, but it was too big. His ears were in the way. So he took off his ears and put them through the hole. He again tried his head, but his eyes were too big. Mr. Coyote took his eyes off and put them through the hole.



Mr. Raven saw the eyes and flew down to take them. Then Mr. Raven flew back up high in the tree with Mr. Coyote's eyes. They were such beautiful eyes, blue like the sky, and would be a treasure to put in his hiding spot!

Mr. Coyote finally put his head through the hole. He then put himself back together. One piece at a time he became a whole coyote again. But after he put his head on he could not find his eyes. He was feeling all over. His ears were listening to hear him touch his eyes, but not a sound could be heard from his eyes. His fingers were being careful while feeling around, but still no eyes were found.

Mr. Coyote knew he could not let the animals know he was blind. He felt his way to a wild rose bush; he then put two rose petals in for his eyes. This would cover the blindness for a little while, but he would have to keep looking for his eyes. Surely they were close by!



Along came Mr. Snail who saw Mr. Coyote with the rose petals in his eyes. He asked Mr. Coyote, "Why do you have those rose petals in your eyes?"

Mr. Coyote said, "Because they are very beautiful. They have lovely colors. You can try them if you want and I will hold your eyes."

Mr. Snail took off his eyes. He put them into Mr. Coyote's hands and tried the rose petals in his eyes. Then Mr. Coyote put Mr. Snail's eyes into his head and ran off with his long tail wagging.



To this day Mr. Snail is crawling with his head down looking for his eyes. And all coyotes have brown eyes instead of blue; this is because Mr. Coyote was naughty when he took Mr. Snail's eyes. And Mr. Raven still has those beautiful blue eyes in his secret hiding place, but he cannot return them because the secret hiding place was so secret not even Mr. Raven can find it!



WHO DID PATRICK'S HOMEWORK?

by Carol Moore

WHO DID PATRICK'S HOMEWORK?

Patrick never did homework. "Too boring," he said. He played baseball and basketball and Nintendo instead. His teachers told him, "Patrick! Do your homework or you won't learn a thing." And it's true, sometimes he did feel like a ding-a-ling.



But what could he do? He hated homework.

Then on St. Patrick's Day his cat was playing with a little doll and he grabbed it away. To his surprise it wasn't a doll at all, but a man of the tiniest size. He had a little wool shirt with old fashioned britches and a high tall hat much like a witch's. He yelled, "Save me! Don't give me back to that cat. I'll grant you a wish, I promise you that."

Patrick couldn't believe how lucky he was! Here was the answer to all of his problems. So he said, "Only if you do all my homework 'til the end of the semester, that's 35 days. If you do a good enough job, I could even get A's."

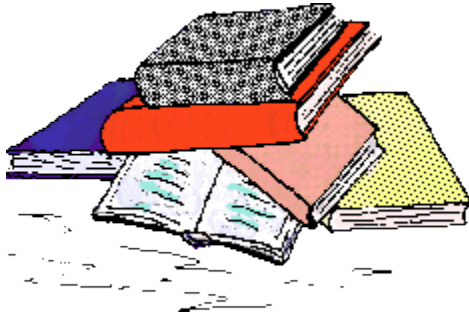
The little man's face wrinkled like a dishcloth thrown in the hamper. He kicked his legs and doubled his fists and he grimaced and scowled and pursed his lips, "Oh, am I cursed! But I'll do it."



And true to his word, that little elf began to do Patrick's homework. Except there was one glitch. The elf didn't always know what to do and he needed help. "Help me! Help me!" he'd say. And Patrick would have to help -- in whatever way.

"I don't know this word," the elf squeaked while reading Patrick's homework. "Get me a dictionary. No, what's even better. Look up the word and sound it out by each letter."

When it came to math, Patrick was out of luck. "What are times tables?" the elf shrieked. "We elves never need that. And addition and subtraction and division and fractions? Here, sit down beside me, you simply must guide me."

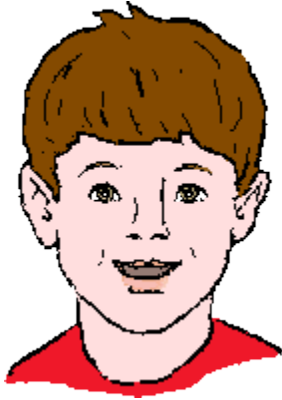


Elves know nothing of human history, to them it's a mystery. So the little elf, already a shouter, just got louder "Go to the library, I need books. More and more books. And you can help me read them too."



As a matter of fact every day in every way that little elf was a nag! Patrick was working harder than ever and was it a drag! He was staying up nights, had never felt so weary, was going to school with his eyes puffed and bleary.

Finally the last day of school arrived and the elf was free to go. As for homework, there was no more, so he quietly and slyly slipped out the back door.



Patrick got his A's; his classmates were amazed; his teachers smiled and were full of praise. And his parents? They wondered what had happened to Patrick. He was now the model kid. Cleaned his room, did his chores, was cheerful, never rude, like he had developed a whole new attitude.

You see, in the end Patrick still thought he'd made that tiny man do all his homework. But I'll share a secret, just between you and me. It wasn't the elf; Patrick had done it himself!

It Could Happen...

by Carol Moore

Illustrated by Aura Moser

One day, overnight, the world turned violet. Just about everything turned violet from the sky and ocean and mountains to the trees and animals and people and from the tallest skyscrapers to the tiniest ant. People sat around looking at one another wondering if they were dreaming. But nobody woke up and things stayed violet, all except for a single Blue Jay who hadn't changed color and stayed the brightest blue.



Being the only thing in the world that wasn't violet, he was caught and put in a cage.



People were shocked. Some were afraid and some were amazed and a few thought it funny, because along with everyone else, the President was very violet. Whole families were violet as were teachers, movie stars, doctors, nurses, gas station attendants, the Queen of England, the President of Mozambique, taxi-drivers, everybody. They went from place to place in their violet cars and buses and rode violet bikes and sat on violet furniture and ate violet food. Even Hershey's candy bars had turned all violet as had Skittles and M&M's. Girls generally thought this yucky, but some boys thought it was pretty neat.

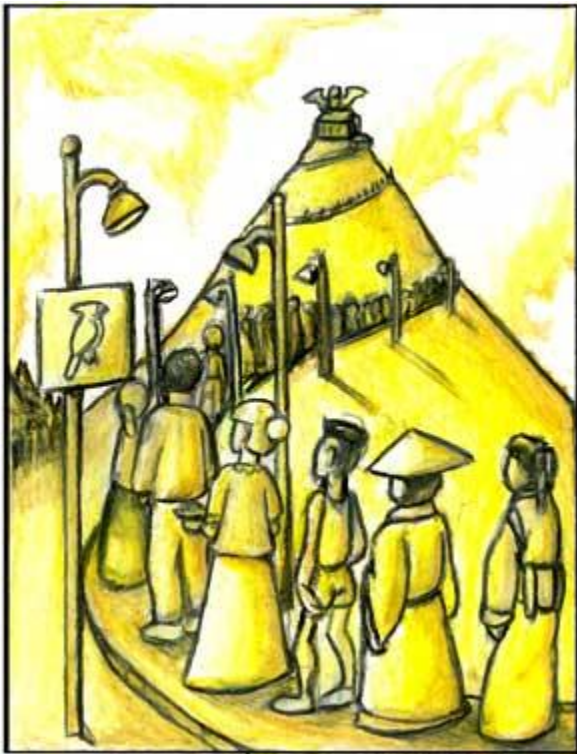


The smartest scientists in the world gathered to figure it out. Was something wrong with people's eyes or was it a trick of nature? They did studies and tests and analyzed and evaluated and debated and wrote article after article, but couldn't explain it.

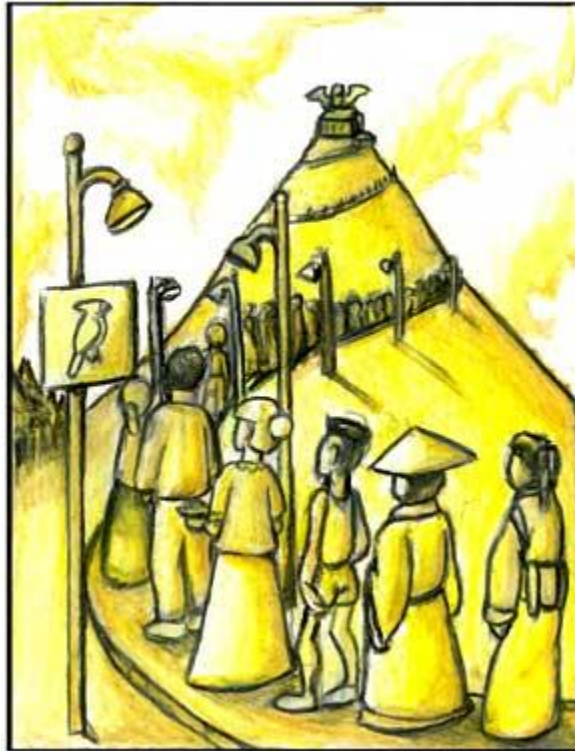
And no longer could people say they felt "blue" or were "green" with envy or had a "green" thumb. So what they said and how they said it began to change. Some people said violet was now the most important color in the world because it was everywhere. Others said that violet had no importance at all because there was too much of it. They discussed and argued, joined clubs, held debates, wrote books, and produced movies all about the issue of the importance or unimportance of the color violet.

The color of the Blue Jay became a big issue because he had such a little bit of blue and the world had such a whole lot of violet. People argued about the importance of that. Some said the Blue Jay must be a very special bird or maybe not a bird at all because he alone had kept his true color. Others said this was silly, that the Blue Jay ate bird seed and drank water and fluffed his feathers and that other than his special color he was still just a bird.

It was exactly one year to the day after the world had turned violet that people awoke to find the world had turned yellow. All except the Blue Jay.



In some ways a yellow world isn't any different than a violet world. People simply said yellow instead of violet when they talked about things. Only now the Blue Jay was more important than ever because he alone had stayed the color blue and people argued about what that meant. They lined up for miles just to take a look at him.





For the next two years, exactly on the day the world had turned violet and then yellow, it turned new colors: first orange and then pink. Still the Blue Jay stayed blue, causing ever greater disagreement -- until in the fifth year the whole world turned blue.

The first thing people asked was what about the Blue Jay. Had he stayed blue? Yes, he was still the same color. No longer were there two colors in the world, but just one -- the color blue. And because the Blue Jay was a color like everybody and everything else people began to lose interest. Now that he was neither more nor less important crowds stopped coming and one day, six months into the year that the world had turned blue, somebody let him out of his cage and he flew off looking happy to be free.





The very next morning the world regained its rainbow of colors as if nothing had ever happened. At first this was a novelty but soon people forgot the world had once been all violet. They forgot the world had once turned yellow, then orange, then pink, and then blue. They returned to saying they felt "blue" or were "green" with envy or had a "green" thumb.

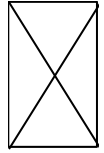
But on occasion they wondered where the Blue Jay had gone and how he was doing and, most of all, if he was still the color blue and what it had all meant.



Tiger Son

Written and Illustrated by Teresa Ng

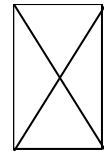
Based on an Ancient Chinese Tale by Po Chung-ling



Once there was an elderly widow, Chen Ma, who lived with her only son inside a forest in the Shanxi Province. Her son was one of the tiger hunters licensed by the local magistrate, following the same profession of his father and grandfather before him. His share of the profits from the sale of tiger skins, meat and bones was sufficient to keep the small mud hut well provisioned for himself and his old mother.

All was well until a particularly bitter winter. During a snowstorm, Chen Ma's son was separated from his fellow hunters and became food for a hungry tigress.

After her initial shock and grief subsided, Chen Ma took stock of her own utterly desperate situation -- an old woman left all alone. She went and implored the magistrate to provide her with compensation for the loss of her son, who was her only source of support. The magistrate decreed that henceforth, she would have a small share of profits from the kill of each tiger by the hunters. Needless to say, his decision was not taken well by the hunters, who had plenty of mouths of their own to feed -- both old and young.

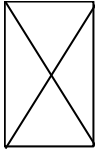


So, when the hunters succeeded in killing the tigress that ate Chen Ma's son, they decided not to give her a share of the profits. Instead, they brought her the tigress' newborn cub. He was a small quivery ball of golden fur with wobbly legs and toothless gums. The rope they tied around his neck was so tight that it was practically choking him. Instantly, Chen Ma's heart went out to this helpless creature, whose jade-green eyes were glistening with tears.

After the hunters left, the tiger cub wobbled to where Chen Ma sat and lay at her feet. She bent down to rub his ears and he licked her shoes with his soft tongue.

The elderly widow looked at the tiger baby and sighed. "They told me to butcher you, to salt and smoke your flesh for my meat supply. Your skin would make warm boots for my feet; your bones are good for making Tiger Bone Wine to ease the pain in my joints. But oh, how can I bear to kill you? You are so young and vital, while I am so old and frail."





And so, Chen Ma untied the rope from the little tiger's neck and fed him a paste of cooked roots with her fingers. Her son had a good supply of grains and roots in the attached shed and she planned to stretch the food out to last the winter.

When the store of the firewood was running low, Chen Ma was unable to keep her bedroll on top of the kang warm (a kang is a bed base built of bricks with space for a small fire). So she slept curling against the baby tiger, whose soft fur was cozy and warm.

Once ever so often, women from nearby villages would bring sewing for Chen Ma to do. She was very handy with a needle. They paid her for her labor with dried venison and small sacks of grain. At first they did not find the little tiger's presence alarming; he was no bigger than a piglet. However, when spring came, he had grown into the size of a calf, showing a full set of teeth and claws. The women told their hunter husbands and the men came to kill the young tiger.

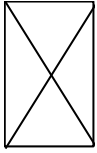
Chen Ma armed herself with her son's hunting spear and threatened to gut anyone who dared to harm her beloved pet.

"I've lost both husband and son. This tiger is the only companion I have now. I shall go to the magistrate and request to adopt him as my son."

The hunters thought the old woman had become mad and jeered at her. But since she was so determined, they dared not kill her tiger without the magistrate's permission. So they followed Chen Ma and her tiger all the way to the official's judgment hall.

"Venerable Mother," said the magistrate. "Your request is most unusual. Are you not afraid that some day the tiger might revert to his wild nature and devour you?"

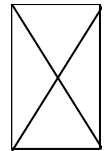




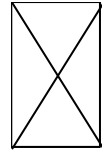
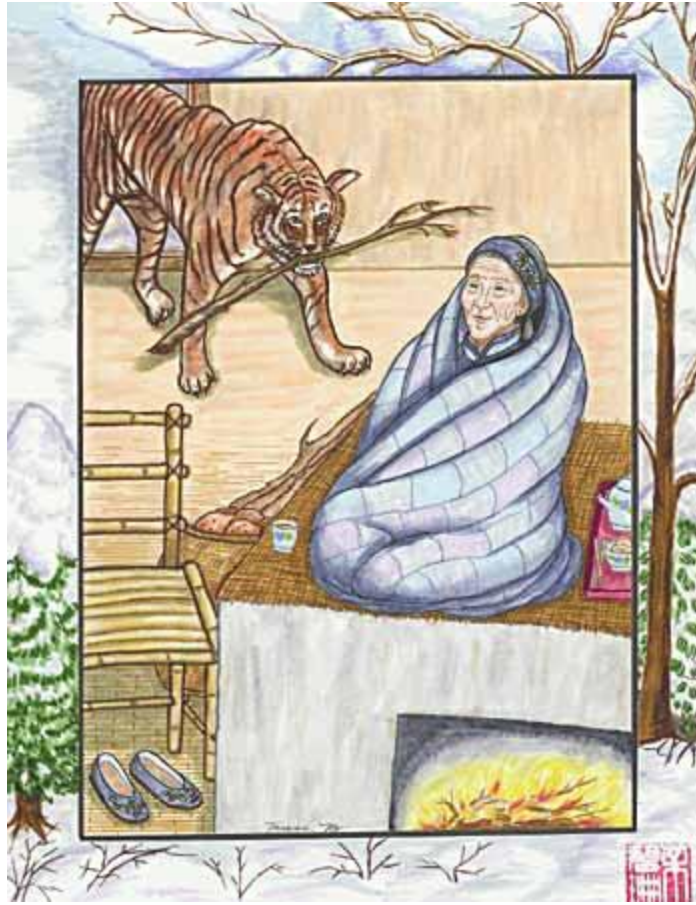
"Honorable sir," replied the old widow with tears in her eyes. "What is there to fear? I have lived too long. The only worry I have now is being left utterly alone. Please let me adopt this young tiger, for he has become like a son in my affections."

The kindly magistrate did not have the heart to refuse such an ancient woman's pleading. So he had his assistant draw up a document for the tiger's adoption.

In order to protect the tiger from the hunters' arrows and spears, the magistrate ordered a large copper pendent made to hang around the beast's neck. The words "Fu Chee" were engraved on the pendent meaning Tiger Son. To show her deep gratitude, Chen Ma knelt down in front of the magistrate and knocked her forehead three times. Then she led Fu Chee back to their home in the forest.



By next winter, Fu Chee had grown into his maximum size. Chen Ma's hut was in danger of collapsing whenever the tiger became playful. Reluctantly, she allowed Fu Chee to make his home inside a cave nearby.



However, the affectionate tiger came back to visit his adopted mother often, always bearing a gift in his mouth -- a dead deer or a large piece of tree branch. Also, he still liked to lick her shoes and to have his ears rubbed. Chen Ma's needs were being cared for just as if her natural son was still alive!

After Chen Ma died at the ripe old age past one hundred, the hunters noticed Fu Chee guarded her tomb nightly. They left him unmolested as he had never attacked any humans or domestic animals. This went on for a number of years and then one day the tiger was seen no more.

