

The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me

by Roald Dahl

“Stop showing off down there!” shouted the Monkey from the upstairs window. “Hurry up and bring that small person up to us! The Giraffe is waiting!”

I climbed into the big orange beak, and with a swoosh of wings the Pelican carried me back to his perch on the window-sill.

The Giraffe looked out of her window at me and said, “How do you do? What is your name?”

“Billy,” I told her.

“Well, Billy,” she said, “we need your help and we need it fast. *We must have* some windows to clean. We’ve spent every penny we had on buying this house and we’ve got to earn some more money quickly. The Pelly is starving, the Monkey is famished and I am perishing with hunger. The Pelly needs fish. The Monkey needs nuts and I am even more difficult to feed. I am a Geraneous Giraffe and a Geraneous Giraffe cannot eat anything except the pink and purple flowers of the tinkle-tinkle tree. But those, as I am sure you know, are hard to find and expensive to buy.”

Friendship According to Humphrey

by Betty G. Birney

“Are you sure the little guy won’t catch cold?” asked Mrs. Tugwell as Garth was ready to leave for school on Monday.

“He’s got a fur coat. And I’ll cover him,” Garth assured her. I was plunged into total darkness as he threw a blanket over the cage.

“Bye, Ham!” shouted Andy.

“Bye, Andy!” I squeaked back. After all, a “ham” isn’t the worst thing that a person can call you.

Soon, I heard the squeal of the bus’s brakes as it stopped in front of the Tugwells’ house.

“All aboard!” I heard Miss Victoria say. “Find a seat.”

“This cage is too big. Can’t I sit up here?” asked Garth.

“Do you see any empty seats up here?” the bus driver replied. “Get moving and keep moving.”

I was already queasy just thinking about Bean. As Garth walked toward the back of the bus, looking for an empty seat, my cage swayed back and forth like a ship on a rough sea, which didn’t help my stomach at all. Once we sat down, the bus started rolling. A block later, it abruptly stopped and I slid across the floor of my cage. Ouch!

“All aboard!” I heard Miss Victoria say. “Find a seat, A.J.”

Stallion by Starlight

by Mary Pope Osborne

Not until the dishes were cleared away did King Philip turn his gaze on Jack and Annie. "Silence!" the king ordered his men. "It is time now to hear from our esteemed visitors. Whomever Aristotle admires, I admire also."

Jack nearly choked on a grape.

"Aristotle tells us you have studied and learned much – both of you," the king said, looking at Annie. "Is that true?"

Before Annie could answer, a boy burst into the room. He was fair-haired and muscular. He wore a purple cloak over his tunic. He strode to the centre of the room, tossed back his cloak, and bowed.

"I greet you all!" the boy declared. "At last I have arrived!"

"Hail, Prince Alexander!" the men said in unison.

Alexander the Great! Jack thought.

Prince Alexander started to speak, but to Jack's surprise, the king snapped at him, "Quiet, boy! Sit down!"

Aristotle leaned forward and spoke kindly to Alexander. "My prince," he said, "when you entered, we were about to hear from two learned young people from Frog Creek, a land west of Greece. They have come here expressly to meet *you*. This is Jack and his sister, Annie."

Catboy

by Eric Walters

Hunter moved stealthily, low, ears back, tail flat. He was stalking the raccoon. He was going to attack it, even though the raccoon was three times as big as him!

The raccoon looked up, and the two animals locked eyes. The raccoon opened its mouth and let out a cry. For a second I saw a set of shiny, sharp teeth.

Hunter jumped to the ground and crept forward until the two animals were no more than a few feet apart. He crouched down and looked like he was about to pounce. They were now so close, Hunter was partially hidden from my view by the bulk of the raccoon. This was crazy. He could be hurt or even killed!

The raccoon leaned into the garbage can, pulled something out and tossed it to Hunter. Hunter smelled it, sat down and started to eat. I was stunned. What had just happened?

The raccoon began eating again. The two of them weren't going to fight. They were having *dinner* together!

The Secret Garden

by Frances Hodgson Burnett

“Yesterday, you showed me where the key was,” she said to him. “So today, you ought to show me where the door is.”

At that moment, the robin flew to the top of the wall and began to sing. Then a gust of wind blew along the path – a magical gust, Mary later swore. It blew aside several long vines of ivy, uncovering an iron plate with a doorknob and a keyhole set into it!

“It’s the door!” she exclaimed. “The door that’s been closed for ten years!”

Mary took the rusty iron key out of her pocket and pushed it into the keyhole – it fit! She gave it a slight twist – it turned!

Taking a deep breath, Mary looked around to see if anyone was coming, then she pushed open the door...slowly...slowly.

She quickly slipped through the opening and shut the door behind her. Standing with her back against the door, Mary looked all around her. “I’m here!” she gasped. “I’m inside the hidden garden at last!”