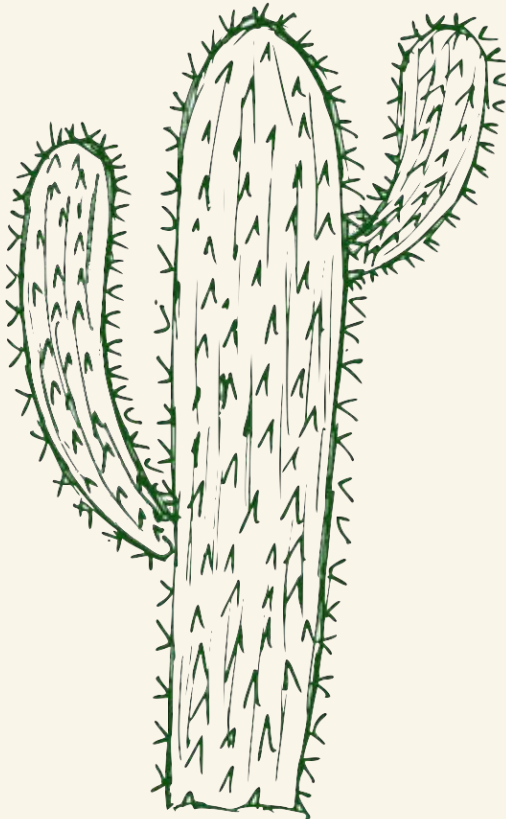


*15 tales about why things are the way they are*

# HOW THE CACTUS GOT ITS PRICKLES AND OTHER STORIES

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BY ASHWOOD'S CLASS OF 2020



# *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

*The Class of 2020  
dedicates this book  
to Ashwood's young readers,  
now and in the future.*

*Laura Purdom,  
dedicates this book to Jeremy Clough,  
in gratitude for eight more years of walking this path  
as colleagues and friends  
and for all of the gifts you have bestowed  
on this amazing group of young people. It has been my great  
privilege to be their language arts teacher!*

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# CONTENTS

The Wind Searches	7
Why the Moon Has a Cycle	19
How the Leaves Found Their Home	27
How the Flamingo Got Its Color	35
The Little Moon That Was Afraid of the Dark	41
The Lily and the Porcupine	47
When Timmy the Toddler Forgot to Paint the Clover	53
Why the Moon Cries	57
Why the Rooster Crows	61
How the Cactus Got Its Prickles	69
Gravity's Tale	77
Why Pebbles Are Patient	95
Why the Moon and Sun Rise and Set	99
A Turtle's Tale	107
How Hubert the Bug Stole the Woodpecker's Song	115

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

*Reading brings us unknown friends.*

—Honoré de Balzac



## INTRODUCTION

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by Laura Purdom

This book of short stories was a project of Ashwood Waldorf School's Class of 2020. The original assignment, to write a *pourquoi* tale—a story that explains “why things are the way they are”—was inspired by the Collins Writing Program. The students' writing technique was supported by a yearlong study of Harry R. Noden's *Image Grammar* as well as eight years of learning with “head, hands, and heart” in the Waldorf classroom. The illustrations that accompany each story are the authors'.

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



## THE WIND SEARCHES

---

by Ina Wolovitz

**W**e call her the wind. But before she was the wind, she was a human being just like us. Her name was Winda.

Before Time, but after Space, above the Sky and below the Sea, in a little hut next to a great vast river, lived Winda—a strong-headed girl with huge mood swings—and Shabina,

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

her friend. Now, the two of them were very best friends, but they each had something that they wished was different about the other. Winda wished that Shabina didn't get upset so easily, and Shabina wished that Winda wasn't so



moody. This caused some problems, but they always got over it. I should say they *almost* always got over it.

One morning, the two of them couldn't decide on what to have for breakfast.

"I want pancakes!" Winda said.



"I prefer crêpes," Shabina replied.

"I am not going to eat crêpes this morning!"

"Well, I'm going to make crêpes and you can make pancakes," Shabina suggested.

"No! I don't want to smell crêpes or have them cooked on my pans or eaten at my table!" Winda bellowed. "Get out of my house, and go make crêpes in your own house as far away from me as possible! I don't ever want to see you again!"

Shabina, hands trembling, eyes watering, fled the room. Nothing like this had ever happened before. Sure, they had gotten into fights, but none *this* big. Shabina decided, then and there, that she wasn't going to put up with this. Winda had until the next morning to apologize, and if she didn't, Winda was never going to see her friend again.

That day was rough. Hovering overhead was a tense silence that sucked up any sounds and created a dark cloud. Not a word was spoken, and the two stayed in their rooms almost all day, venturing out only when absolutely necessary.

Late that night, Winda heard a little voice, gentle yet persistent. "Apologize!"

"No. Why should I? She wanted crêpes."

"Crêpes versus pancakes isn't important."

"I don't care."

"You will regret this. She's going to leave."

"Fine. Let her leave. I never want to see her again."

Winda stubbornly stuck to her own opinion and sealed her fate.

Early the next morning, Shabina quietly padded down the hallway with her belongings and left. She took the boat that was moored on the river and sailed away, never to be seen again.

Winda woke up late and sensed that something was different. The house was dead silent. When she walked into the kitchen, she spied a note on the table. It was only a few words: "Now you can eat all the pancakes you want."

"That's a good idea!" Winda remarked aloud, feeling bright and cheerful. The silence agreed with her.

She whipped up a batch of pancakes and ate breakfast. She wasn't sure how she liked it. There wasn't anyone to talk to about how she had burned them a little bit but that they were still good. Well, she reminded herself, at least *someone* isn't eating crêpes. Suddenly, she threw the pancakes to the floor in anger! Surprised at herself, she

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

started to pick them up. As she finished, tears started pouring out of her eyes. What was happening?

The rest of Winda's day wasn't any better. She kept turning to talk to someone and then realizing that the only person to talk to was herself. It was a lot of work to



convince herself that life was going to be better on her own. After all, she could eat pancakes all day, everyday and no one would care.

The novelty of being alone soon wore off, and one night, that little voice came back.

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"Look what you've done! You're all alone, and the only person to blame is yourself."

All night long, Winda stayed awake, thinking about that voice. And then, just as the sun rose, she had a breakthrough that was quickly followed by a *breakdown*, as she realized that her friend wasn't coming back and that it was her fault.

"Well, the only thing to do is to look for her." That morning, Winda decided to start building a boat. After a week of back-breaking work that felt surprisingly good, she had a boat that would work. She gathered food, rope, clothes, a compass, and other essentials, closed up her house, and embarked on the journey of her life.

Winda searched for a year and two days. The river ran for hundreds upon hundreds of miles and she traveled them all. But she didn't find one trace of her friend. In desperation, she flung her hands in the air and cried out for someone to help her. She cried herself into a deep dreamless sleep.

When she awoke, she was somewhere she had never seen or imagined she would ever see. The closest description she could think of was the place where everything started and the place where everything ended. All around her, she could feel life. The plants seemed

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

greener, the sun brighter, the sky bluer, and even the air looked vibrant. She wondered aloud where she was and almost immediately heard an answer.

"You are at the Center of the Universe."

"And who are you?" she asked.

"Why, I am the Soul of the Universe."

Winda turned to see who she was speaking to. She looked north and south, east and west, northeast and southwest, and all the directions in between. A gentle chuckle from above made her look up. It had come from a tall, cloudy, essence of matter. There was no clear shape, and the being seemed to be constantly changing shape.

"Tell me your story, child. Why are you here?" it asked in a voice that seemed to rumble like thunder yet was as gentle as a springtime rain.

Winda told her story, sobbing at her outburst that fateful morning, showing her gratitude to the little voice (whereupon the Soul of the Universe chuckled knowingly), laughing at finding the note and the pancake breakfast, reflecting on the early uneasiness, reciting her journeys on the river with the air of an old sea dog, and finally arriving at the Center of the Universe. By the end, she was breathless.

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"Well, well, well. It seems as though you have had quite the journey and learned some lessons too, no doubt. Now, the thing with the Center of the Universe is that no one comes here unless they have a reason. What is your reason?"

"I-I-I have no idea."



"Hmm. What's your deepest wish?"

"My deepest wish? To find Shabina, of course."

"There you go!"

Tremulously, Winda asked, "Can you find her?"

"I'm afraid I can't, but you can try."

"I'll do anything!"

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

The wise Soul of the Universe changed Winda from her form as a human being to something even less tangible than itself. She became the wind, blowing across the world. She is fated to search for her friend until the end of time,



whistling through the trees and blustering around corners. Sometimes she gets angry and tears down trees and pulls the roofs off of houses. Other times she is as gentle as a lamb in springtime and softly brushes the cheeks of babies. Or she will be feeling playful and toss your hair around and give you a makeover. But it's Winda, and she's looking for

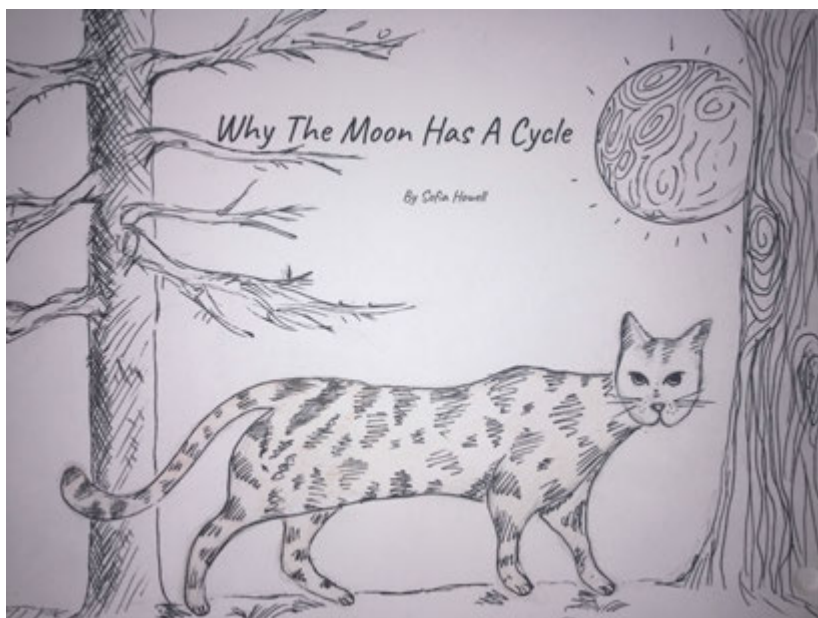


## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

her friend. So, don't make the same mistake she did, and don't let the sun go down on your anger.

**Ina Wolovitz** was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when she wrote this story. Ina says, "This is the second story that I have 'officially' written and liked. I hope I've learned from this story as much as my readers have learned." In writing this story, Ina took inspiration from Marmee in *Little Women*, "which just happens to be one of my favorite books." In her free time, Ina likes to sightread music, read books, eat food, and hang out with friends.

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



## WHY THE MOON HAS A CYCLE

---

by Sofia Howell

**T**his is the story of the cat and the moon, and how with one action, you can change your life, for the worse, or the better. It is completely up to you.

You see, long, long ago, in a little green forest, there lived a little, lonely, cat. The cat, long-whiskered and furry-tailed, was the only cat in the little green forest. And for all he knew, the only cat in the big, wide, world. One dark

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

night, the cat—Felis was his name—was sitting all alone in a little patch of grass, gazing up at the Milky Way, when thousands of tiny teardrops began, very suddenly, falling from the sky. Frightened, Felis quickly scurried under a leafy bush to protect himself, but the tear drops didn't stop



falling. So Felis waited and waited, hidden under his leafy bush in the middle of the little green forest.

As the hours trickled by, Felis began to wonder what it would be like if he wasn't a little cat in a little green forest. He began to imagine living in a warm home, curling up beside a warm fire, and drinking milk from a saucer every

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

day. But the more he thought about it, the hungrier he got and the more he wanted a saucer of milk. So when the sky became dry once again, Felis, being the brave little cat he was, set out to find a saucer of milk.

Felis set out when it was still dark, but that didn't bother him. Felis was a cat after all and could see perfectly fine in the dark. Just a short while into his journey, Felis came across a large field filled with puddles, and to his great excitement, in each of those puddles was a saucer of milk. Eager for a taste, Felis sat down next to the nearest one and bent down to have a sip. But when his tongue finally reached the surface, he realized it didn't taste like milk at all! Surprised by this discovery, Felis quickly raced around to every puddle, but to his utter despair, none of them tasted anything like milk!

"Now what will I do!" cried Felis to the heavens, as if they could hear him, "How will I ever find a saucer of milk in this little green forest?" He sat down again, discouraged. Tired, saddened, and still hungry, Felis glanced up at the stars before curling up to go to sleep.

That's when he saw it. Perched up in the night sky was the biggest, widest, most delicious looking saucer of milk he could have ever imagined. Felis could barely believe his eyes. It was the most magical thing he had ever seen! Enchanted by this saucer of milk, Felis began to chase after it, his little paws beating against the ground in a steady

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

rhythm. Pitter patter, pitter patter, pitter patter. Felis ran as fast as his furry paws could take him, in fact, Felis ran so fast that he began to lift, slowly at first, right off the ground! Soon he was above the treetops, the ground far below him, but Felis didn't mind, he was headed straight for the giant saucer of milk; nothing could stop him now! Whoosh whoosh, whoosh whoosh. His tiny claws sliced through the crisp night air, like a knife cuts through butter. Below him, his little green forest was getting smaller and smaller, but Felis only had one goal in mind, and that goal was getting bigger and bigger by the second.

When Felis finally reached the saucer of milk, he was many, many, miles above the earth. He was so far away, he could barely even see his little green forest. But none of that mattered now, for before him lay the giant saucer. Felis wasted no time and quickly began to drink up the milk. It tasted so good that Felis simply couldn't stop drinking it. So he sat there, and he drank and drank and drank. Gulp, gulp, gulp. Felis couldn't have been happier, in fact, he was so contented, sitting in the sky, drinking from his saucer of milk, that he didn't notice that the more he drank, the smaller and smaller his saucer of milk became.

It took Felis many days to finally finish, 28 to be exact, but when the last drop reached his tongue, he realized what had happened. This wasn't a saucer of milk at all! This was the moon! And now, it was gone! Distraught at what he

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

had done, Felis curled into a tight little ball and began to cry little raindrops of his own.

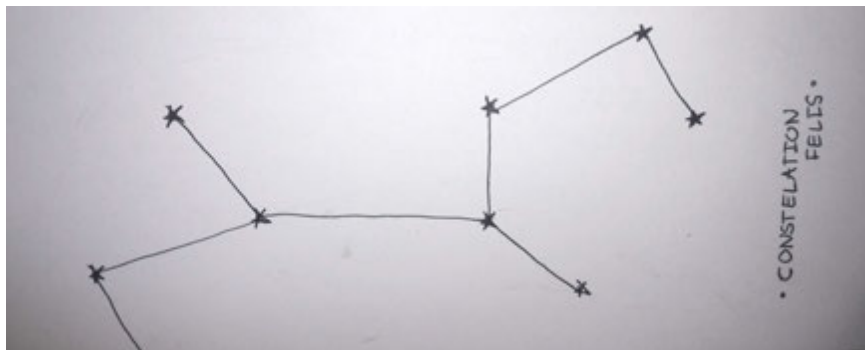
Unfortunately for Felis, he wasn't the only one who had realized what had happened, and before long, the sun,



great, mighty, and shimmering, stood before Felis.

"Dear Felis, what have you done!" cried the sun. "The moon is gone. How will this ever be fixed!" Felis sat quietly, head hung, ears pinned down toward his whiskers.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



"You must believe me, I meant no harm," said Felis "But I was ever so hungry in my little green forest that I couldn't help myself! I never meant to drink the moon!"

For the next few days the mighty sun tried and tried to restore the moon to its former self, but as much as she endeavored, the moon never fully returned, always fading in and out of the sky throughout the course of 28 days.

After after many failed attempts, the sun turned to Felis once more:

"I understand your actions, and that it was all but a great mistake, but a crime like this, cannot go without punishment."

Felis nodded his furry head; he knew what he had done and understood the consequences.

"Felis," said the sun, "I sentence you to be a star, to no longer walk the earth or the sky, but instead to be frozen in time, forced to simply watch, as the earth continues to



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

move and life continues to blossom without you.” And with that, Felis became a constellation, and for the next thousand years, stood silently beside the fading moon and watched from the sky. You can even see the Felis constellation today, stranded up above the clouds, watching it all from the stars.

**Sofia Howell** was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when she wrote this story. “Why The Moon Has A Cycle” was based upon the Felis constellation discovered by Jérôme Lalande, in 1799. Apart from writing stories for her language arts class, Sofia also enjoys spending time with her friends, eating food, and riding in the family Volkswagen bus, not that she can drive just yet. Sofia is currently well known for absolutely nothing, and would be honestly shocked if her name ever showed up in a newspaper. Sofia currently lives in the small town of Waldoboro, Maine, which is located about half an hour from anything interesting, although she will be moving to Camden, Maine, soon. She hopes you have a wonderful day and that you enjoy her story.

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



## HOW THE LEAVES FOUND THEIR HOME

---

by Anna Hildreth

**G**ray skies, gusty winds, silence throughout the forest, all the creatures slowly seek shelter. I could sense we were about to get a downpour. We get a lot of storms...and rain...and angry wind...and every

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

creature seems to be sad. I am high in the sky, looking down on everything. It's incredible being up here on the trees, but I get lonely being the only leaf. But, I must not be the *only* one; that would be impossible. More are out there, somewhere, waiting for me to find them and bring them back home; but for now I have to wait for the storm to pass.



One hour passes, then two, then three, and finally the sun slowly peeks its smile through the trees and lets everyone know it's morning. I stretch my tired body and realize what today is. Today I'm going to search for all the lost leaves! Floating, drifting, and gliding I slowly land on the green(ish) grass. I'm so excited, I'm going to find everyone

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

and bring them back! It's a mystery that has to be solved. What I will do is ask everyone if they know where the leaves are. Starting with the giant trees...

Opening their big brown eyes and breathing their heavy breaths, the giant trees look on as I calmly glide towards them. "Oh trees, do you know where I can find all the leaves?" I ask.

The giant trees reply, "Oh Leo, we haven't seen the leaves in such a long time. We're sorry. They have not returned since last winter when the cold shook them off, but it would be nice to have their company again." With that, the trees close their eyes and begin an enormous snore.

I continue my search until I find a family of deer by the river. There is a mother, a father, and a little doe. I quietly approach the family, making sure I don't frighten them. "Oh family of deer, do you know where I can find the leaves?"

"Oh Leo, I haven't seen the leaves in such a long time. I'm sorry," says the mother deer.

I try to hide my disappointment while I thank them and quietly go on my way. I turn the corner and see a vibrant squirrel, legs scurrying, tail swishing, running up a tree. I yell, "Wait, wait!" and the squirrel suddenly stops.

"Yes?" answers the squirrel.

"Oh squirrel, do you know where I can find the leaves?"

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"Oh Leo, I haven't seen the leaves in such a long time. I'm sorry," says the hurried squirrel.

So far, no luck, but tomorrow is a new day and I will continue then. I find a little stump and rest my head there until morning.

The next morning as I get up, right in front of me is a bird couple. They are singing and swaying. I say good morning and ask if they know anything about my mystery. "Oh birds, do you know where I can find the leaves?"

"Oh Leo, we haven't seen the leaves in such a long time. We're sorry," reply the birds.

"That's okay," I say. "There are more creatures to ask." I walk for many miles and find nothing. No creatures, no trees, and absolutely *no* leaves. I come upon a little stream and see a tiny fish, bright orange, bright yellow, and covered with many blue spots. I ask, "Oh fish, do you know where I can find the leaves?"

"Oh Leo, I haven't seen the leaves in such a long time. I'm sorry," says the brightly colored fish.

I don't know what to do! I've asked everyone! Maybe there are just no more leaves. I decide to go home and let the mystery alone. I start walking, but then I hear a sound coming from a little den. I carefully tiptoe over to the den. I hear rustling movements. I move closer and closer, with a spark of hope in me, to find a jumpy family of foxes. The

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

bright, hopeful smile on my face disappears, and I quickly hurry out of the way of the foxes. They swiftly run to their kit that is stuck on a root.

The whole fox family has left the den, but I can still hear



a strange sound. I cautiously creep farther in...

The lost leaves are here! I am overjoyed and can't believe what I am seeing. "Come, come, I will bring you back to where you belong!" I say.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

But the leaves shake their heads and cry, "No we can't! The trees got angry and shook us off last winter. They don't want us. The trees scare us!"

"No, they want you back. They told me. The trees are bare without you."



The lost leaves, with many frightened glances and whispered chatter, finally summon their courage and decide they will come with me. "We will come with you, oh, Leo!" they say in unison. "Lead on!"



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

I have so much happiness running through my body I can barely contain my excitement. "Follow, come, follow me."

The leaves follow, and in a day or two we arrive back home. Each leaf slowly finds a branch to rest on realizing as they do that the trees are delighted to see them. All the nervousness leaves their bodies, and they shut their little eyes for a well-deserved rest.

The forest lights up, the flowers bloom, the grass turns a bright green and the sun rises high in the sky making everything glisten. The creatures are happy and the leaves have found their home.

**Anna Hildreth** was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when she wrote this story. She began her life in Cumberland, Maine, and soon after moved to Rockport. Anna enjoys writing stories and illustrating them. She wrote this story because she found the topic interesting and felt she could really explore it. "In this story there are so many different things that you can imagine and create in your mind," writes Anna. "I had so much fun shaping this into a great story that any age would appreciate."

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



# HOW THE FLAMINGO GOT ITS COLOR

---

by Jonathan Troutman

**H**ard-packed ground rose up to meet Fred's body as he plunged over a root. Sometimes Fred hated his long, clumsy legs. When he was a little flamingo, he got teased because he was plain and clumsy. His feathers were a pale, almost translucent white, and he had long, spindly legs that often tripped over roots and rocks.

Fred grew up in a birchwood hut, bleached white from the sun at the edge of a winding, bubbly stream that was at the foot of a colorful, fragranced hill covered with flowers, tall grass, and chirping crickets.

Growing up without having any friends, Fred never knew what it was like to laugh and joke with other animals. He would lie in his favorite spot on a rock at the top of his hill, smelling the colorful, painted flowers and soaking up the sun. He liked to imagine that the sun was his friend, and he would pretend that he could hear him and would answer all of his many, many questions.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

One day, a little hippo had a birthday party and all the animals were invited... except Fred. Sitting on his rock and watching the sky, thoughts drifted through Fred's head like clouds. Did the sun have a birthday? What if the sun could really talk to me? Would he invite me to his birthday party?

Fred wanted answers to his questions, so he set off to find the sun and see if he was really the person Fred thought he was. Along the way, Fred picked a flower to give to the sun. Walk, walk, walk, trip, walk, stumble, walk. His actions made a rhythm and he began to hum.

A little way off, Gina the giraffe heard Fred's humming and greeted him, "You are very good at humming," Gina said.

Embarrassed, Fred blushed, "Thank you, Gina," he said, his voice wobbling.

"Where are you going?" said Gina, "If you don't mind, I would love to walk with you."

Fred said yes, and they walked on. They walked and walked and walked, until it got dark. Then they found a field of poppies and quickly fell asleep, tired after a long day of walking.

Waking up early, they started off again. Walk, walk, walk, trip, walk, stumble, walk. Fred thought about the question Gina had asked the day before. Where was he going? He

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

didn't want her to make fun of him and leave, but he also didn't want to lie. Eventually he started to speak.

"I'm going to the Sun's birthday party, and this is my present," he said, showing Gina his flower. "It can be from both of us."

"I would love that," Gina said cheerfully.

A little later it began to rain. It was a light drizzly mist at first, but it soon began to get worse. Pelting its cold drops and throwing its angry tears, the rain seemed to never end. Gina's long neck stretched high above the rain clouds, so she did not get wet, but Fred was quickly getting drenched.

Then Fred remembered his flower and put it up above his head to act as an umbrella and ward off the storming sky. It seemed to work, so they trudged on. When the rain finally began to clear, a rainbow popped out of the blue sky. "Wouldn't it be nice to be colorful like that," Fred remarked.

Gina looked down at him to respond, and stopped in surprise. "Fred," said Gina, "you're pink!"

Fred thought it was a joke until he looked at his feathers. They were indeed pink! He then looked up and cried out in alarm. The beautiful flower that he had brought to give to the Sun was now pale and white. All the color

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

had seeped out of it when it was raining, dying his feathers with its brilliant color. Fred started to sob.

"What's wrong?" asked Gina, "I think you look very good in that color."

"It's not about me," Fred complained. "What am I going to give the Sun now?"

"We can find another flower," Gina reassured him.

For days and nights they journeyed onward until they found themselves directly beneath the Sun.

Fred hadn't considered how he would get up to the Sun. He sank to the ground in despair and began to think about what he could do.

Seeing Fred's despair, Gina immediately found a solution. "If you climb up my neck, I can place you down on top of a cloud."

"What about you?" said Fred. "How will you get up?"

"You go on without me," Gina smiled. "I'm just here to help."

So Fred began to climb up her neck, and Gina then placed him on a fluffy white cloud.

Suddenly, Fred remembered that he didn't have a present for the Sun; however, he didn't want to burden Gina any more, so he kept it to himself. They said goodbye, and Gina made Fred promise to visit her soon.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

After taking a very peaceful nap on the clouds, Fred set out again. Only a little farther, he said to himself. As he was clambering up a very big, flat cloud, he saw a field of flowers at its top. He didn't know that flowers grew in the sky, but it made sense, Fred thought, because there is lots of water and good air. The flowers were tall and yellow with a dark brown center. They looked like the Sun, so Fred named them "sunflowers." He picked one gently and went on walking. There were no rocks and roots here, so Fred didn't trip and stumble.

Finally, after days and days, Fred, a weary flamingo, got to the Sun's birthday party just in time for cake and presents. When it was Fred's turn to give the Sun his present, he handed the Sun his sunflower and said, "I'm sorry it isn't much, but it's something."

The sun, smiling and glowing, took his present with great delight. "Thank you very much," said the Sun. "It's perfect. Tonight I will paint the sky yellow, like this beautiful flower."

The Sun is real *and* really nice, thought Fred. He had a very good time at the party and made a lot of friends. He learned that the Sun was a painter, trying new colors on his canvas, the sky, every dusk and dawn.

Eventually it was time to go, and Fred said his goodbyes and started home again. On the way down he picked one more sunflower to give to Gina. When he finally got to her

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

house, he gave her the flower and thanked her kindly for her help.

As Gina came to give Fred a hug goodbye the flower got smooshed between them and all the color and seeds squirted over Gina.

Many say that the reason giraffes are golden yellow with dark brown spots is because a certain flamingo gave a certain giraffe a sunflower, and its color dyed the giraffe's coat; but that's another story.

Fred and Gina have been best friends ever since, taking pride in their color, and the Sun continues to watch over them. Still to this day, Fred sunbathes on his rock, watching the clouds drift by.

**Jonathan Troutman** was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when he wrote this story. Jonny, as his friends call him, likes to make art and ski. He was inspired to create a story for all ages that had a special meaning. "I really enjoyed illustrating my story," Jonny says, "and writing it was very interesting because it was for a younger audience." He enjoys writing and drawing, and hopes to make more stories in the future.



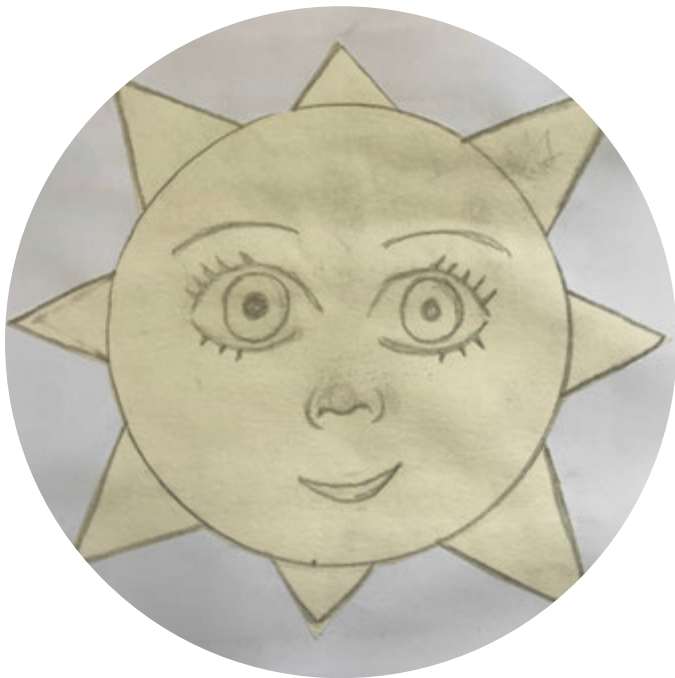


## THE LITTLE MOON THAT WAS AFRAID OF THE DARK

---

by Sadie Luehman

**W**hen you stand outside on a clear night, look up at the sky and see the stars. That is where our story takes place. You see, a very long time ago when the earth was still new, the moon had a problem: She



was afraid of the dark. Nothing helped. Every night she sat amid the dark cloak of night and stared at the glowing world far far below, trying to calm her misgivings. But no matter what she did, the dark still scared her.

One day the sun heard from some of the stars that the moon was crying, so he went to the moon to see what he could do. "What's wrong?" he asked as he approached the moon.

The moon looked up at the sun with watery eyes. "I am afraid of the dark, and I don't know what to do," she whispered.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

The sun thought about this for a long time, wondering how he could help. "I will be back," he promised, "I will figure out how to fix this."

Eyes shining, the hint of smile showing, the moon thanked the sun.

As the sun traveled back across the sky, he pondered his options and tried to find the best solution. It nagged at him for three days and three nights until he found the answer. He traveled back across the sky to see the moon and to tell her his brilliant plan.

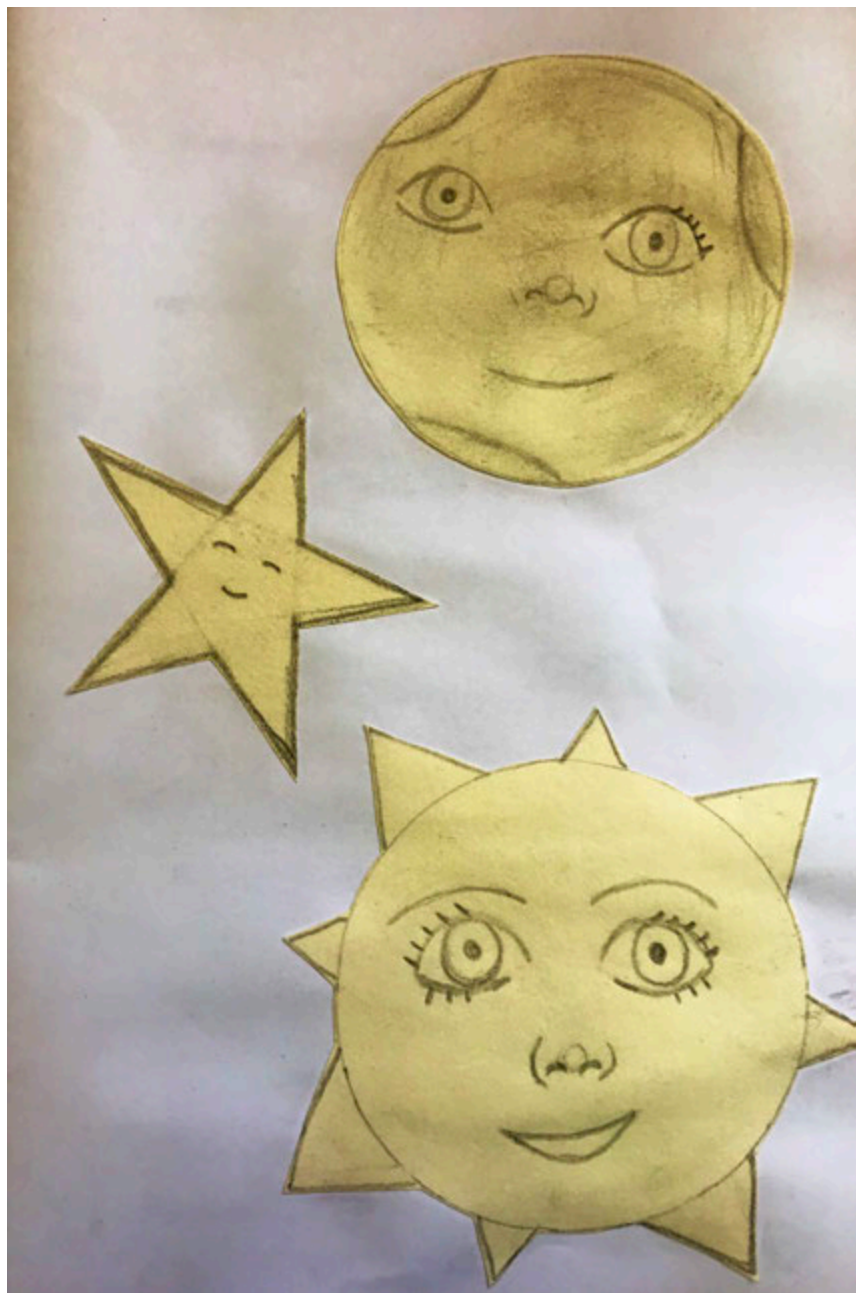
"I will give you some of my light!" cried the sun as he sped across the sky.

"You would do that for me?" asked the moon in a shaking voice.

"Of course," said the sun. "I would do anything to help my friends." Well, they knew what they were going to do so they set about planning for how it would work.

Now, this was wonderful, but the stars began to be very very jealous. "Why don't we get to shine?" they grumbled. One particularly jealous star devised a way to get some shine for themselves. "We will steal the moon's light, little by little, until we shine brighter," it announced. "This will take about 30 days to complete, but it will be worth every second if we get to be brighter," said the star.

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

Meanwhile, the sun was preparing to hand over its light. One night at 6:03 p.m. the sun reached out his hand and touched the moon's heart. She began to glow. She no longer had to be afraid because she would never be in the dark.

"Thank-you-thank-you-thank-you!" exclaimed the moon as she hugged the sun tightly. "Now I will always have the light, and I won't be afraid."

The moon radiated happiness and light wherever she went. But each night, the stars would steal a little of her light, and after 30 days, it was all gone. Yet, even then she wasn't afraid, because it was not dark. The stars sat all around her glittering like a thousand tiny moons. Besides, the light was inside her. Even when it wasn't shining, it was there.

Glowing with all the love and happiness the sun had given her. The moon still wanted her light back, so she made a deal with the stars. Every month, for a few days, they could have her light. But they would always give it back to her in the end.

That is the story of why the moon shines and why, every 30 days, the stars shine brighter.



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

**Sadie Brae Luehman** wrote this story when she was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School. She was inspired to write this story as a way to tell people that everyone is afraid of something—whether it be spiders, walking up stairs in the dark, talking to people, or just life in general. In addition to writing, Sadie enjoys hanging out with her friends and going on crazy adventures. She likes sailing with her family and wearing oversized sweatshirts 90% of the time. Sadie also cherishes trying to tan on warm days but usually ends up looking like a lobster. And finally, she would like to thank her little sister Alora for helping her write this story and making her smile every day.



## THE LILY AND THE PORCUPINE

---

by Scarlet Labbe-Watson

**//** I am afraid you have been denied the protection and alliance of the Institution of Wild Mammals. You have until tomorrow to be out of our territory," declared the head of that institution.

"What?!" cried Porcupine. "But, I am a mammal!"

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"I am sorry, but your spikes unfortunately prevent you from meeting the company's standards."

Staring in disbelief, Porcupine gazed around at the prim foxes, tidy bears, raccoons, and squirrels. Every mammal, down to the smallest vole, was there—all sitting in a neat semi-circle on the clipped grass of the clearing grazed short by the ungulates.



Well, I guess I'm leaving, thought Porcupine, eyes welling with tears. I have only ever lived in this forest, and now I am... What? Am I leaving just like that?

But all arguments were in vain; go he must.

"I am sorry," said Deer, "but the rules must be firm, or this new world would fall into chaos."



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

With those final words Porcupine was escorted out of the clearing where he had been brought into existence by the Creator. Weeping, he set off to find a new life away from the green glades and cascading waterfalls he called home—a new life far from the long arm of the Institution of Wild Mammals.

With many longing looks Porcupine, a heartbroken creature, made his way into the unknown. He waddled through dark conifer forests. He plodded through open fields of goldenrod, aster, and tall grasses. He trudged through swamps, festering, gooey, and stinking. Wading small rivers and tumbling out of many trees were also some things he did on his adventure to find a new home.

One day, when Porcupine was wandering about an open forest, he heard music, like tinkling bells accompanied by a sweet, high voice. Porcupine curiously followed the music. *What could that sweet song be?* he wondered.

After pursuing the music for what felt like hours he came upon a clearing. It was not like the neat clearing of The Institution, all short clipped grass and neat formations; it was sunlit, long blades of grass dotted with clover, swaying in a light spring breeze. In it there was a Lily-of-the-Valley. She was singing her heart out, playing her delicate flowers, which sounded like the most beautiful bells Porcupine had ever heard.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"Hi!" said the lily, "Who are you? Do you like my playing? I am experimenting with using my lower left bells for accompaniment while I usually use my lower right bells. How does it sound? Are you new here? I haven't seen you here before. Are those spikes you have? That is sooo cool! You have spikes, and I have bells! They're very pretty, how do you play them?"

"I...," stammered Porcupine. Lily was unlike anyone he had ever met. "I came from the North Woods—where the Institution of Wild Mammals is."

"Ew, isn't that the prim one? The one that CUTS grass and flowers?" cried Lily.

"Yeah, they kicked me out for having spikes," confirmed Porcupine.

"Oh, I'm so sorry I said anything about your spikes! I just thought they looked cool! Sorry. But we'll have fun, just the two of us! We don't need them to like us!"

"I guess you're right," Porcupine conceded.

"I'll play for you, and you can tell me everything about your spikes. We can play games too! Oh, we will be so happy! I know we will! What is your favorite game? Mine is hide-and-seek. I have such fun trying to hide in place."

Lily was fun; so happy and eager, it made Porcupine's gloomy mood lift slightly. The lovely contrast of personality made them become fast friends quickly. They spent every

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

day together. Porcupine showed Lily his tree climbing skills, she sang to him, and they played all kinds of games.

Unfortunately, soon there were whispers of the Institution expanding its territory. These rumors threw



Porcupine into a state of anxiety. He wouldn't sing; he hardly laughed; the games they used to play could not engage or interest him.

"I have to go!" cried Porcupine at last.

"But you just arrived!" wailed Lily. "Please don't go! We only just became good friends!"

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"But if they find me..." Porcupine shuddered.

"It will be fine," comforted Lily "There might be no truth in the rumors. They might never come."

"But if they do, I'm doomed!" fretted Porcupine, "They will find me! They will find me! No no no, I have to go, I can't stay! I have to go!"

So Porcupine went, with many regretful and longing glances back, he wandered out of the peaceful glade, and once again into the unknown.

Lily was heartbroken, she cried and cried until finally her beautiful white petals drooped, and because she had always sung to Porcupine, ever after she refused to sing... unless the fairies sang with her.

**Scarlet Labbe-Watson** was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School. She loves to read and play violin. Scarlet has been at Ashwood since she was three, when she started in their early childhood program with the excellent teacher, Toki Oshima. She started violin in fourth grade, and in fifth grade she loved it so much that she started taking lessons through Bay Chamber, which she now considers a wonderful advantage for both her enjoyment and her growth as a musician. She lives in Rockland with her parents and cat.



## WHEN TIMMY THE TODDLER FORGOT TO PAINT THE CLOVER

---

by Gabriel Wheeler

**T**here once was a toddler. His name was Timmy. Timmy was about to have his second birthday. His mother gave him a paint set. Timmy said,

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"Why'd I gets this?"

"To paint Beautiful Things that will make people happy,"  
replied Timmy's mother.

Now to understand the next part of the story you must



know two things:

1. Timmy was a very friendly toddler.
2. At the time of this story, all flowers had green petals.

Now, back to the story:

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

The next day Timmy went for a walk in the fields surrounding his house. Suddenly, up from the ground, a voice said, "HI, TIMMY! DOWN HERE!" It was Timmy's friend Poppy. "Hello, Poppy. I didn't not see oow there," said Timmy as he plopped down on his bottom.

"I know," said Poppy. "I'm the same color as grass. If I were a different color, then people would see me."

That's when Timmy had an idea, and he got up and toddled back toward the house.

A few minutes later, Timmy was back with his paint set. "Poppy," he said, "I have a an i-idea! I will make oow ORANGE so's i can see oow."

"That's a great idea," said Poppy.

And, that is just what Timmy did.

This made people feel happy, but it also made all the Other Flowers jealous. So, Timmy had to paint them, too. But Timmy didn't mind because this made people feel happy.

Timmy did this for 80. Then he died of old age. When Timmy died, he had painted every flower.

Except one.

This flower was named Shamrock—more commonly known as the four leaf clover.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

Shamrock was sad because it is not beautiful like all of the other flowers. And that is why, even today, it is so hard to find a four leaf clover.

**Gabriel Wheeler** was in 7th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when he wrote this story. Gabe was born in Damariscotta, Maine, and he has been a student at Ashwood since he was a toddler—just like Timmy. Gabe wrote this story because he likes to think about things that not many other people think about—things other people take for granted. When asked, “What is the meaning of life?” Gabe replied, “42.”





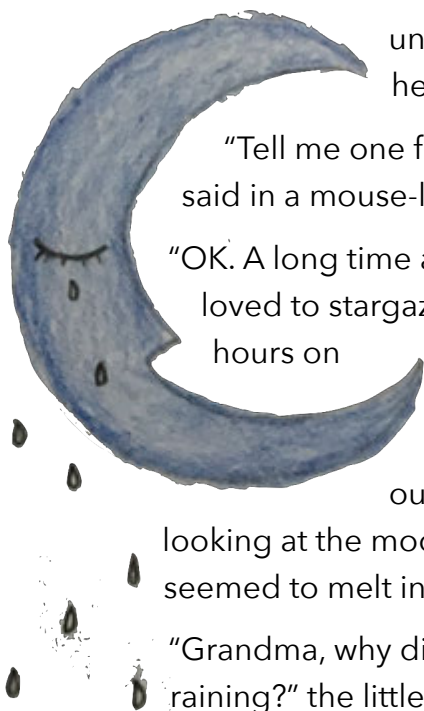
## WHY THE MOON CRIES

---

by Zola Roberts

**//** Grandma," said the little girl, "can you tell me a story?"

The old woman looked out the window at the stormy night and took a deep breath. "Yes, of course, my dear," she said in a soft voice. She tucked the little girl



under the warm blanket, hiding her from the cold winter night.

"Tell me one from a long time ago," the girl said in a mouse-like voice.

"OK. A long time ago, when I was your age, I loved to stargaze and watch the moon for hours on end. One night it started to rain. But I still stayed outside," she said, still looking out at the endless night sky, looking at the moon, a glowing orb of light, that seemed to melt into the sky.

"Grandma, why did you stay outside if it was raining?" the little girl said.

"I love it out there," replied Grandma "with the glowing moon. I feel free when I'm out in the wild, when it's just me and the stars."

"Oh," said the girl. "Sorry, I interrupted you."

"It's all right dear. Where was I? Oh yes, well, when I was out there in the rain, I saw lightning, but the lightning wasn't just any lightning: it was magical. I blinked at the lightning, but it didn't move. I was so confused. I pinched myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming. It was still there, clear as day. The lightning, I suddenly realized, was in the shape of a staircase! I watched as the staircase went away

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

and a new one formed. The longer I watched it, the more I understood. It rained every time the staircase went away."

"Why did it rain every time grandma?" The little girl asked.

"You'll find out soon. So, the next time the staircase came down, I investigated. I took a step onto the stairway of light. I started to walk up and up and up. A few minutes later, I was at the top. The staircase led to a platform overlooking the moon.

"Was it cold? Or scary?" The little girl asked

"No, it was actually quite warm up there, surprisingly. As I looked out across the big moon, I saw a man's face. He looked very sad. He had tears in his eyes. He looked up at me and said, 'Will you be my friend? I'm really lonely up here.' That's when I realized it." The old woman said.

"What did you realize?" The small girl said in a high pitched voice.



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"I realized the man in the moon causes the rain and the lightning. When he's lonely, he shoots down a stairway of light. When no one comes up to see him, he cries. And his tears are the rain!" The old lady looked out the window once again. Her eyes fixed on the moon.

"Is that a true story?" she asked.

"Oh, of course it is my dear! I met the man in the moon," the old lady protested.

The little girl looked out the window in awe, thinking that one day she would be able to go to the moon, too.

"The moon and I got to be really good friends," the woman said. "I used to look out my window every night to greet him and it made him happy."

And, as the little girl went to sleep that night, she dreamed of the moon, the stars, and the pitter patter of the rain on the roof.

**Zola Roberts** was in the 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when she wrote this story. Zola was born in Rockland, Maine and now lives in Hope. "Creating this story made me explore new areas of writing," writes Zola. She hopes to continue writing and illustrating books for the young and the old. Just like the little girl in the story, Zola loves to look among the stars and find new paths.



## WHY THE ROOSTER CROWS

---

by Eli Pluecker

**T**his is the story of why the cock crows.

Long ago, in a hamlet, on the other side of the world, in a hot, humid, sweltering place, a baby rooster was born. He grew up among with his mother and among his siblings. Every day when they woke they would

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

sit around in the sun, pecking at the dirt, playing and and eating. One day, though, when Rooster was a few weeks old, he awoke in a cage, with a bunch of other cocks his own age, bouncing around as the rusty old pickup truck they were in sped down a pothole-riddled road. Rooster cried out in sadness then, because he knew he would never see his family again.

After jostling down the road the truck pulled into a small farm, where they were all dumped into a ramshackle barn. When he woke up the next morning and remembered what had happened, Rooster cried out once again. Later that morning, after being fed, two humans came in every little while and took a cock. Then, a little while later, they'd come back, put the last cock back and take another. After a few cocks had gone and come back it was rooster's turn. The men scooped him up and took him to another little shed where they made him attack a stuffed fabric cock over and over again in all sorts of strenuous ways, jumping, pecking and leaping, sometimes with weights. They did this until Rooster was exhausted, then they brought him back to the others. This happened for months. Every morning, Rooster cried out in mourning; every day they all trained attacking the cloth cock. They did this until all the cocks were full grown. And very strong.

One day the humans took Rooster away. After a short ride—in the rusty old pickup that Rooster did not have such fond memories of—they arrived at a little old house from

which most of the paint had peeled off. The humans brought him inside where there was a ring of hay bales with two wire cages resting next to each other on the ground—each attached to a pulley mounted on the ceiling. Around the ring of hay bales were many humans running around and yelling

“Odds are 3 to 1!” shouted one man.

“The red one’s gonna win,” called another.

One of the humans who had brought Rooster inside stepped into the ring, opened the back of one of the wire cages and put Rooster inside the cage. Soon enough, another human stepped into the ring and put another cock in the other cage. Then Rooster realized what was happening. This time, instead of a fake cock, he was fighting a real one! A whistle blew, and the cages lifted up, leaving Rooster and the other cock in the ring. Rooster and the other cock circled each other for a few seconds until the other cock struck out with a claw. Then it began. Jabbing, leaping and twisting, the cocks fought until Rooster’s leg got hurt so bad he could hardly stand. Then it was over. The other cock took full advantage, pricking and pecking until Rooster fell down. A human jumped into the ring then and snatched the other cock while someone else took Rooster, twitching and scratching, to be doctored.

Rooster woke up later, back in the ramshackle barn that had become his home over the last couple of months, with

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

his head and legs covered in gauze, and once again he cried out in sadness for his lost family. Rooster tried to move, but his whole body shrieked in pain so he stood still. He looked down at his body, wrapped in gauze, flaring with



pain, and it stung him that this had happened to him. At that moment, Rooster decided that, once healed, he was going to train and fight as hard as he could, and that this was never going to happen to him again. He was going to beat every cock he ever fought.



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

In a few weeks Rooster was healed, and when the humans brought him back to the little shed he attacked the cloth cock with everything he had in him. In just a few weeks time he had built his strength back up to what it had been when he got injured. Every morning he cried out for his lost family, then dedicated himself to training. Soon the humans were strapping bigger and bigger weights onto his legs. He was jumping higher, pecking harder and reacting faster. Eventually, it had been almost eight months since his defeat. He was the strongest cock at the little farm. So, once again, the humans brought him to the old rusty pickup truck. Once again, they drove to the old house that had almost no paint by now. Once again, inside the old house, there was chaos.

"This one lost bad before," muttered somebody.

"Odds are 5 to 1!" bellowed some one else.

Once again, the humans put him in the little wire cage that was attached to a pulley mounted on the ceiling. Once again, another human stepped into the ring and put a fierce-looking cock in the other cage. Once again, the cages lifted up and left the two cocks in the ring. The cocks circled each other until the other cock cut at Rooster. But Rooster was ready; he leaped up and came down, jabbing fiercely at the other cock. And once again, the fight commenced. Wings whipping, the cocks leaped upon each other again. They fought for about five minutes, Rooster

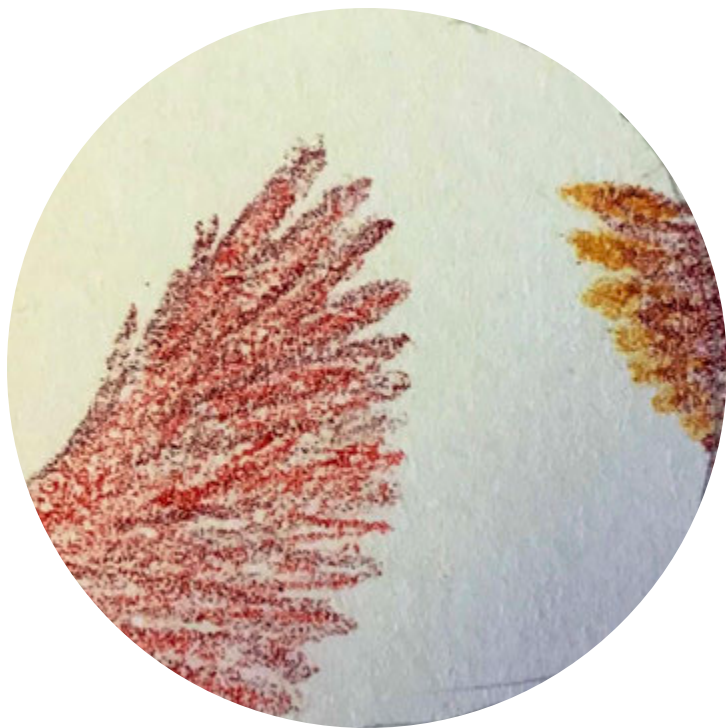
slowly grinding the other cock down until the other cock was lying still, face down in the dust. Then, once again, two humans jumped into the ring, except this time it was the other cock who got carried off to be doctored. The two humans who brought Rooster picked him up and brought him home victoriously.

From that day on Rooster woke up every morning and cried out for his lost family, then trained all morning and rested all afternoon, and about once a month the humans would take him to the old, decrepit house. He would fight and come home victorious.

One day when Rooster was about five years old the humans, as always, came and took him to the old house, except by now Rooster had gotten relatively famous, and lots of people came to see all of his fights. Whoever owned the old house had been able to renovate and build a big arena for cock fights. As always the humans lifted Rooster up and showed him to the crowds; as always the crowds roared with excitement; as always they put Rooster in the wire cage; and as always some other humans came and put a cock in the other cage. The cock he was fighting today was an up-and-coming young cock who was already very strong and accomplished. The bell rang, the cages lifted, and as always the cocks circled. The young cock struck first, but as always Rooster deftly evaded the attack and countered with a peck of his own, and then it had begun. The two renowned cocks, clawing and flapping,

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

battled for the win. They fought at an electric pace. Striking, jumping, jabbing and twisting until the young cock got in a well placed jab, so fast that almost nobody saw, right under Rooster's chin. Rooster fell to the ground,



still, blood gushing from his throat. He twitched twice, then Rooster was quiet. The humans surrounding the ring fell silent, then two humans jumped into the ring. One grabbed Rooster and rushed him out to be doctored, but it was to no avail. Rooster had died.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

When the humans came home, and the other cocks that Rooster had lived with all his life realized that he was gone, they were sad. When the cocks woke up the next morning without Rooster's cries they themselves were mournful and cried out in honor of Rooster—as they did every morning for as long as they lived. And when they died, other cocks cried out in honor of them.

That is the story of why cocks cry in the morning.

**Eli Pluecker** was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when he wrote this story. Elli attended Ashwood from second through eighth grade. He lives on Hatchet Cove Farm in Warren, Maine, and he really loves baseball, cows, and yaks. After graduating from Ashwood in the midst the coronavirus pandemic, Eli plans to go on to Medomak Valley High School. He really hopes you enjoyed his story about why roosters crow.



# HOW THE CACTUS GOT ITS PRICKLES

---

by Aidan Wyman

**G**reen skin sizzling, scared and sulking, Cactus was about to meet his fate. It was a skin-scorchingly hot, sunny day in the middle of the lonely, palm-tree speckled desert. Flamingo—a cruel, conniving, and confident bird with long legs and a pink body—and Hippo, a massive, malicious, and mean mammal with sandpaper-like grey skin, were bullying Cactus. Hippo and Flamingo bullied Cactus every day because he was an ugly, gullible, and weak plant with bare green flesh. The bullying consisted of Flamingo pecking at Cactus while Hippo

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

blasted him with streams of unmannerly phrases. This all made Cactus very depressed and lonely.

One day, Cactus was standing out in the sun during another one of his sessions of depression and yelled, "I



wish the desert wasn't so lifeless and empty!" and proceeded to bellow, "Can anybody hear me?" After receiving no response, he continued his sulking, feeling discouraged and alone. Little did Cactus know, The Great Spirit, protector of the desert, was listening and had begun to brew up a plan to help.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

The next day, Flamingo and Hippo were extremely bored and decided to once again plan a devious attack on Cactus. Hippo proceeded to conjure up some ill-mannered remarks and Flamingo sharpened his beak. They ambushed Cactus, and Hippo fired his most vulgar insult, which hit Cactus with great force in the right arm.

That was the final straw! Green, growling, and angry, Cactus screamed, "I wish I had some protection against these ungracious, unmannerly, and insulting animals."

Flamingo began to laugh hysterically and said, "Is that all you've got?" and then began to peck him.

This ambush lasted for quite some time until Flamingo and Hippo got tired of pestering Cactus and scurried off to find something to eat. After Flamingo and Hippo departure, Cactus felt like he could breathe again.

Then out of the corner of his eye, Cactus saw something. It was a creature unlike anything Cactus had ever seen before. Glowing intensely, it floated down from the clouds and then, in a booming reverberating voice, introduced itself. The creature said, "I am The Great Spirit, Guardian and Protector of the Desert. After watching you be constantly harassed by Flamingo and Hippo, I have decided to help you. Being The Great Spirit comes with some nifty perks such as casting spells, manipulating nature, and controlling time. I am here to give you

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

protection against those ungracious, unmannerly, and insulting animals. So, what do you say?"

Cactus, mouth gaping, eyes widening, was completely shocked. He never thought such a golden opportunity would come his way. After hesitating for a few seconds, Cactus said, "Of course! Thank you! I have never wanted something so badly in my life." Then Cactus began to cry with joy, even though he had no idea what The Great Spirit had in store. After a few seconds, when the sun had evaporated all of his tears, Cactus asked, "Are you going to stay here and keep me company in the empty desert?"

"No," The Great Spirit replied, "I must float high in the sky where I can see and hear everything that goes on in the desert." The Great Spirit then began to rise back up to his perch in the sky.

Cactus frantically yelled, "What about my protection against Hippo and Flamingo?" but The Great Spirit did not reply.

The next day, Cactus was confused and disappointed. When The Great Spirit had come to him the day before, he truly thought that he would finally be safe from Flamingo and Hippo. He thought The Great Spirit was going to help him. But, obviously, it was too good to be true.

Then, while Cactus was pondering yesterday's events, Flamingo and Hippo waltzed up to him and said in perfect synchrony, "Where were you yesterday?"



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"I was talking to The Great Spirit. He came down from the sky and confronted me and said he will give me protection against you two," Cactus replied.

Hippo rolled his eyes and sarcastically said, "Sure you did. Did you see a flock of flying pigs as well?" When Hippo made fun of Cactus, Flamingo saw terror in poor Cactus's eyes and for the first time, began to feel a little bit sorry for his behavior. He tried to put it aside, though, and laugh at Hippo's sarcastic remark—but he couldn't. Hippo laughed and began pummeling Cactus with rude phrases, but to Cactus's surprise, none of them touched his flesh.

Hippo and Flamingo's jaws dropped. Large sharp spines had sprung out of Cactus like a Jack-in-the-Box. These spines caught Hippo's ill-mannered remarks, which made Hippo very confused and Flamingo feel relieved.

After days of Hippo trying to bully Cactus, he was covered in an armor of prickles. Cactus finally felt safe.

Weeks passed and one day, Flamingo said to Hippo, "Look at what you have done to Cactus. He has so many spines."

"So what?" Hippo replied.

"The amount of spines he has represents how many times we have done something despicable to him," Flamingo said."

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

That was the first time that Hippo acknowledged how mean they had been to Cactus all these years. Then, Flamingo said, "I feel awful. Why don't we go and apologize to him."

Hippo nodded in agreement, and so they went to apologize to Cactus. When Cactus saw them he frowned



and braced himself, only to find out that they were doing the one thing he could have never dreamed they would do. Apologize.

"I am so sorry for the way I have behaved. I did not know how frequent and horrible my actions were until I saw all of your spines," said Flamingo.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"I am sorry as well," said Hippo.

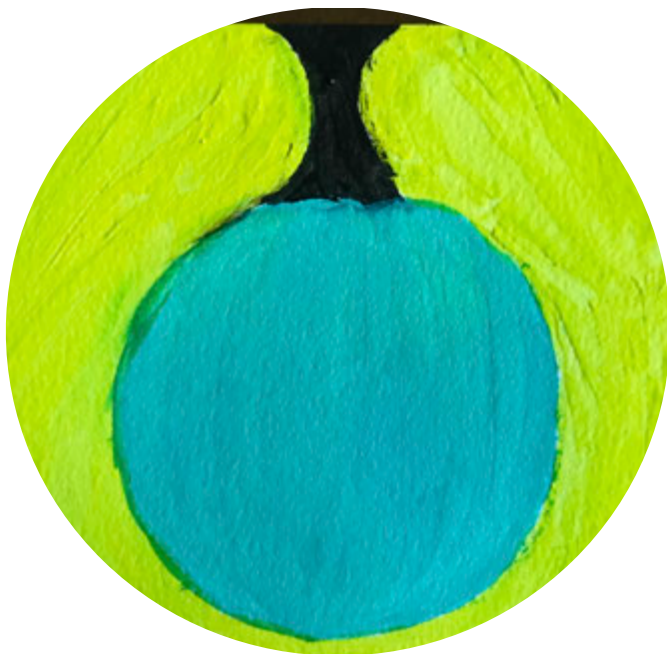
"I forgive you," Cactus said hesitantly.

That was the awkward beginning of a long friendship between Cactus, Flamingo, and Hippo. From that day forward, Cactus was never lonely again—but he kept his prickles. Just in case.

And that is how the cactus got its prickles.

**Aidan Wyman** wrote this story when he was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School. He has always been interested in cacti, and this fascination inspired him to create a cactus-oriented children's story. Some of Aidan's hobbies are candle-making, business, skiing, and mountain biking, all of which he takes part in on a somewhat regular basis. Aidan hopes this story will be cherished throughout the lower grades and will bring joy to everyone who reads it.

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



## GRAVITY'S TALE

---

by Sanbate Doshi

**L**ong ago in ancient China, far before there were any humans, animals or plants, there lived four beings. The first was an old man who had no heart, the second was a young woman named Zhòngli who was as sweet and caring as possible, and the third was Zhòngli's daughter, Gravity. Gravity was serious, somber, and never smiled. She would spend her days pondering everything

there was, thinking of problems and finding their solutions. She never spoke to her mother more than was necessary, and this saddened Zhònglì who would spend her time thinking of ways to get her daughter to become less solemn all the time. But she could not find a way.



One day, in despair, Zhònglì decided to go to the only other person she knew, the old man. She told Gravity she was going on a journey, to which Gravity gave no response, not even looking up from her thoughts.

Zhònglì felt as if her heart would break in two, but she managed to keep a smile on her face as she left. (At this

point, I should tell you there was one more person alive. And this person was watching, very closely.)

Now, Zhònglì made the long and tiring journey to the old man's house, and when she arrived he greeted her warmly. Of course, he did not actually like her, but he figured that she could help him with something he did not wish to do and then send her away. So when she asked him for a way to make Gravity smile, he grinned with pleasure and quickly agreed to help her.

"I can help you," he said, "But you'll need to help me, too."

Zhònglì was delighted. "Of course!" she beamed. "Xíngdòng, Bāngmáng." A deed for a deed and a favor for a favor.

"Excellent," he stated. "The job I require of you is not difficult. You must go to the Sahara Desert and pluck me a leaf from a palm tree."

"I didn't know there *were any* trees in the world. It seems impossible. But if this tree exists, then I will fetch you a leaf from it!" said Zhònglì. "But where *is* the Sahara Desert? I have never heard of it."

The old man smiled; this was going to be easier than expected.

"It's not that far," he began, "just across the Indian Ocean."

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

It should be noted that Zhònglì had no idea where the Indian Ocean was either, but she did not wish to seem foolish, so she simply nodded and left. Once she had figured where the Indian Ocean was, she quickly made herself a boat out of a hollowed log and, using a tree branch as an oar, she travelled over to the continent which we know as Africa. After several days, she was able to find an oasis with a few palm trees. And with a leaf tucked safely in her pocket, Zhònglì made the long journey back to China, and the old man.

When the old man saw Zhònglì approaching, he ran outside and snatched the palm leaf from her hands. "You've got it!" he exclaimed in delight.

Zhònglì was happy because, at long last, her daughter would smile. "So sir," she asked, "do you have the solution to my problem?"

The old man froze. In his pure giddiness he had forgotten his promise. Thinking fast, he went around the back of his hut, found an orb hanging from a vine, and brought it to her. "This shall make your child smile, without a doubt!" he said smiling.

Delighted, Zhònglì took the orb and, forgetting her fatigue, ran all the way home to Gravity where she presented her daughter with the orb and waited for a smile from her.



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

Gravity looked up at her mother, true curiosity written across her face as she admired the beautiful orb. However, she did not smile. "What," she asked quietly, "am I supposed to do with this?"



Zhònglì could practically feel her heart shattering; had she done all this work so her daughter could scorn her? "The person who gave it to me," she said in a shaky voice, "told me you would like it."

Gravity scoffed. "Why would I?" she remarked. "It's pretty to look at I suppose, but what use is it? It's just a

piece of glass." And saying so, she threw the orb to the ground where it broke into pieces. From the pieces rose up vines and leaves, swirling and whooshing in an invisible wind. Then came seeds, showering down upon them like drops of rain, and when they landed trees sprang up from them, trunks stretching, branches shooting out from them. Then all the seeds that had not grown into trees began sprouting smaller stems and blossoming flowers. The ground which had been brown before turned green with grass and the river banks became covered in moss. The former land was gone, replaced with luscious fields and meadows.

Gravity stared in shock at the world unfolding before her eyes and, without a word to her mother, ran off into the sprouting woods.

Zhònglì was sad Gravity had said nothing to her, but she felt hopeful. After all, her daughter wasn't talkative, and this was most likely the best thank you she would get. However, when nighttime came, and Zhònglì called for Gravity, no one came or answered her calls. Becoming worried, Zhònglì began to search for her daughter. Disregarding the thorns and snaking coils of plants wrapping around her arms and legs, Zhònglì stumbled through the dense forest, looking desperately for her child. Finally, after many hours of searching, Zhònglì found Gravity lying near a small pool of water, her eyes closed, and a bruise on her forehead.

Rushing to her, Zhònglì hurried to pick up her seemingly unconscious daughter.

"Gravity," she cooed. "Wake up now."

When Gravity didn't wake up, Zhònglì carried her home in her arms, where she finally awoke.

But when Gravity rose she was angry. "Is this why you brought this bauble home? To trick me? To get rid of me?"

Zhònglì was mortified; how could her daughter think such things of her? Anxiously, she reached for Gravity's forehead to check her temperature, but Gravity pushed her hand away.

"Don't touch me," she fumed. "If it wasn't for your ridiculous present, I wouldn't have hurt myself. Why couldn't you just let me be?"

And just like that, Zhònglì's heart broke again.

The next morning Zhònglì went again to the old man, clutching the broken pieces the orb, to demand an explanation. But when she arrived the old man knew what she wanted, and he had prepared an argument. "This present was supposed to make my daughter smile!" cried Zhònglì. "But it has only made her more unhappy."

The old man put on a mournful expression and began to speak, his voice low and regretful. "If your daughter did not appreciate this gift, then it simply means she is an

ungrateful child. It is not my fault you have raised her so poorly," he chided.

Zhònglì glared fiercely at the old man and quickly replied. "She *hurt* herself exploring in the forest you created."

But again the old man was ready. "It is not my fault if your child is foolish enough to hurt herself in a place where anyone should know to take caution. And once again, if the fault is not hers, it is yours for not teaching her how to be safe."

Though Zhònglì had come to the old man's house to find a solution, she had only found another problem. "Then what," she managed weakly, "do you suggest I do?"

Once again, the old man had won. Smiling kindly at the woman, he gave her gentle instructions. "Go to the biggest lake there is, and fetch the pearl that lies at the bottom of it. Then I will give you something that will most definitely make your daughter smile."

So, Zhònglì left and began to think about where the biggest lake might be. Suddenly, a voice began to speak. It was in her head, but certainly not her voice, nor her thoughts.

"Why," said the voice in a cheerful, airy voice, "the biggest lake?" here the voice paused, as if for dramatic

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

effect: "The ocean!" it exclaimed. Then it laughed merrily and was gone.

"Come back!" called Zhònglì "who are you?"

But the voice had disappeared.



Determined to find the pearl, Zhònglì went to the ocean and, once again, used her hollowed out log to go to the very center of the ocean. There, leaning over the edge of the log boat, she saw something gleaming brightly. "That must be the pearl!" she said in excitement. "But how to reach it?" and while she was pondering this, the voice spoke again.

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"I'll fetch it for you!" it declared, and the Zhònglì heard a splash and she turned to see a circle of ripples flowing outwards, as if someone had jumped into the water.

"Hello? Is anyone there?" called Zhònglì, but there was no answer. And so she waited until she heard a sharp crack



behind her, like the sound of a stone hitting wood. When she looked, she saw a beautiful, gleaming pearl in the back of her boat. Reaching for it, she smiled, feeling nothing but joy. Confusion left her, replaced by gratefulness. "Thank you!" she said "Whoever you are..." and it could have been

her mind playing tricks, but she thought she heard a faint laughter in response.

Now, with the pearl clutched safely in one hand, Zhònglì returned to the old man's house, where she gave him the pearl, and he gave her another orb and told her to break it on the ground as soon as she arrived home.

When she did, from it rose several small balls of light which drifted off into the distance and into the forest. Left with nothing to show her child, Zhònglì went inside her home and cried herself to sleep.

In the morning, however, when Zhònglì awoke she heard a shriek coming from outside. Thinking it was Gravity, she hurried to make sure her daughter was all right. But when she made it to the door, she saw her daughter being chased by two animals she had never seen before. Granted, she had never seen *any* animal before, so it should not be unexpected that she was confused. But, she knew enough to understand that her child was in danger, and she ran quickly to her, lifting her high above her in her arms and rushing to the house where she dropped Gravity onto her feet.

Once Gravity had been set down, she glared at her mother, and began yelling. "Is this another one of your plots?" she demanded, "Are you still trying to get rid of me?" And saying so, she ran from the house to where the old man lived. "My mother won't leave me alone, and I'm

tired of it. I was happy before she started interfering with my life. I wish she would disappear!" she screamed.

The old man could feel anger building up inside him; he certainly did not care for Zhònglì, but he had watched her struggling to help her daughter, accomplishing tasks that he had thought impossible, succeeding in every obstacle he threw at her, and here was the girl she had been trying so hard to please, wishing her gone. "Child," he began, trying to maintain his composure. "Do you know the toil your mother has put into making you happy?"

Gravity would not hear it. "I don't care! I don't want to see her ever again!"

And with that the old man lost his grasp on his temper and he yelled in a booming voice that could be heard for miles around. "If you do not wish to see your mother, then you shall not. Not only that, but you shall see no one! No plants nor animals shall you ever see again, and never again shall you see the light of the sun!" And so saying, he opened the earth beneath Gravity's feet, and she fell to the center of the earth.

Tears streaming, body trembling, Gravity looked up out of the crack that was now her home and saw the old man looking regretfully down at her. "Please," she begged, "Let me out of here!"



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

The old man shook his head sorrowfully. "I wish I had not lost my temper," he confessed, "but I cannot and will not let you go." And with that, he left.

Meanwhile, Zhònglì had heard the old man's declaration and had rushed to his house just in time to see Gravity plunge into the earth's core. And now she hung, sobbing, on the old man's robes begging him to release her daughter. But he would not hear her, and what was more, he sent her from his house telling her never to return.

When she got outside she screamed her anger and pain to the sky—cursing everyone and everything. She had lost her child, and this was a loss she could never recover from. Her heart was more than broken. It was destroyed. She wanted nothing to do with the world.

Now, in the midst of her suffering, Zhònglì suddenly felt warmth engulfing her, and she heard a voice speaking to her. It was muffled, and she could not hear it clearly, her ears filled with her own cries, but she managed to get a hold on her emotions for a moment to listen to the voice.

"Shhh, don't cry so," it sang softly. "Your daughter will be all right."

At this Zhònglì sat up straight and demanded, "So, I will see Gravity?"

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

The voice was silent for a time before responding. "No, I'm afraid not. You will not see your daughter again, but she will live, and learn to smile, to laugh, to be happy."

Zhònglì sighed heavily and choked out a few words, "How can you be so sure? How can I trust you? I do not even know your name!"

"Levity," the voice said softly.

"What?" scoffed Zhònglì now turning cold.

"My name. Levity. That's my name. Now will you trust me?" asked Levity.

Zhònglì still wasn't satisfied. "What can you do to make my daughter happy?" she said scornfully. "I've spent my life trying to make her smile. What makes you think you can do better?"

Levity laughed. "Because, you gave her everything but the thing she truly needed. A friend. I can give her that, and that will make her happy."

Now Zhònglì began crying again. "Will you promise me you will take care of my daughter?"

Levity hesitated before answering, "I cannot take care of your daughter; only she can do that. I can only help her. But I will help her as much as I can in every way possible."

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

And though she was still filled with hurt, Zhònglì trusted Levity, asking one last question before letting her leave "Are you a human? I have never seen you before."

Levity laughed. "Not quite a human, but I am more capable than even your old man," she stated. "But that is



not important. I must go now, to Gravity. But I will visit you."

At this Zhònglì perked up. "You'll visit me? I can speak to you?"

Levity laughed once more, a light airy laugh that made Zhònglì want to forget her cares and smile. "Yes," she

replied. "I will visit you. And I will tell you about Gravity. But now I really must leave. Goodbye Zhònglì!" And with that, Levity was gone, but the warmth that had surrounded Zhònglì when she had come remained. And so did the happiness she had brought.

And now, Levity went down, down into the earth, where Gravity was crying, and spoke. "No more crying, you'll only exhaust yourself. Now let's see...hmm, this is quite a small space. How about we make it bigger?" and with that the walls around Gravity moved much farther away leaving her enough space to stand and walk around in.

Gravity looked through her tears to see who was speaking to her, but all she saw was a bright light, illuminating the small room. "Who are you?" she asked shakily.

Levity laughed and it made Gravity feel light. "My name is Levity," she answered "and I'm here to be your friend."

At that, Gravity's tears stopped, and she became haughty. "Who told you I needed a friend?" she demanded.

But Levity didn't get offended. Instead, she laughed again for longer this time "Why, you told me!" she giggled.

At that, Gravity began to laugh. And she laughed and laughed and laughed. This was the beginning of a long and close friendship. Gravity grew to love Levity as a sister,

and she learned to laugh, to smile, and to be happy. The two would laugh together, and it would shake the earth. This is what we now know of as earthquakes. And as for the strange force you may have forgotten about which drew the wolves to Gravity, well that force is still around. It pulls everyone towards her in the center of the earth and keeps us grounded.

True to her promise, Levity went to visit Zhònglì every once and a while to inform her about how Gravity was, and to pass along messages. And while it wasn't the happily ever after Zhònglì had dreamed about, it was enough.

**Sanbate Doshi** was in 7th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when she wrote this story. She was born in Ethiopia and raised around the world. Sanbate was read to, and eventually started reading, children's books from all over the globe. Sanbate currently lives part of the year in Warren, Maine—with her mother, her aunt, their roommate, and seven cats and dogs—and part of the year in Cambridge, Massachusetts with her father.

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



## WHY PEBBLES ARE PATIENT

---

by Harrison Garcia



n a sunny, hot day, on a beach far away, there lived a pebble named Pete.

Pete never talked to other pebbles; he talked only with his friend Dave, a wave that always came back to him whenever Pete wanted to talk.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

One day Pete got tired of Dave leaving him every five seconds. Pete said, "Why do you leave so often?"

Dave replied, "I have important stuff to work on, like taking caring for my family. I can't always be with you."

Pete understood but had a lot of questions: Why can't I go with Dave and stay in the ocean so I can always talk to Dave? Why do I have to stay back and wait for Dave to come back?" But Pete replied, I understand."

"Good, now I have to go," Dave said. A few days had passed, and Pete was impatient to get close enough to Dave to be frolicking in the ocean. Pete skipped across the line of pebbles waiting to be pulled into the ocean. "Hey! I am waiting here," other pebbles hollered.

"Sorry," Pete said, still trying to get past everyone.

"You need to learn to be patient," a grain of sand said.

Pete had no idea what the sand was saying, "What does 'patient' mean?" he asked.

The sand and pebbles looked at each other, knowing that Pete was never taught a valuable lesson.

"I'll handle this," Dave said as he arrived. "Pete, patient means to be able to tolerate delays or problems without becoming annoyed or anxious."

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Pete. "I was being selfish."



"It's all right. I understand. Life can be confusing at times, but just remember, good adventures can come out of bad situations," Dave said, trying to make his explanation as simple as he could.

"Like what?" Pete said. "What could have possibly come out of this that's good, after I shoved everyone out of the way and wanted everything to be about me?"

Dave felt sorry for Pete, replying, "I can give a couple of examples, feeling confident that Pete would understand, "You learned what the word patient meant, which you didn't understand before. Second, you acknowledged knowing what you did wrong. And third, you're improving from your mistakes. So next time you're in a similar situation, you'll look back and know that you will be patient and won't have any trouble being thoughtful of others.

"Wow," Pete said lying there, as if his life was flashing before his eyes, "Next time I'm waiting for you to come back, I'll be full of self control."

Dave smiled and replied, "You don't need to wait for me again, actually."

Pete was confused. He wondered if Dave forgot that he came back and forth to talk to him, and said, "What do you mean? You always go back and forth, taking care of your family in the ocean."

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"Well, you see Pete, what if I told you, I have a special spot for you in the ocean?"

Pete smiled knowing that Dave would always be there with him, instead of going back and forth to chat with him.

"Well what are we waiting for then," Dave exclaimed.

"You need to pull me in so I can go to my spot in the ocean," Pete said, knowing that Dave forgot that pebbles can't move unless a force strong enough to pull them or skip them across the beach was present.

"Oh yeah, that's right," Dave realized. "Well come here you little pebble."

And so Pete and Dave set off into the deep realms of the ocean and talked all they wanted to, and even when Dave was not there, Pete knew Dave was with him, even if he could not see him.

**Harrison Garcia** wrote this story when he was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School. He hopes this story encourages children to be patient and not rush. Harrison wants children to remember to stay calm, be well-mannered, treat others as they would want to be treated, give to those in need and be humble about it. "Good things will come to you," says Harrison, "if you do the right thing, and to just be patient."



## WHY THE MOON AND SUN RISE AND SET

---

by Lily Mott

**H**ave you ever wondered why the Moon rises and the Sun sets? Before humans, animals, creatures, and the earth, there were just the planets, living in the

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



big wide universe,  
stretching for miles and  
miles, universe after  
universe. Well...

Let me take you back to a  
time before time, but after  
creation. The Sun and  
Moon were always sharing  
time and space. They had  
been sharing time and  
space since they were  
created. When they were  
young, all they did was  
dance with the stardust  
and sun rays, enjoying the  
essence of life. They

enjoyed every bit of being together. Their personalities  
were so similar, adventurous, curious, and hyper that they  
bonded so well together. But as they grew older they  
began to get frustrated with one another. They both grew  
into different planets. The Moon became more lazy and  
unaware of its surroundings. The Sun became more selfish  
and talkative. As they observed the other planets far away  
from one another with their own time and space, they  
began to think it was unfair they had to share everything.  
Once this problem began to grow and infuriate the Sun  
and Moon, they began to argue bitterly with one another.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

The Sun exclaimed, "I just want to shine brighter than any other universe and I can't do that when you're always around me!"

"Well, that's not my problem," said the Moon.

This bickering went on for days, weeks, and months. It even began to aggravate the other planets. After years of thinking, the Sun and Moon wanted to talk with the Soul of the Universe about how they felt, annoyed, enraged, and upset.

The Soul of the Universe was a spirit who controlled the way of life for all things. It created the planets, space, and galaxies. The Soul of the Universe was the soul of life. The planets knew that they must approach the Soul of the Universe with respect and love. As they expressed to the Soul of the Universe how they felt, and that they needed their own time, separate from each other, the Soul of the Universe disagreed. Discussing, consulting, and debating,



the Moon and Sun begged the Soul of the Universe to separate them. The Soul of the Universe said no, and demanded that they must leave instantly. After being disappointed by the Soul of the Universe, the Sun and Moon became unhappy and felt as though they weren't being heard.

Shining, glowing, and gleaming, the Sun and Moon sat smooshed together in space. As years went by, the Moon became more lazy, and began to leave its stardust everywhere. This infuriated the sun so much that the Sun would have to shine so brightly that the stardust would not be seen, and this caused the Sun to be exhausted. The Sun and Moon began to fall apart into space because of their hardships.

Meanwhile, the Soul of the Universe created a new planet called Earth. Earth was home to animals, plants, water, and land. People did not exist yet. The Sun and Moon were fascinated by Earth and wanted to visit each place on the planet over and over again. This sparked up a new idea in the Sun and Moon's desperate minds. They would speak to the Soul of the Universe and tell it they want to have their own time so they can visit each beautiful place around Earth. The next morning the Sun and Moon approached the Soul of the Universe, hearts pounding, hands sweating.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"Oh Great Spirit," they both spoke, "please consider our request. Let us run wild and free on our own. Let us adventure to different parts of the earth on our own. Let us live freely on our own!"



The Soul of the Universe looked confused but content. "Let me ask you something," the Soul of the Universe responded. "What beauty will come out of this to offer to the universe?"

The orbs looked at each other and thought for a minute.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"The Moon will finally be able to show the gleaming stardust in the beautiful night sky!" the Sun expressed.

"The Sun will be allowed to shine its own light as brightly as it wants!" the Moon declared.

"We will both do what we've always dreamt of doing, living freely and offering the universe what we can on our own!" they both said.

The Soul of the Universe looked pleased with their wanting and told them to return to their home. Confused that they had to go back to sharing time, the Sun and Moon went to bed annoyed. When the Sun woke looking down on Africa, it noticed that the Moon was nowhere to be found! The Moon woke up looking down on Fiji. They both exclaimed in excitement and each minute they slowly rotate around the world and visit a new spot, far far away from one another.

The Sun is now able to shine its golden rays as bright as it pleases. The Moon is now able to play with its beautiful star friends. Weeks and months went by with the two planets not being near one another. They weren't able to connect anymore.

One morning the Sun and Moon woke up and felt lonely, afraid, and deserted. They spoke to the Soul of the Universe once more and told it how they felt. The Soul of the Universe then gave the two planets a bond of light. The Sun and Moon can only shine brightly because of each



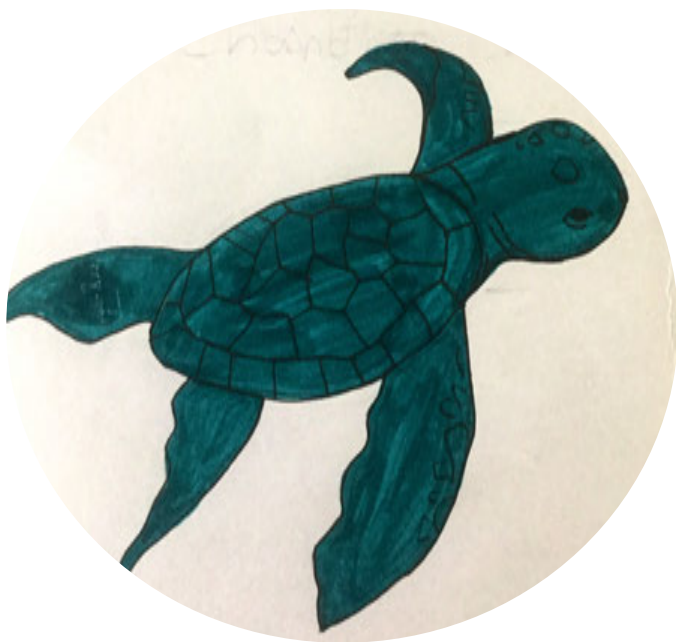
## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

other. They both make sure there is light in the day and night. To this day, the two orbs now share a bond of light.

When the Moon rises, it is only traveling from a different area in the world. When the Sun sets, it's on its way to go visit another part. That is why the Moon rises, and the Sun sets.

**Lily Mott** was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when she wrote this story. Lily grew up gazing at the stars, moon and planets, pondering the undiscovered universe. Lily was inspired to create a story about something unique that all ages would enjoy and love. She has always enjoyed writing stories about questions all humans ask. She loves to share her thoughts with people who share the same interests and looks forward to creating more *pourquoi* stories in the future.

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



## A TURTLE'S TALE

---

by Roza Chandler

Once upon a time, in a rocky field of mystery filled with animals of all kinds, lived Martin the turtle. He didn't have many friends, not because he was shy or didn't want company, but because of his personality. Martin was a complete know-it-all. He was always showing off and bragging about everything he could do—even if he

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

didn't do it very well. He would ruin plays, conversations, and much more. All the animals hated Martin. They thought he was the meanest creature created. But Martin didn't care. He would just go about his day, interrupting and messing up everyone else's.



One day a cloud by the name of Joey had had enough of Martin's ways. Joey decided to teach Martin a little lesson. Feet stomping, lips smiling, Martin walked up a hill, when it started to rain. At first it was just a harmless sprinkle, so he just kept walking. Then Martin saw a big flash of lightning followed by a big boom of thunder.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

Martin jumped at the sound. He started walking faster and faster until he was in a full sprint. He looked around frantically for a place to hide. He looked to the left and right, front and back. And there, out of the corner of his eye Martin saw a small, round, greenish cave. Martin ran as fast as his legs could carry him towards the cave, and by the time he got there it was pouring. Martin squeezed into his tiny shelter—he just barely fit. And waited. And waited.

Martin waited day and night, until finally the sun came out from behind Joey. After the last raindrop fell and touched the ground, Martin decided it was safe to come out. He took one last look around, just to make sure he was good to go. After Martin was satisfied with his surroundings, he started to move. But soon, Martin realized something terrible. HE WAS STUCK!!! He couldn't believe it. Martin was stuck in the hiding place he had spent too long in. Martin moved back and forth, again and again with no hope of getting out.

After half an hour of desperately fighting to get out, Martin came to a conclusion: He wasn't getting out by himself. Martin looked around for someone to help. Once again he looked left and right, front and back. Suddenly, he saw his good friend Barley the Bear. Frantically Martin called out to her. "Please help me, Barley, I'm stuck in this cave!"

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"No thank you," said Barley. "You were very mean to me the other day at the pond."

"I was just trying to help you!" yelled Martin.

"Well go find someone else to help you!" said Barley, "I'm leaving you here".

Martin looked helplessly after her, as she walked away. "What will I do now?" mumbled Martin to himself.

"Maybe you should stay there," said a voice next to him.

Martin quickly looked up to see a little, old ladybug.

"Who are you?" asked the curious turtle.

"My name is Lily," she said, "and I am here to help you. But only if you will let me".

"What are you going to do? You're no bigger than a penny!"

The wise ladybug looked into Martin's brown eyes and replied: "I may be small, but I have the power to help you."

"Well what's your plan?" asked Martin. "How are you going to get me out?"

"I never said I would get you out. I said I would help you."

"Fine," sighed Martin. "How are you going to help me?"

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"If you stay in your little cave, you won't ever be rained on again!" sang Lily. "You won't ever have to run for cover again."

"But it's so heavy! How do you expect me to ever run again?!" cried Martin.

Lily sighed. "That is a sacrifice you will have to make. If you ever want to move from this place, you will take my advice," she scolded. Otherwise you will be stuck here for the rest of time." Lily said farewell, and wings fluttering, mind free, she floated into the sunset.

After Lily was gone Martin didn't know what to do. As he sat there he started to think. He thought about his life and what he had accomplished. As Martin was thinking he realized what a bad friend he had been. He thought about how many birthdays he had ruined, how many performances he had messed up, and how many days he had not cared about who he was hurting. As Martin pondered this, he grew sadder and sadder. He had no friends or family that cared about him anymore.

One week went by, and Martin was still thinking about what a terrible person he had been and how many people he had let down.

On day seven Martin couldn't take it anymore. He had to fix what he had destroyed. I just need to say sorry and hope they forgive me, he thought. If they don't, then I will never bother them again. Martin slowly stood up.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

"This cave is heavier than I thought!" he said aloud.  
"This will be a long, slow, and difficult journey. But I am determined to get back home."

Step by step Martin made his journey to try and mend



the wounds he made. One week went by, and Martin stopped once for water and sleep.

Two week. Three weeks. One month came and left.

After seventeen weeks with very few stops, Martin finally made it home. The first thing he did when he got there was collapse. When he woke up, everyone he knew was



## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

standing around him. After blinking from the blinding sun, Martin carefully stood up.

"What is he doing here?" said a voice. I don't know!" said another. "I thought he was dead.

"Well?" said a familiar voice.

Martin looked around until he was staring into the eyes of Barley. He took a deep breath and began to talk. He told them about the storm and how he hid in the tiny cave. He told them how he got stuck and couldn't get out, how Lily came to help him, and the advice that she gave him. And finally he told about his long journey home. Before anyone could answer, Martin began again.

"I just wanted you all to know how sorry I am. I know that I was a terrible friend, and I have come to make it right," said Martin in a sad, tired voice. Suddenly Martin felt a warm paw on his arm. He looked up to see Barely smiling down at him.

"We forgive you," she comforted Martin, "and we will all help you along the way.

Martin looked up to see many warm smiles and loving eyes all around him. "Thank you all so much," he said in a small voice. "I promise I won't let you down again."

Now to this day, whenever a turtle hatches they find a tiny cave—we call it a "shell"—to hide in until the storm

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

passes. But the shells are very heavy, so it is hard for them to move fast.

And that is the story of how the turtle got its shell.

**Roza Chandler** was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when she wrote this story. Roza was born at home in Warren, Maine. When she was eight, Roza and her family moved to Hope, Maine. Roza wrote a story about turtles because her grandparents live by the ocean in Small Point, Maine, and Roza loves the ocean. "It is my safe place," Roza says, "where I can just be myself." Roza also love turtles. "I think they are wise and beautiful." She hopes you enjoy her story.



## HOW HUBERT THE BUG STOLE THE WOODPECKER'S SONG

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by George Bickham

Once upon a time, when the world was just beginning, there was a village that stood in a peaceful clearing. This settlement was surrounded by a forest in which, in the deepest and darkest parts, great

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

evils lurked, while in the sacred groves, beings of light lived in harmony with the village.

In this wood lived Woodpecker, who every day made his way to the village and take their food. You are probably



wondering how such a humble being as the woodpecker may steal from so many. The secret is, in those far off times, every single thing, from the grandest mountain to the smallest little green bug ( you'll hear more about him later ), is imbued with a spark of magic, which can grant those with the ability to harness the spark strange abilities. In the case of Woodpecker, his song could make even

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

Argos, the man with a thousand eyes, fall asleep in a single note. So, Woodpecker just glided into town, sung a ballad or two, then he strolled out, with his beak filled with corn and bread.

Many years passed with no sign of this thievery stopping, until an old peddler, who went by the odd and mysterious name of Sap Man, came into town on a little red tricycle. The townspeople were flummoxed by this apparently crazy, wrinkled old man, and their first thought was to send him packing. As the militia walked briskly toward Sap Man, he calmly raised his hand, and, as one, the town became utterly frozen. "I know of your troubles," smiled the old man, "and I may be of great assistance to you." He snapped his gnarled fingers, and the town unfroze.

"But how?" cried the smith. "We've tried glue, webs, nets, sleeping potions....." He continued to count them all on his finger until he ran out.

In reply, Sap Man reached into a bush and pulled out a kicking, struggling little green bug with its arms flailing in all directions. When it saw Sap Man, Hubert, the small green bug with a big personality stopped struggling and fixed him with a baleful look. "Oh. It's you. Can you please put me down?"

"Not now my little friend," said the Sap Man. "I have a favor to ask."

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

Woodpecker clung onto an old oak, snoring gently. He was very tired, after all that business with the village trying, once again, to trap him using that Smith's vile concoction. He needed a good solid nap with nothing going wrong for a change. But that, sadly, was not going to happen today.

Hubert the bug was sneaking up the tree to where Woodpecker slept, trembling with nerves, shaking with exhilaration, and vibrating with the thought of this great heist. Carefully, he made his way over the bark so he could just reach into Woodpecker's beak, where he pulled out a tiny orb, pulsing in 6/8 time. This, you see, was Woodpecker's song. Hubert was very tempted to shout, "I did it!" but because of the very large woodpecker snoring peacefully directly next to him, he decided that it might not be the best idea. Instead, he made the long climb back down the tree. Suddenly, a leaf fluttered down, and Hubert was so nervous, he let out a squeak and fell 10 feet into a soft pile of leaves.

Woodpecker woke up with a start, and tried to say, "Who's there?" but all that came out was a tiny squeak, for his song was gone! Frantically, he looked around, just spotting a pair of wriggling green legs disappearing under the bark. Like an avenging Angel, he swooped down and began pecking at the bark, trying frantically to get his song back, but to no avail. He flew from tree to tree pecking into every one, thinking that each one would hold Hubert.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

Wisely, Hubert vanished into the meadow and watched Woodpecker fly all around the forest. Over the years that followed, the village returned to a peaceful existence, while Hubert and Woodpecker continued to play cat-and-mouse. Occasionally, however, when Hubert is far enough away



from Woodpecker, he likes to use the song to play little tricks with the song, which is why you might suddenly want to go to sleep in a meadow, and wake up with a little green bug on your nose. And that is how Woodpecker lost his song.

## *How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*

**George Bickham** was in 8th grade at Ashwood Waldorf School when he wrote this story. Before moving to Maine, George lived in Qatar, England, and Texas and traveled to and fro over the Atlantic with his family, occasionally his friends, and always on an eight-hour flight. George enjoys reading, making and playing board games, and constructing vast superstructures made out of anything he can find, including Marble Run© pieces, Legos© and, occasionally, cookies. He also has a great time playing Dungeons & Dragons.



*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other Stories*



*The Class of 2020 atop Mount Battie, Camden, Maine*

**Back row L to R:** Jeremy Clough, class teacher;  
Gabe Wheeler, Lily Mott, Sanbate Doshi, Aidan Wyman,  
Roza Chandler, Eli Pluecker, Ina Wolovitz.

**Middle row L to R:** Jonny Troutman, Sadie Luehman,  
Anna Hildreth, Zola Roberts, Mazy Howell.

**Seated, front L to R:** Sofia Howell, Scarlet Labbe-Watson,  
Harrison Garcia, George Bickham.



**H**ave you ever wondered  
how the turtle got its  
shell, why the sun and  
moon rise and set, how flowers got  
their colors, why pebbles are so  
patient, or why the rooster crows?

*How the Cactus Got Its Prickles and Other  
Stories* will take you on a journey to explore  
these mysteries and many others, as you wind  
your way through space and time with animals,  
humans, and elements in search of lost friends  
and new adventures. And, while not each of  
life's little stories has a happy ending, happiness  
is always within reach, hidden in plain view.

This book was written and illustrated by the  
7th and 8th graders of Ashwood  
Waldorf School's Class of 2020.  
It is dedicated with love and  
devotion to readers—just  
like you!

