

# The Blue Guitar Jr.

*Featuring  
children's  
fiction and  
poetry  
winners  
for 2010*



# The Blue Guitar Jr. writers contest

# The Winners' Circle

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“Things as they are are changed upon the blue guitar.”

— Excerpt from Wallace Stevens’ 1937 poem “The Man With the Blue Guitar.” Copyright reserved, Random House Inc.

# Time For Change

## By Meena Venkataramanan

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“April, I’m busy right now! Go fly a kite!” hollered my mom from inside the kitchen.

“We don’t even have a kite!” I yelled back, even though I knew it was an expression. I decided to check on my baby sister, Gretel. Gretel was only a few months old and had an accident every five minutes. But I was used to that. I was the one who changed her diaper when Mom was busy in the kitchen. I trotted inside Gretel’s alphabet-themed room. I sat on the rocking chair and was about to pick her up when she did the most surprising thing. Gretel rolled over! “Mom! Come quick!” I screamed.

“What is it? What happened?!” she shouted. She ran over to Gretel’s room and narrowed her eyes. “I don’t see anything!” I motioned for her to come over to her crib. Gretel rolled again. Mom stood there, wide-eyed. “Go get the video camera!” she exclaimed. I ran to get it as she kept watching Gretel roll over and smile and the roll again. When I came back Mom had put Gretel on the floor so she had more room to roll. We video-taped her continuously roll over until the tape was full.

That night, when I was getting ready for bed, I thought about how Gretel had just achieved her first milestone in this house. Next would be crawling, then walking, then talking. I thought about how I had lived here all my life, and my first steps were on these floors and my first words echoed through these walls. This house was full of memories. Good ones and bad ones. I wouldn’t trade this house for a mansion. Nothing can replace the times we’ve had here.

I was having a wonderful dream that I was a gymnast and could do back flips all over the gym when I felt a hard tap on my shoulder. I forced open my dopey eyes to see a face that looked like my mother’s. The face was blurry so I rubbed my eyes to see my mom with a terrified expression on her face. “April! Wake up! We have to leave!”

I yawned. “Oh, mom! You’re mistaken! It’s Saturday! We don’t have to go anywhere!” I said, still half asleep.

She dragged me off the bed. “The house caught on fire a few minutes ago! It’s ruined! We have to move! Dad’s trying to find a place to stay until we find a new



Meena was born in London, England. Meena enjoys reading, spelling, and dancing when she is not writing. She has won many writing and poetry contests. Her favorite subjects are language arts, music, and math. Meena wants to be a doctor and writer when she grows up. She has a great imagination.

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house! Grab some of your stuff! We can buy new stuff when we find a new house! Quickly!” I snapped into reality. My heart started beating faster by the second. Tears started to trickle down my face.

“Mom! We can’t just leave! What about all my friends and all our memories! How can we just leave our house?”

My mom gave me a kiss on the cheek. “I know it’s hard. But we’ll talk later. We have to move before it gets worse!” She hurried out of my room. I grabbed Honey, my little stuffed bear I had since I was one, and my favorite book. I snatched a handful of clothes, a hairbrush, and a headband and scurried out of the room. I ran into Gretel’s room and scooped her up. She started crying because I woke her up. This time, I didn’t stop her. I cried with her. I couldn’t just leave the place I was born. Just yesterday the world was perfect and today it turned upside down. Just then I noticed a hole that had blasted through the letter ‘Z’ on Gretel’s wall. I checked the clock. It was 1:00 a.m. Gretel had dozed off to sleep in my lap. Mom ran into the room just then. “Girls! Get in the car! There’s no time to sit around!” I grabbed a handful of diapers for Gretel as we dashed out of the room. It was time to say goodbye to #1245 Leigh St., the place we grew up.

My mom woke me up when we reached our new house. Gretel and I had fallen back asleep for the car ride. I peered out of the window. The houses looked the same. They both were creamy-colored and had two stories. They looked nothing like our old house. Just thinking of our old house made me want to cry. When we went inside, everything was different from our old house. It smelled of lavender scent, which made me sneeze. I’d known that I’d hate this place from the moment I set foot inside. “I know what you’re

thinking,” said my mom. “This condo is only temporary. We’ll find somewhere better to live. But I promise you’ll like it here soon. There’s a park just a few blocks away, and the school’s supposed to be great.”

I snorted. In my experience, no school was great. “Which is my room?” I asked. My mom and dad exchanged glances.

“Well, there are only two rooms...so you and Gretel have to share a room.” I threw back my head and laughed.

“You guys are kidding, right? You would never make me share a room with Gretel!” But they just stood there, nodding. A terrified look spread across my face. How could I sleep when Gretel would cry in the middle of the night? How could I live with Gretel when she had an accident on our carpet every five minutes? It was impossible! My mom folded her arms and sighed.

“April, I know how mad you are. But just cooperate for now, please?” I picked up Gretel and we made our way to my, or our, new room. I sat on the windowsill and gazed out the window. I saw a couple of girls jump-roping on the lawn. I didn’t feel like joining them. Suddenly, I felt myself crying. For no reason, that was. I just missed living in our house. I wanted to go back. I wanted to see my friends. I just wished I could go back in time and stop the fire from happening. But I just couldn’t.

Then I heard a voice behind me. “Why so sad?” It was my dad. He sat down on the floor. “April, you’re thinking about the past. Don’t moan and groan about previous times. Think about the future. About all the great times you’ll have. And remember, the memories will always lie in your heart. They won’t go anywhere.” He put his arm around me. I smiled. It was the first time I had smiled today. Then I realized change wasn’t so bad after all. I decided to go and join those girls. Things were getting better already.

# Franco

## By Mira Takamura

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**W**orn down old albums, being stacked up as I walk past memory lane. This part of my past, I remember, was the most dramatic, exciting, and so mysterious. Many times everything would be dropped on my head and I would be sucked into the drain and I would suffer. Oh, the many times I suffered, oh the many times I wished I could just go back in time and fix all my mistakes; live my life over again. Now all those past memories are stuffed into those dusty albums.

Sitting in the corner of the classroom with my nose in a book, I never had many friends. The thought never bothered me. I actually preferred being by myself than being social. Never having the experience with people, the only people I would talk to were my parents. Sadly they were, by no means ever with me, because of their long 16 hours work shifts. Our petite blue house was always empty, as I would find a way to stay out of reach from boredom.

As I looked through those albums, I found myself looking upon one certain picture. My mother took this with her old vintage camera, which I thought was the silliest thing I have ever seen. I didn't know that she had taken this picture until she had brought it home one day after having all of her pictures processed. I was sitting in the middle of my small cramped room holding a book. She had taken it right when I was about to look up to see what she was doing. In the background, there was the mirror that had given me hope.

The handsome brass colored frame had no fancy design, which was pretty unusual for an antique. It had battle scars everywhere. But in this very mirror, I met a friend. A friend I have been craving to see, yet scared at the same time. He was a friend I could talk about countless times saying he was real, but wonder if he actually was. A long story unfolds as the memory of this mirror comes to mind.

I had gotten this mirror from my dear mother on my birthday. Just thinking of my reaction scares me. So excited I had gotten it, I had screamed at the top of my lungs.

“Oh Mother thank you so much!” I exclaimed.



Mira Takamura is a thirteen-year-old eighth grader at Desert Arroyo Middle School. Living with her in Carefree, Arizona are her mother, father, and younger sister. The story “Franco” was actually a project assigned in the eighth grade writing class. The story was inspired by a mirror she received for her birthday. Writing and story telling have played a big role in her wanting to pursue a career in cinematography.

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“I’m glad you’re happy with what you got. Too bad father couldn’t make it here on time.” Just hearing her voice let me know how important his work was, to miss my birthday. My life wasn’t the best, but at least I had one.

Afterwards, in month’s time, everything dropped on my head. As her body was naturally weak, my mother became sick. I never knew what was wrong with her. Only acting normal in front of me, my parents would go to work normally, and come home at their usual time. The way I felt when I realized that something was wrong with my mother. I was horrified, dumbfounded, angry, and felt guilty for not realizing earlier. I couldn’t believe I didn’t notice even before that, and that her movement was becoming stiffer and stiffer and looked more painful each step she took. I watched my own mother die.

“Look to your father... your father is a strong man...” she whispered just seconds before she left me. The bed she was laying in for the past three days felt empty and cold as her body went limp.

I don’t remember anything after that. I don’t even want to. I just remember staying up every night in shock on what I had just lost. I would sometimes skip school and just stay at home staring at myself in my mirror, the only real memory I had of a birthday gift from my mother. I never cried, there was no need to cry when there were other ways to express sadness, and anger, and stress. I knew that.

While I was suffering, being trapped in my own world, I never would have imagined how much my father suffered. In front of me, he would smile, talk, and occasionally laugh, but sometimes in the middle

of the night, I would wake up to the sound of crying. He was missing her in his dreams, even though he never showed it when I was there. Then, what I needed the most, was someone that could take care of me, and comfort me, making me forget everything that had happened. I didn’t want to believe that my father had weakened from my mother’s death. Your father is a strong man... Was this a lie?

My father was weaker than I, or anybody had expected. A few months after my mother, I lost my father. All he wanted was to run away from suffering and start a new life. He had left me leaving a note of apology that would never be forgiven.

Filled with rage, I would think how cruel my father was for leaving me – his little girl, his one baby. Sometimes jealousy would find its way through to me. My father could write down what he wanted most on just one single paper between the words Dear Sweetheart, and Love Father. What I wanted could NEVER be written that easily. Never could be expressed in sentences, or even words. I envied him for that.

I was moved to my aunt’s house that day so I can have a place to live. The only things I brought were my clothes, Father’s note, and my mirror. I was given my own room. That was the first time in a great while that I cried. My reflection mirrored me as I did so. Every night after that very day, I would go up to my small room and cry; cry until I could cry no more.

One mysterious day, I woke up to a strange, unfamiliar voice.

“You have water in your eyes.” Says he, “This is so strange, I have never heard of it!” Thinking it’s all a

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dream too real; I try twisting into a better position and try to fall asleep again.

“Hello? Hello, sleepy head no more nap time for you.” He pulled off my sheets and that’s when I noticed that this was no dream. As he pulled at my sheets, I fell along with it.

“Wh-who are you?” I stuttered. He didn’t answer. This is not happening! It’s all too crazy! I thought. I first sort out my thoughts. Ok, well Auntie is at school and Uncle is at work, so there is NO way this little boy could have gotten in.

I faced him to get my answer and met eye contact for the first time. I suddenly noticed how charming he was. His perfect shade of golden hair, eyes sparkling each time light was caught in them, basically his face was one of an angel’s. He was about the size of an eight year old.

“Can you tell me your name?” I figured he wouldn’t answer me because of all the times he didn’t answer me before.

“Franco.” I finally got him to talk.

“How did you get in?” I knew every door and window in this house had to be locked at all times. Yet again, he stared at me as if I was some strange being he has never seen before. To answer my question, he pointed at what I thought was my mirror.

“What did you do to my poor mirror!” How could this boy break one of my prized possessions? What a mess it was! Little pieces of my reflection were staring at me as I stared back – a staring contest. How could I have not noticed earlier?

“I saw you with water in your eyes and I wanted to see how you did that, so I came to the forbidden world.” This child was mad, but his innocence brought

myself to let him stay.

“Think of something sad.” I instructed.

“How can I do such a thing when I come from a world based off of smiles? I came to you because I wasn’t familiar with your expression.” I found this interesting so I let him talk.

He told me about his dark room behind the now shattered mirror, and how he is always lonely there and that the Voices tell him the rules of his world.

“They tell me to be the happiest I can be so I can reflect those faces ready to be reflected. But how can I when I’m not happy at all?” I asked him who’s voices they were, but he couldn’t answer me. He said it was forbidden. He told me about the horrible things in his world.

I wanted to comfort this little child, Franco. Pull him into my arms and cuddle him and tell him that everything’s going to be ok. But all I could do at that moment was to talk.

“When I had water coming from my eyes, I was sad and I was crying. That’s what happens to people in this world. I didn’t have anyone to share my sadness with so I shared it with my mirror.” I explained.

Very annoyingly, he said, “No, you shared it with me, and not your reflection. Why don’t humans understand that the reflection is not you.”

“Franco, I’m sorry I don’t understand. I didn’t see you in the mirror. I saw myself.” I could tell that after each word I said, he was becoming more and more annoyed.

“Everything that my mirror decides to reflect, I must show perfectly. Because I am from the world of reflections, I cannot ever show myself as I really am. What is a world of happiness, if you can only reflect

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the happiness.” Franco mumbles. I knew he had wanted to express his feelings for quite a while.

“I am not in my world anymore, so I do not have to reflect each and everything my mirror decides to hold. I came here to find my own happiness; not someone else’s, but only to find out that this world is just the opposite of what I’d imagined. All this world ever thinks about are the sadness, and all it’s horrors it holds. I am truly disappointed.” He turns, and looks at his world of mirrors, cracked, broken, and piled on the carpeted floor.

Yet again, looking at him, I wanted to run up to my little Franco and hold him tight. Comfort him, to tell him it’s all right, to tell him that Earth isn’t so bad. But I didn’t do any of that. A part of my brain was thinking about what this little boy had just said. I couldn’t move a muscle, I just stood there in awe.

Franco and I had just stood there for I didn’t know how long. Was it a second, a minute, an hour, a day, a year? We stood there, with me staring at my Franco, and him staring at his home world. Finally, I managed to go to the pile of the broken pieces of mirror, and started putting them back together, like a big jigsaw puzzle.

“I am glad I met you,” He whispered. I was very surprised and didn’t know what to say.

All I said was, “I guess we are good friends now.” He stared at me with his beautiful eyes, and showed a cute, toothy grin.

“Friends... There aren’t that many in my world. I am always shut up in my little mirror. I only talk to my self. That is why I am glad I have met you.” He looked like a child that had just gotten his favorite treat. His smile just spread happiness into my heart,

telling me that he is my friend and he will be with me. Although I had so much else to think about, my mind was all about my first real friend.

Countless hours we worked, trying to fix the force field connecting the two worlds. Countless times we had run out of glue, and had to run to the store for some more. Countless hours we had talked about my world and his, about my happiness and his. We were almost dreading the time when we had only one last piece left.

“The mirror is finished, and now I must leave.” I knew that this would come sooner or later. Why must everything I am happy with just disappear without a warning?

“The mirror is only strong enough for one trip. You will not be able to see me again. After my transportation, I predict that this mirror will break down, and you will not be able to put it back together again. The mirror will disappear, but the frame will last though.” He avoided eye contact. He did not want to see me suffer.

“I understand Franco, but without the mirror, the frame will mean nothing to me. I must discard it soon afterwards.” Trying too hard to hold in my tears, my voice cracked and whimpered.

Together, we put the last piece in place, and I watched Franco in silence as I witnessed my best friend leave me and never to come back again.

“I am glad I have found my own happiness.” Were his last words to me. Emotions shot at me like I was the target. I tried for my friend to hold back a break down. I wasn’t sad, I was happy for my friend.

As he had predicted, the pieces disappeared, but I was terribly surprised to see one small piece, about

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the size of my fingernail, had gotten left behind the others. It was glittering, and it held warmth. I held it tightly, not bothering about the sharp edges and my blood trickling down my wrist.

But the mirror gave me a sort of warmth that told me that this was happiness, and then I knew Franco purposely left this little piece behind for me. Wherever he is now, I hope his happiness is as he wished it to be.

Months afterwards, I decided to go forth and start again, to try to make more friends, and most importantly, to be happy. Franco had taught me that happiness doesn't come from how fortunate you are, or how popular you are, or how rich you are. It is how well you can see beyond the imperfections.

Infinite times, have I tried to teach this to other people, but they never understand. Sometimes, I think the only person that could explain, would have to be

the one and only, Franco, but he is not anywhere I can reach. I have a duty to pass this happiness down.

I am almost finished with this last album, and I am on the last page. I realize that I do not remember putting together these memories. I remind myself how long ago this was. I am growing so old. I flip over the last page and it reveals a piece of a mirror, about the size of my fingernail. I pick it up going through this small, but important memory again. I hold it tightly between my hands. Maybe it was from my hand, but I felt a flash of warmth from this mirror, that I know I have experienced before. I look hard into the old mirror, and beyond my own reflection, the scratches and the cracks on it, I see a charming little boy about eight years old, with flowing golden hair, with sparkling sapphire blue eyes, showing a very familiar great big toothy grin. But as fast I saw him appear, he was gone with a flash of light.

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## About the Arizona Consortium for the Arts

The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a Non-Profit Organization approved by the Arizona Corporation Commission in February 2008 and recently was approved for 501c3 tax-exempt status. We are all volunteer. We are educators, artists, performers, writers and supporters of all artistic endeavors, and are proponents and supporters of the rich, vibrant and diverse community of the Greater Phoenix area as well as the entire state.

The Arizona Consortium's vision is to create a



multicultural arts center, where children, teens and adults will become inspired, to develop their creative abilities, in conjunction with exhibiting artists, writers, actors, dancers and musicians who will share their expertise in a gallery, theater setting. Please visit [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org) or [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) for more

information about becoming a member, networking, donating, advertising, volunteering or submitting to The Blue Guitar magazine.

# A Change of Scene

By A.L. Means

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With a frown on her face, Mary tried to look as unhappy as she could. “I don’t want to stay here,” she hissed into her mother’s ear. “There’s nothing to do.”

Her mother knelt beside her and tried to smile sympathetically.

“Mary, it will be fun. Granny and Grandpa have been so looking forward to seeing you.”

Just then there was a crackling in the leaves by their feet. Mary’s mother looked down. She smiled and added: “Look, Tigger wants to be your friend.”

Tigger licked his paws, mewed softly, and then slunk away into the bushes by the side of the driveway.

“Tigger doesn’t like me,” said Mary, pouting and staring at her feet.

Just then Mary’s dad came out of the house. He was waving at Granny and Grandpa.

“You be a good girl now,” he said to Mary. “We’ll miss you.”

Mary watched her parents climb into the car and drive down the road. She watched as the car went past the clump of trees by the store and over the brow of the hill. She could still see her mother waving back to her. Mary waved too, but she wasn’t pleased.

“Why are they going if they think they will miss me?” she thought. “Why can’t I go on vacation too?”

“Come along, young lady,” said Grandpa. “They’ll be back before you know it. Besides, a change of scene will do you all good.”

Hah, some hope of that! Mary just knew she was in for a long, boring weekend.

She followed Granny and Grandpa into the house, and then she went out of the back door and sat on the porch. She put her head in her hands and stared at the barn behind Grandpa’s vegetable garden.

The wind was whisking clouds into a frothy gray broth overhead, and there was a chill in the afternoon air. Mary didn’t want to stay out too long. But what was there to do indoors? Her grandparents didn’t own a television and glumly she realized she



A.L. Means grew up in Britain and has lived in the Phoenix area for 30 years. He has written in various forms since a tender age, and has spent much of his working life as a journalist. In 2007, he published a memoir about the childhood of the late Country-Western singer Marty Robbins, who lived in the Phoenix area in the years before World War II.

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was going to miss one of her favorite shows.

Her grandparents seemed strange to her. Granny was always fiddling with balls of wool or pieces of cotton, and Grandpa would rummage through old things in battered cardboard boxes for hours at a time. Sometimes he would pull out a dusty photograph and chortle as he stared at it. What could be so interesting about stuff like that, Mary wondered.

Grandpa came out of the barn and saw Mary. He walked stiffly across the yard towards her.

“Would you like to help me?” he asked.

Mary couldn’t think what to say. It was bound to be something dull. Reluctantly she followed him into the barn.

“I need to clean off these old books,” Grandpa said. “Otherwise they’ll start to mildew.”

“What’s ‘mildew’?” Mary responded.

“That’s when something gets damp and falls apart,” was the reply.

Mary picked up a pile of books. They were many colors and sizes. Some had hard covers and some had paper covers. She began to wipe off dust with a rag Grandpa had given her.

“You’re never alone with a book,” Grandpa said.

“What do you mean?” Mary asked.

“Books are full of people’s thoughts and ideas and adventures,” Grandpa continued. “It’s almost as if the people are right there standing next to you.”

Mary glanced uncomfortably over her shoulder. Grandpa chuckled.

“Nothing to be afraid of. Think of a book as a friend waiting to help you.”

Mary tried, but the pile of books just looked all the more faded and stuffy. She picked up another book to dust. But she was careless, and the book slipped out of her hand and crashed on to the hard concrete floor.

Mary bent down to pick it up, and as she did so she noticed the title. A Child’s Book Of 101 Things To Do On A Rainy Day, she read. The book had fallen open at a page with a picture of a toy theater. The theater was made out of wood, and there were instructions giving measurements and showing the stages of construction. Mary turned the page, and saw little figures. They were characters in a play, and there were diagrams showing how to make them too. Each one had a costume, made from scraps of old clothing.

“Like that, do you?” asked Grandpa. “I had that book when I was a kid. There was always something in it to keep us occupied.”

“Did you have a theater like this?” Mary enquired.

“Sure did. My dad put it together for us kids, and we’d put on all kinds of plays.”

Mary wasn’t quite ready for what happened next. Grandpa began looking in cupboards and on shelves, and before she knew it he had found some pieces of wood and was hard at work with a hammer and saw.

“You better start thinking,” he said.

“About what?” said Mary.

“About what your play is going to be about,” said Grandpa.

Mary thought. She thought about the TV show she was missing. She thought about how she would do it if it were her show. On TV sometimes the stories didn’t turn out the way she wanted, and some of the characters didn’t please her. She ran into the house to find Granny.

“Do you have any old clothes?” she asked.

Granny looked surprised.

“Whatever for?”

“Well,” said Mary, “I need to make some little people.”

Granny went upstairs to look. Back she came with a pile of fabric.

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“I use these for mending, if I need to patch something,” Granny said. “But we can cut them up and make them into little people right enough.”

Granny got out her sewing machine and a pair of scissors.

“Now then, young lady,” she said. “What sort of folk do you want in your theater?”

Mary helped Granny cut the little figures out of cardboard and make clothes for them. Some had little dresses and some had pants and shirts. There were one or two with hats, and a couple with coats. All had clothes of different colors. It took a long time to make them, but finally there were enough. Mary ran back to the barn with her arms full of little people ready to go into the theater. Grandpa glued strips of cardboard to the back of each figure so they’d stand up on the stage.

“That’s the way my dad did it when we were kids,” he said. “Now it’s up to you.”

All too soon it was Sunday evening. In the barn Mary

heard the sound of the car draw up in the driveway. She heard her father’s voice, and saw her mother hurrying across the yard in the drizzling rain. Mary had been so busy she hadn’t heard the rain pattering on the tin roof. She ran outside to greet her mother.

“Oh Mary, I couldn’t stop thinking about you. Were you very bored?”

Mary’s face broke into a broad grin.

“Follow me, I’ve got something to show you,” she said.

“Did you make a friend?” asked her mother, as Tigger brushed against her legs in greeting.

“Lots of them,” said Mary.

Her mother turned and almost tripped over Tigger, who was running for shelter, frantically shaking the rain off his whiskers.

“What is Tigger doing?” said Mary’s mother impatiently.

Mary remembered something Grandpa had told her.

“Maybe he’s starting to mildew,” she said.

# A Sniff of Sadie's Magic

By Victoria Turnipseed

© 2010

In a lovely green forest  
on a bright sunny day  
Sadie the Skunk  
was eager to play

She wore a red ribbon  
and smiled a great grin  
but Sadie the Skunk  
couldn't find any friends

She searched through the trees  
behind rocks, in the river  
but friendship was something  
no creature would give her

They all feared the fumes  
that a skunk could emit  
an odor most potent  
when the nose it would hit

Critters scampered away  
at the sight of sweet Sadie  
and they hid in the forest  
a collection of 'fraidies!

There was Freddy the Fox  
looking slinky and sleek  
and Katie Coyote  
who was fast on her feet

Stanley the Squirrel  
stuffing nuts in his cheeks  
and Reba Raccoon  
washing food in the creek

Billy the Buzzard  
a scavenger cunning  
When he circled above,  
everybody went running

Except Francine the Frog  
who was still very young  
and spent all of her time  
catching bugs with her tongue

These were the playmates  
that Sadie was seeking  
when she spotted a tree  
from which Freddy was peeking

She saw his red tail  
watched the way that it moved  
thought, "If I can match that,  
I shall soon be approved."

But her tail was unruly  
it got tangled in rocks  
She looked nothing at all  
like sleek Freddy the Fox

Sadie heaved a big sigh  
her face was downcast  
and then she decided,  
"I'll try to be fast!"

Just like Katie Coyote  
I'm sure I can run  
then I'll be accepted  
by every one



Victoria "Viki" Turnipseed has taught preschool, mentored students at San Diego City College, developed peer counseling programs and teen pregnancy programs in the public schools of northern New Mexico, served on the board of a foster care program in San Diego, and served as children's recreation leader for the Dallas Parks & Recreation Department. She is also a former foundation and public relations executive for hospitals in Albuquerque, Denver, San Diego and Scottsdale.

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Katie's long, skinny legs  
sprinted quickly on ground  
while Sadie was short  
and a little bit round

She tried and she tried  
but her pace was so slow  
that she finally stopped running  
and announced, "Now I know..."

I can surely store nuts  
in my cheeks like a squirrel  
then I know I'll be one  
very popular girl."

Stanley heard Sadie's plan  
and he thought it was good  
'til he soon realized  
that she misunderstood

How much room is required  
in a squirrel's pudgy cheeks  
and the time that it takes  
just to fill them – it's weeks!

After nibbling and noshing  
to pack those nuts in,  
they spilled out of her mouth  
and streamed down her small chin

She discarded the plan  
to store nuts just like Stan,  
then saw Reba Raccoon  
holding food in her hand

Reba carefully cleansed  
every morsel of food  
for the thought of not washing  
her dinner was rude

She looked pretty and dainty  
and so very clean  
as she moistened her food  
in a trickling stream

"I shall do the same thing  
for myself," Sadie said.  
When the animals see  
that I wash my own bread

They will know I'm as tidy  
as Reba Raccoon  
and they're sure to accept me –  
I'll do it quite soon!"

To the water she skipped  
waving food in her hand,  
in the mud Sadie slipped...  
and her snack hit the sand

Quick as a wink  
Billy Buzzard swooped down  
he snatched Sadie's food  
as it fell on the ground

Then he soared high above  
in the sunny blue sky  
leaving Sadie alone  
and she wanted to cry

'Til she spotted Francine  
at the edge of a pond  
a frog very green  
with a tongue very long

She rolled that tongue out  
and she rolled it back in  
munching bugs she had caught,  
Francine rolled it again

**Continued on page 15**

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**Continued from page 14**

Sadie thought, "I can win many friends  
in this place if some bugs I can trap."  
With a smile on her face,  
Sadie started to clap!

She was certain this plan  
was a magical one  
to at last bring her friends  
that would play and have fun

She poked out her pink tongue  
in the afternoon breeze,  
but all that she got  
were a couple of fleas

Her dream of acceptance  
started to fade  
as she stood all alone  
in the afternoon shade

"Why was *I* born a *skunk*?"  
Sadie asked with a scowl,  
then she felt the ground rumble  
and heard a fierce growl

Barney the Bear stomped onto the scene  
so big and bold and strong  
saw Sadie standing by a rock  
and said, "You don't belong."

"This forest is just for animals  
who follow my command.  
There's nothing that a skunk can do  
to lend a helping hand."

Then up he climbed, he scaled a tree  
the tallest he could find  
for at the top, a honeycomb  
his very favorite kind!

It dripped with honey, homemade fresh  
by lots of honeybees  
Sadie looked up longingly,  
"I'd like to taste some, please."

Barney scoffed at Sadie Skunk  
"The nerve of her!" he thought.  
A silly, frilly, smelly skunk  
will not taste what I've got."

Then all at once a thundering sound  
came charging through the skies  
a swarm of very angry bees  
had come to claim their prize.

The lovely nectar they had drawn  
from flowers grown for picking  
now golden honey in their hive  
that Barney Bear was licking!

Those bees were raging, all riled up  
and ready to attack  
They headed straight for Barney's nose  
then stung his face and back

He roared at them and swung his paws  
but swarms of bees kept coming  
The clamor was so very loud  
that animals came running.

They tried their best to be of help  
to scare those bees away  
raccoon and coyote - fox, buzzard and squirrel  
not one could save the day

Francine turned to Sadie  
and gave a little wink  
Sadie knew just what to do...  
the air began to s t i n k

**Continued on page 16**  
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**Continued from page 15**

Foul odor rose into the skies  
it burned their noses, filled their eyes  
The bees forgot their honeycomb  
and made a beeline straight back home.

“Sadie is scentsational!”  
the animals proclaimed.  
A skunk is quite a worthy friend,  
especially one that’s tame.”

She saved them from a swarm of bees  
when no one else could do it  
Aroma is a potent thing –  
it’s all in how you use it

Sadie gained six playmates  
when she rescued Barney Bear  
and learned the magic in herself  
is the best gift she can share.



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A blue acoustic guitar is the central focus, set against a background of swirling, ethereal blue and white patterns that resemble smoke or sound waves. The guitar is positioned diagonally, with its headstock at the top left and its body extending towards the bottom right. The body of the guitar is a deep, vibrant blue, while the neck and headstock are a darker, more muted blue. The background consists of soft, painterly strokes of light blue and white, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall composition is framed by a solid blue border.

***“Things  
as they are  
are  
changed  
upon  
the  
blue guitar.”***