

The Cozy Crew

Bedtime Stories

Eleven big-heart stories from the block



How to read a Canooles story

1

Hood up. Say it together: **“Hood up. Heart in.”**

2

Say the creature’s oath (it’s at the top of every story).

3

Read. When you see  **YOUR TURN**, stop and do it together.

4

Ask tonight’s question. Any answer is a good answer.

5

Tomorrow, try the Brave Thing.



The grown-up’s promise

I will listen before I decide what happened. I will be honest about my own mistakes. I will help you practice the next step.

AFTER A CONFESSION

‘Thank you for telling me. We still need to put it right, and I’ll help you work out how.’

Welcome to the Block



Who lives where



The Middle — the fort (cushions, a tarp, a crate for a table, a cardboard door with a heart).



Lyle (and his little sister Nell) and Hattie — beside the Middle.



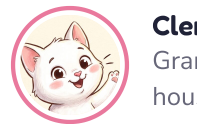
Pip and Sunday (and his big sister Bex) — sharing a back alley.



Flossie — the corner house with the fairy lights.



Tully and Una — across the street from each other.



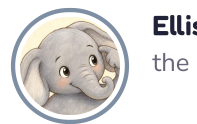
Clementine — at Grandma's green-chair house.



Posey — the window that sees the water tower.



Mochi (and his big brother Ren) — the backyard with the tent and the frog.



Ellis — the newest on the block.

Meet the Cozy Crew

The Brave Crew



Lyle the Lion
EXPEDITION LEADER

SUPERPOWER
The Rally Roar

One roar and the whole crew is up, ready and following.

OATH
Big roar. True words.



Pip the Purple Dino
CHIEF BUILDER

SUPERPOWER
Full-Size Fun

He builds the biggest games and tallest towers on the block.

OATH
Look, then land.



Flossie the Flamingo
SHOW STARTER

SUPERPOWER
Spotlight Steady

Every eye on her, one leg up, not a wobble.

OATH
Practice on purpose.

The Gentle Crew



Sunday the Sloth
LOOKOUT OF LITTLE THINGS

SUPERPOWER
Slow-Look Vision

He spots what the whole house runs straight past.

OATH
Slow and started.



Hattie the Hippo
SPLASH CAPTAIN

SUPERPOWER
The All-In Splash

She jumps all the way in and makes any afternoon magnificent.

OATH
All in. All help.



Ellis the Elephant
KEEPER OF MEMORIES

SUPERPOWER
Elephant Memory

He never forgets a birthday, a name, or what matters to his friends.

OATH
Promise small.
Keep it all.



Mochi the Panda
NIGHT-LIGHT KEEPER

SUPERPOWER
Night Ears

He hears every tiny sound: the frog, the rain, the kettle.

OATH
Listen for the good.

The Wonder Crew



Una the Unicorn

DREAM DESIGNER

SUPERPOWER
Kingdom Eyes

*She can see what
anything could become.*

OATH

Dream it. Start it.



Tully the
Turquoise Dino

MAPMAKER

SUPERPOWER
Expedition Mode

*He turns anywhere into
an adventure and finds
what nobody else finds.*

OATH

Finish, then explore.



Clementine the
Cat

STORYTELLER

SUPERPOWER
The Storykeeper

*She can tell a whole
chapter with no
book in her hands.*

OATH

Listen to the end.



Posey the Pink
Panda

DOOR MAKER

SUPERPOWER
True-Color Eyes

*She sees what's really
there, and who is
standing at the edge.*

OATH

Open one
more door.

The stories

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Lyle and the Ribbon That Wasn't His

Lyle the Lion

SAY IT TOGETHER

Big roar. True words.

F

ort Night on the block meant three things: a fort, a story, and a challenge.

This Friday the challenge was on a cardboard sign in Flossie's best letters: BUILD A BRIDGE. SIX BLOCKS. IT MUST HOLD THE BUS.

The bus was a small yellow toy bus with one squeaky wheel. It was, everybody agreed, very heavy for its size.

"Crew!" said Lyle, and he did his Rally Roar, the big one, the one that made the hallway roar back from three houses away. "Bridges! Now!"

★ YOUR TURN

Do Lyle's Rally Roar. Big as a Tuesday!

Everybody built. Pip's bridge fell down twice. ("Roadworks," said Pip.) Tully's bridge came with a map. Hattie's bridge was mostly a lake.

Lyle's bridge was low and wide and very sure of itself. Hattie set the bus on top. The bus squeaked. The bridge held.

"LYLE WINS!" roared Lyle, before anyone else could say it, and Hattie pinned the blue ribbon to his mane. It was the exact blue of the sky just before it gets dark.

Later, while the crew ate grapes in the fort, Lyle put his blocks back in the box. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six.

Seven.

He counted again. Seven.

Nobody had seen. Nobody had counted. The seventh block was the smallest block in the whole box, and somehow it took up most of the room in his chest.

Across the fort, Tully was laughing about his map. Tully's bridge had held the bus too, with exactly six blocks.

The loudest part of Lyle wanted to stay very quiet. So Lyle turned his roar down, down, down, to the smallest voice he had.

★ YOUR TURN

Turn the Volume Knob down to a whisper.

“Here’s what happened,” said Lyle. “I used seven.”

The fort went still. Even the goldfish said nothing, which was normal for the goldfish, but still.

Lyle unpinned the ribbon. His eyes went hot. He gave it to Hattie, and Hattie gave it to Tully, and Tully held it like it was a piece of the sky.

Nobody told Lyle he had won something bigger. No second ribbon appeared. The ribbon was just gone, and that was that.

Lyle sat by the cardboard door and felt small in a way he had never practiced.

Then, thump, thump, thump, Pip pushed six blocks across the rug. Carefully. Pip was never careful.

“Build one with me?” said Pip.

Lyle counted the blocks twice, out loud, at low volume.

Then he pulled his cushion up to the crate that was the table, and he stayed.



TONIGHT'S QUESTION

When is your voice big, and when is it small?

★ TOMORROW'S BRAVE THING

Say one small true thing that's hard to say.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

When it's hard to say, say the small true part first.

Working on: Tell the truth

The word Lyle leaves behind: Low volume



Pip and the Tower He Knocked Down

Pip the Purple Dino

SAY IT TOGETHER

Look, then land.



It was Wren's second birthday, and the party was in the Middle.

There were balloons tied to the fort. There was a cake shaped like a very round dinosaur. And in the middle of the rug, all by herself, Wren had built the tallest building in the world.

It was nine blocks high. It leaned a little to the left. Wren had built every block of it with her own two hands, and she was guarding it with her whole face.

Pip saw the balloons. Pip saw the cake. Pip saw the sprinkler come on across the grass.

"INCOMING!" shouted Pip.

★ YOUR TURN

Shout it like Pip: "INCOMING!"

He ran at full size. He jumped at full size. He landed at full size, right on top of the tallest building in the world.

Blocks went everywhere. One went into the cake.

For a moment nobody said anything. Then Wren's face folded up like a paper napkin, and she made a sound so small and so sad that the whole party heard it.

"It was an accident," said Pip.

That was true. It was completely true. It did not put a single block back.

The party went on. Somebody cut the cake. Somebody found the block in the cake. Flossie started a game of tag, and the crew ran off across the grass, and Pip could hear them laughing.

Pip did not go.

He was very big, and the blocks were very small, and Wren was very small, sitting in the middle of all of it with one block in each hand.

So Pip got small. He folded up his big purple legs. He tucked in his tail. He sat down on the rug until his eyes were at Wren height.

★ YOUR TURN

Do the Landing Check: hand over your eyes, look down, then land softly.

“Show me how it goes,” said Pip.

Wren looked at him for a long time. Then she handed him a block.

It was slow work. Wren was very particular. The red one went at the bottom. The one with the chewed corner went fourth. Twice Pip put a block in the wrong place, and twice Wren took it out and gave him a look, and twice Pip said, “My fault,” and tried again.

The tag game ended. The cake was mostly gone. Somebody saved Pip a piece with a dent in it.

By the time the sun touched the water tower, the tallest building in the world was nine blocks high again, leaning a little to the left, exactly the way it was supposed to.

Wren clapped. Pip clapped. Then Wren pointed at the tower, and at Pip, and at the tower again.

“Again?” said Pip.

“Again,” said Wren.

So they built a tenth floor.



TONIGHT'S QUESTION

What is something you are careful with?

★ TOMORROW'S BRAVE THING

Fix one thing you knocked over or messed up, before anyone asks.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

An accident explains it. Helping is what happens next.

Working on: Make it right

The word Pip leaves behind: Cozy landing



Flossie and the Second-Place Saturday

Flossie the Flamingo

SAY IT TOGETHER

Practice on purpose.



ll summer, Flossie practiced.

She practiced standing on one leg while she brushed her beak. She practiced while the kettle boiled. She practiced under the fairy lights at the corner house until the lights came on by themselves, because the block party balance contest was on Saturday, and Flossie intended to win it.

★ YOUR TURN

Stand on one leg like Flossie. Can you get to eleven?

On Saturday the whole block came. The judge was the art teacher, who had eleven colors on her apron and never said “good job” about anything.

One by one, the balancers balanced. Hattie wobbled into the lemonade. Sunday balanced beautifully and then, very slowly, fell asleep.

Then it was Flossie’s turn. She stood on one leg with every eye on her, still as a lamp post, and she held it, and held it, and held it. She was sure. She was completely sure.

Then the boy with the yo-yo stepped up and balanced on one foot, with his yo-yo going, for even longer.

The art teacher pinned first place on the boy with the yo-yo. She pinned second place on Flossie.

“Good game,” said Flossie, and meant about sixty percent of it.

On the walk home, Flossie made a list.

“The judge wasn’t watching the whole time,” she said. “And the wind moved. And somebody coughed at my best part. And a yo-yo is basically cheating.”

Posey walked beside her and didn’t argue. She just listened, which was somehow worse.

Nobody said, “You were robbed.” Nobody gave Flossie a surprise ribbon. The second-place ribbon was green, and it was fine, and Flossie did not love it. She was disappointed all the way down the street, and that was allowed.

At the corner, under the fairy lights, Flossie stopped.

The wind was not moving. Nobody was coughing. Nobody was clapping, either.

Flossie lifted one leg. She wobbled. She held it anyway.

“The yo-yo boy looked at one thing the whole time,” she said slowly. “His yo-yo. I looked at everybody looking at me.”

★ YOUR TURN

Pick one spot on the wall. Look only at it, and balance.

“So what will you practice?” asked Posey.

It was a real question, so Flossie gave it a real answer.

“Looking at one thing,” she said. “Every day. Even when nobody’s watching. Especially then.”

She hung the green ribbon on the corner house door, right beside the fairy lights, where it could keep an eye on her.



TONIGHT'S QUESTION

*What is something you can do
that you'd like someone to watch?*

★ TOMORROW'S BRAVE THING

Practice something for five minutes with nobody watching.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

When it didn't work, change one thing and try again.

Working on: Give it a try

The word Flossie leaves behind: Practice



Sunday and the Seed That Wouldn't Hurry

Sunday the Sloth

SAY IT TOGETHER

Slow and started.

S

unday found the seed on a Monday.

It was sitting at the edge of the Middle, all by itself: round, brown, and a little bit wrinkly, like it had been waiting a long time for somebody to notice it.

Sunday noticed it. Sunday noticed everything. He noticed the seed, and the patch of dirt beside Hattie's gate where the sun stayed longest, and the spot where the rain collected, and a worm who seemed to be in charge of the whole area.

★ YOUR TURN

Do Honey Hands: the slowest wave in the world.

"That's the spot," said Sunday. "That's the seed. I'll plant it when the day is right."

On Tuesday it was a little too windy.

On Wednesday it was a little too sunny.

On Thursday the worm was busy.

Meanwhile the rest of the crew planted things. Tully planted beans in a boot. Una planted glitter, which did not grow. Hattie planted a whole tray of sunflowers and then watered them, and the lawn, and Pip.

By the next Monday, everyone else's pots had little green curls poking up. Sunday's seed was still in his paw.

Lyle came and sat in the dirt beside him. Lyle did not say "hurry up." Lyle did not say anything at all, which for Lyle was an enormous effort, and it helped.

"The day isn't right yet," said Sunday.

Lyle looked at the sky. It was gray and ordinary. "It's just a day," said Lyle.

Sunday looked at the sky for a long time. It was, he had to admit, just a day.

So he dug a small hole with one long claw. He put the seed in. He covered it up and patted it, slowly, three times.

★ YOUR TURN

Pat the seed three times, slow as Sunday.

Then came the boring part.

Nothing happened on Tuesday. Nothing happened on Wednesday. Nothing happened for eleven whole days. Sunday watered it every single one of them, while everybody else's sunflowers grew taller than the fort, and the goldfish watched from the window and said nothing.

"It's not doing anything," said Pip.

"It's doing something," said Sunday. "It's just doing it slower."

On the twelfth morning, Sunday was the first one up. He walked to the spot beside Hattie's gate at the speed of honey leaving a jar.

There, in the dirt, was one tiny green curl.

It was small, and it was late, and it was there.

Sunday lay down on his tummy until his nose was nearly touching it.

"Hello," he said. "I was here the whole time. You were just here slower."



TONIGHT'S QUESTION

What is something you like to do slowly?

★ TOMORROW'S BRAVE THING

Start the thing you've been putting off. Just the first minute.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

When it didn't work, change one thing and try again.

Working on: Give it a try

The word Sunday leaves behind: Slow Sunday



Hattie and the Job Nobody Picked

Hattie the Hippo

SAY IT TOGETHER

All in. All help.

T

he block party was over, and it had been magnificent.

There had been lemonade and music and a water balloon fight, and Hattie had been in the middle of all of it, because Hattie did not do things halfway. She did not test the sprinkler with a toe. She sat down in it.

★ YOUR TURN

Do Hattie's Cannonball: hug your knees and SPLASH!

Now the sun was going down behind the water tower, and it was time to clean up.

Flossie's grown-up read out the jobs. "Balloons?" Pip. "Music?" Una. "Chairs?" Lyle and Tully. "Fairy lights?" Posey, carefully.

"Last job," said Flossie's grown-up. "Paper cups."

Nobody said anything.

There were paper cups everywhere. Cups in the grass and cups in the hedge and cups floating in the sprinkler puddle like a tiny fleet of boats. Somebody counted. There were eleven. Then somebody found more.

Hattie looked at the cups. Then she looked at the Middle, where the puddle from the storm was still wide and shining and exactly the right size for one more sit.

The lake was calling her. It was calling her very loudly.

Hattie took a big breath.

"I'll get the bags," she said. Then, and this part was new, she said, "Who's with me?"

★ YOUR TURN

Two thumbs up, like Hattie: "Who's with me?"

There was a pause.

"Cups are boring," said Pip.

“Cups ARE boring,” said Hattie. “That’s why I asked.”

Pip thought about it. “What if it’s a race?”

So it became a race. Pip picked up cups at full size. Tully made a map of where the cups were. Mochi found three under the snack table and one inside a shoe. Clementine told the story of the cups while everyone picked them up, and it was a very dramatic story, with a villain. (The wind.)

They stacked the cups into a tower beside the fort. It was eleven cups high, then fourteen, then it fell over. “Roadworks,” said Pip, and they stacked it again.

By the time the last cup was in the bag, the others had run off to play one last game of tag in the dark. Hattie had missed it.

She stood in the Middle holding a full bag, and she felt a little sad about the tag, and that was allowed.

Then she tied the bag, set it by the gate, and walked home, squelching.

On the way, she passed the lake.

She sat in it, once, just once. The job was done, and a hippo has priorities.



TONIGHT'S QUESTION

What is the messiest fun you have ever had?

★ TOMORROW'S BRAVE THING

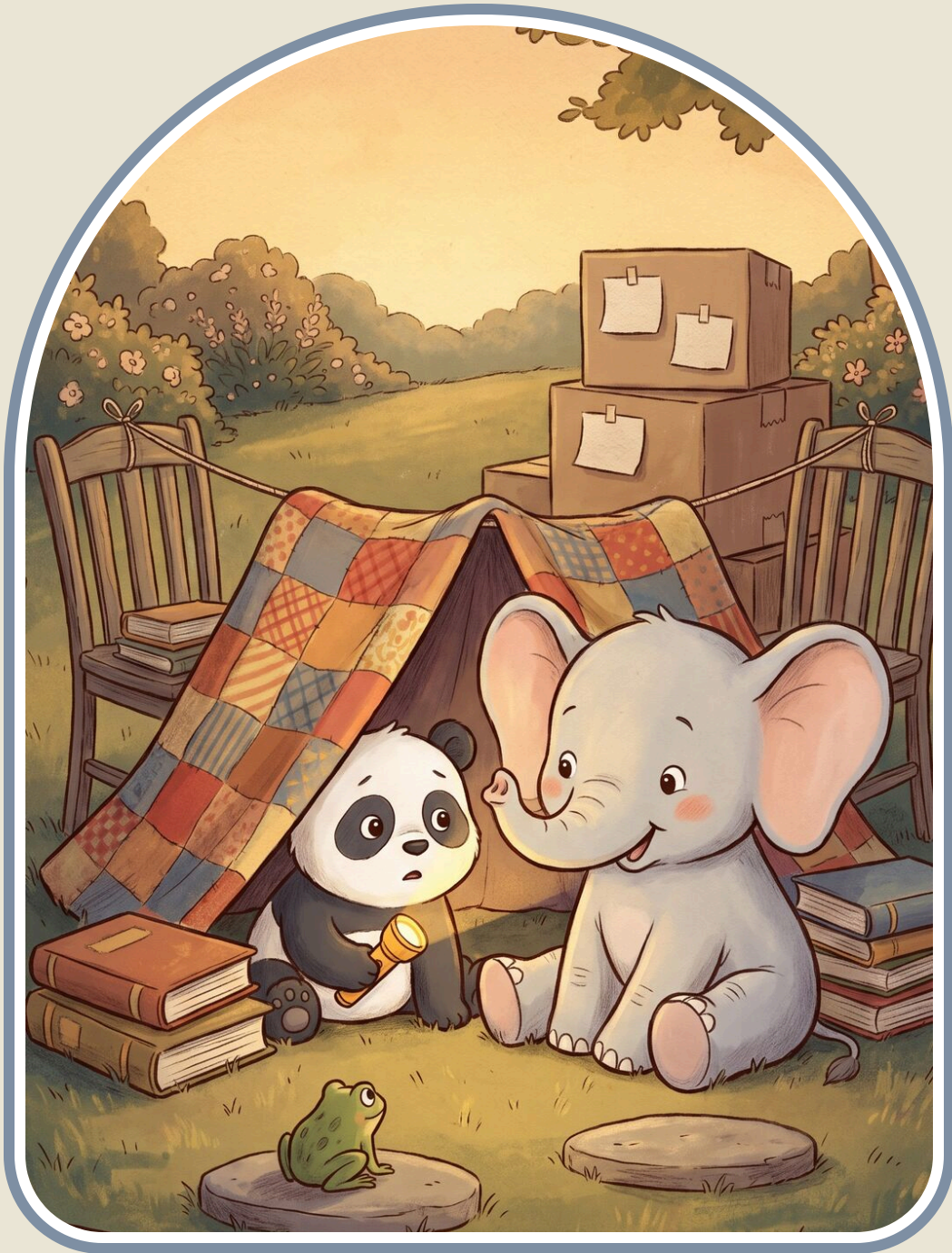
Do one job nobody picked, without being asked.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

If you can't keep it, say so early.

Working on: Do your part

The word Hattie leaves behind: Big fun, big cleanup



Ellis and the Promise He Couldn't Keep

Ellis the Elephant

SAY IT TOGETHER

Promise small. Keep it all.

E

llis was the newest one on the block, and he remembered everything.

He remembered that Hattie's lake was deepest on the left. He remembered that Tully's favorite tree was Gary. He remembered that Mochi checked the kitchen light three times, and he never, ever said so.

★ YOUR TURN

Do the Trunk Tap: two taps on your head. "Elephants remember!"

So when Hattie asked, "Will you help me fill the lake on Thursday?" Ellis said yes.

When Tully asked, "Will you check my map on Thursday?" Ellis said yes.

And when Mochi asked, very quietly, "Will you test my tent with me on Thursday? The first part is the scariest," Ellis said yes, because he remembered how long Mochi had waited to ask.

He wrote each promise on a little piece of paper, the way he did with everything that mattered. Then he laid the three papers side by side on the moving boxes that were still his table.

FILL THE LAKE.
FOUR O'CLOCK.

CHECK THE MAP.
FOUR O'CLOCK.

TEST THE TENT.
FOUR O'CLOCK.

Ellis looked at the papers for a long time. He was a very good elephant. He was not three elephants.

He felt a strong wish to climb inside a moving box and stay there until Friday. He almost did. He had one foot in.

Then he remembered Mochi's face when Mochi asked, and he took his foot back out.

On Thursday morning, early, before anyone had started waiting, Ellis went to see Hattie.

“I said yes to three things at four o’clock,” he said. “I can’t do all three. I should have said so sooner.”

Hattie thought about it. “Can you do five o’clock?” He could.

Tully rolled up his map. “Tomorrow, first thing,” said Tully. “Maps are patient.”

Then Ellis went to Mochi.

Mochi did not say “that’s okay.” Mochi looked at the tent, and his ears went down, and he said, “Oh.”

It was the worst “oh” Ellis had ever heard. He stood there and let it be bad. He did not make it smaller by pretending.

★ YOUR TURN

Say it with Ellis: “Promise small. Keep it all.”

“I’ll be here at four,” said Ellis. “Only here. The whole time.”

At four o’clock the tent was very dark and full of rustling. Ellis sat by the door the whole time, exactly as promised, and together they named every sound. There was a frog, of course. There is a frog in every yard in the world. It’s a rule.

That night, Ellis wrote one new promise on one piece of paper.

It said: ONE AT A TIME.

He kept it.



TONIGHT'S QUESTION

What is something you never want to forget about today?

★ TOMORROW'S BRAVE THING

Make one small promise and keep it all day.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

If you can't keep it, say so early.

Working on: Do your part

The word Ellis leaves behind: Say so early



Mochi and the Ordinary, Excellent Tuesday

Mochi the Panda

SAY IT TOGETHER

Listen for the good.

F

or eleven days, Mochi had been counting down to Tuesday.

On Tuesday, the crew was going to the aquarium. There would be a tunnel you could walk through with fish swimming over your head. There would be a starfish you were allowed to touch with one finger. Mochi had practiced the finger.

On Tuesday morning, it rained. Not a little rain. The kind of rain that closes roads and makes grown-ups talk in low voices on the phone.

The aquarium trip was off.

Mochi sat on the floor by the back door and was disappointed all the way down, from his ears to his toes. He did not want the other plan. He did not want a snack. He did not want anybody to tell him it would be fine.

His big brother Ren did not tell him it would be fine. Ren did not say, “Don’t be a baby.” Ren just sat down on the floor beside him, which big brothers almost never do, and the two of them watched the rain.

For a long time, nobody said anything.

Then Mochi’s ears twitched.

★ YOUR TURN

Cup your hands behind your ears, like Night Ears. What can you hear?

Plip. Plip. Plip-plip.

“The rain is playing the drainpipe,” said Mochi, a little surprised.

“Mm,” said Ren.

Mochi listened harder.

There was a frog. Of course there was a frog. There is a frog in every yard in the world. It’s a rule. This one sounded very pleased about the weather.

There was the kettle, starting to whistle in the kitchen, low and then high.

And there was Ren, humming. Ren was humming a song he didn't know the words to, and getting the tune wrong in the same place every time. On purpose, Mochi was nearly sure.

Mochi held up one finger. Then two. Then three.

★ YOUR TURN

Count good sounds on your fingers with Mochi. One... two... three...

Then the kitchen light clicked on, warm and yellow, because it was getting dark.

Four.

Mochi did not check the light three times. He just looked at it.

It was still a disappointing Tuesday. The starfish was still at the aquarium, being touched by other people's fingers. That did not change.

But it was an excellent Tuesday too, and both of those things fit inside one afternoon.

"What was the best sound?" asked Ren.

Mochi thought about it very carefully.

"You," he said. "Humming it wrong."

So Ren hummed it wrong again, just for him.



TONIGHT'S QUESTION

What sounds can you hear in our house right now?

★ TOMORROW'S BRAVE THING

Try one new thing with someone you trust beside you.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

Before lights out, name one good thing that already happened.

Working on: Notice the good

The word Mochi leaves behind: Will you try it with me?



Una and the Very Unmagical First Step

Una the Unicorn

SAY IT TOGETHER

Dream it. Start it.



na had designed the most magnificent fort in the history of the block.

It had three balconies. It had a moat with a bridge that went up and down. It had a tower for looking at the water tower, a secret room behind a waterfall, and a glitter dragon who guarded the door and was friendly to everyone except bad moods.

She drew it with her fattest purple crayon. It took four pieces of paper, taped together.

★ YOUR TURN

Draw Una's glitter dragon in the air with one finger.

“Fort Night is Friday,” said Tully. “Let’s build it!”

Una looked at her drawing. Then she looked at the Middle: one tarp, two cushions, a crate, a hallway rug, and a cardboard door with a heart on it.

“Not yet,” said Una. “It’s not ready.”

On Wednesday, she added a slide.

On Thursday, she added a second dragon, in case the first one got lonely.

By Friday afternoon the crew was standing in the Middle, waiting, and the drawing was so beautiful that nobody could think where to begin, least of all Una. Everything real she imagined building looked wrong next to the picture. So she didn’t build anything at all.

Then Milo came over. Milo always said the obvious thing first.

“That’s a lot of balconies,” said Milo.

“Three,” said Una.

Milo looked around. He found a cardboard box that used to hold somebody’s new shoes. He found a sock with a hole in it. He put the sock on a stick and stuck the stick in the box.

“There,” said Milo. “That’s a tower.”

It was not a tower. It was a box with a sock on it. It was the least magical thing Una had ever seen, and everybody could see it.

Una’s face went hot. She wanted very much to go back inside the drawing, where everything was already perfect.

★ YOUR TURN

Point your horn at one thing and say, “Pick one!”

Instead, she pointed her horn at the box. “Pick one,” she whispered. “Just one.”

She picked the tower.

She cut a window in the box. It was crooked. She added a paper flag. It flopped. Hattie added a balcony made from a cereal box, and it held one very small toy bus.

By dark, the fort had one tower and one balcony and no dragon at all. It looked nothing like the drawing.

It was also real. You could sit in it. Una sat in it.

Before she went home, she taped her beautiful four-page drawing up inside the box, where the fort could see it.

“So it knows where it’s going,” said Una.



TONIGHT'S QUESTION

*If you could build anything at all,
what would the very first piece be?*

★ TOMORROW'S BRAVE THING

Make the first messy version of something you've been dreaming up.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

When it didn't work, change one thing and try again.

Working on: Give it a try

The word Una leaves behind: First step



Tully and the Promise Before the Expedition

Tully the Turquoise Dino

SAY IT TOGETHER

Finish, then explore.

T

he crew was going on an expedition.

Base camp was the gas station out of town, which had a snack aisle, a rack of maps, and a man at the counter who called everybody “Captain.” Tully had been waiting all week.

But first there was one job, and it was Tully’s.

“Somebody has to finish the map of the Middle,” said Lyle, “so we can find our way back.”

“Me,” said Tully. “I promise.”

He unrolled his big paper and got to work. He drew the fort, and the cardboard door with the heart on it. He drew Hattie’s lake, deepest on the left. He drew Gary the tree, who was the best tree, with a star.

★ YOUR TURN

Make Spyglass Hands and look for something to add to Tully’s map!

He was halfway along the hedge when he saw it.

A gap.

Not the usual gap, the one everybody pushed through. A new gap, low down, behind a bush. And beyond it, something that looked like a whole secret garden nobody had ever mapped.

Tully’s tail went stiff with wanting.

He put down his pencil. He crawled into the gap. There were stepping stones. There was a birdbath with a crack in it. There was a snail the size of a cookie. He named the snail Admiral. He was going to name everything.

Far away, someone was calling.

“TUL-LY!”

Tully backed out of the gap. At the gate stood the whole crew, packed and ready and waiting. Lyle was holding the snack bag. Mochi was checking the gate latch for the third time. And on the

grass lay the map, half finished, with an enormous blank space where the rest of the Middle should be.

Tully looked at the gap. He looked at the crew. The gap was pulling at him like a kite string.

He walked back to the crew instead.

“I found a secret garden,” he said. “And I forgot my job. The map’s not done.”

Nobody cheered. Pip groaned. The expedition would have to wait, and everybody knew it.

★ YOUR TURN

Say it with Tully: “Finish, then explore!”

Tully sat down on the grass and finished the map. All of it. Every cushion and puddle and fence post. It took nineteen minutes, which Pip counted out loud.

Then he held it up.

“Now,” said Tully. “Want to see something?”

He led them through the new gap, all together, with the crew right behind him this time. They met Admiral. They filled the cracked birdbath with the hose. And on the map, in his very best letters, in the space he had saved for it, Tully wrote a new name:

THE CREW’S GARDEN.

They got to base camp a little late. The man at the counter said, “Welcome, Captains,” like always.

TONIGHT’S QUESTION

If today were an expedition, what would you have named it?

★ TOMORROW’S BRAVE THING

Finish one job before you start something new.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

If you can’t keep it, say so early.

Working on: Do your part

The word Tully leaves behind: Expedition



Clementine and the Story She Got Wrong

Clementine the Cat

SAY IT TOGETHER

Listen to the end.

C

lementine loved a story, and she was very good at telling one.

She could tell a whole chapter with no book in her hands, the way Grandma could. She knew exactly where to go quiet, and exactly where to go, “And THEN.” She was so good at endings that sometimes she told them before anybody else had finished the beginning.

“And then the snail—” Tully would start.

“—fell in the birdbath,” Clementine would finish.

“No,” Tully would say. “The snail won a prize.”

★ YOUR TURN

Make Cat Ears with your hands and point them at whoever is talking.

One morning, Clementine was walking past Hattie’s gate when she heard Hattie’s grown-up say, over the fence, “...that lake won’t be here tomorrow...”

Clementine did not hear the rest. She did not need to. She already knew how this story ended.

By lunch she had told the whole block.

She told it beautifully. She went quiet in all the right places. “Hattie’s lake,” she told Pip, “is going away. Forever.” She told Posey, who looked sad. She told Lyle, who roared. She told Hattie, who sat down in the middle of the lake and would not get out.

By two o’clock the crew was making signs. Una’s had a glitter dragon on it. Pip had a whistle.

Then Grandma called Clementine over to the green chair.

“Tell me the whole thing,” said Grandma. “From the beginning. The part you heard, and the part you didn’t.”

Clementine opened her mouth, and found a hole in the middle of the story where the rest of the sentence should have been.

So she went back to Hattie's gate. This time she waited. She listened all the way to the end.

"...that lake won't be here tomorrow," said Hattie's grown-up. "It'll be twice as big. We're filling it up with the hose, for the party."

Oh.

★ YOUR TURN

Say it with Clementine: "Listen to the end."

Clementine's tail drooped. Telling the story had been the easy part. Now came the hard chapter.

She went back to every single one of them. Pip. Posey. Lyle. The crew with their signs. Hattie, still sitting in the lake with her arms crossed.

"I told it wrong," Clementine said, each time. "I didn't hear the ending. They're making it bigger. For you."

It was the hardest story she had ever told, because she had to tell it eleven times.

Hattie uncrossed her arms. The next day the lake was twice as big, and Hattie sat in the very middle of it, and everybody came.

Grandma watched from the green chair and nodded once, which, from Grandma, is a lot.



TONIGHT'S QUESTION

Will you tell me the story of your day? I'll listen all the way to the end.

★ TOMORROW'S BRAVE THING

Let someone finish their whole story before you talk.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

Before lights out, name one good thing that already happened.

Working on: Notice the good

The word Clementine leaves behind: One more chapter



Posey and the Fort with One More Door

Posey the Pink Panda

SAY IT TOGETHER

Open one more door.

E

very Friday, the crew played Castle in the fort.

There were rules. Everyone came in through the cardboard door with the heart on it. You knocked twice, said the password, and crawled in on your knees. The password changed every week. This week it was “Gary.”

★ YOUR TURN

Knock twice and whisper the password: “Gary!”

Castle was the best game on the block, and everyone knew exactly how it went.

This Friday there was someone new.

Her name was June. She had just moved into the house with the blue mailbox, and she rode a wheelchair with stickers all over the wheels. She rolled up to the edge of the Middle and watched.

“You can play!” said Lyle, loudly, because he meant it. “Come in through the door!”

June looked at the door. It was low, and the way in was a crawl on your knees across two cushions and a rug.

“I can’t get in that way,” said June.

Nobody was being unkind. The door was just in the wrong place.

The crew stood there. Pip said, “Um.” Somebody said June could be the guard outside, which was a job, but it was not the same as being in.

Posey knew that feeling. She knew exactly what the edge of a group felt like: close enough to hear the game, too far to be in it. She had once painted a sky that was a different color from everybody else’s, and she remembered.

Posey did not give up her own spot. She did not make a speech. She went over to June.

“What would help?” said Posey.

June thought about it. “A door on this side,” she said. “A wide one. With no crawling.”

So the crew built one.

It was harder than it sounded. They had to move the crate that was the table. Hattie held up the tarp while Pip cut a second door out of a big flat box. Tully measured it twice with his arms. Una drew a heart on it, because every door needs one.

★ YOUR TURN

Open the Door: swing both arms open, wide.

The new door changed things. Castle didn’t work the old way anymore. The throne had to move. The password had to be said louder, so both doors could hear it. For a while the game was a little bit messy, and Pip said so.

Then June rolled in through the second door, said “Gary” in an excellent castle voice, and asked what the rules were.

“We’re kind of making them up again,” said Posey.

“Good,” said June. “I have ideas.”

She did. They played Castle until the fairy lights came on at Flossie’s house.



TONIGHT'S QUESTION

If our fort had one more door, who would come in through it?

★ TOMORROW'S BRAVE THING

Invite someone into your game.

♥ GROWN-UP TOOL: SAY IT IN THE MOMENT

If someone’s outside the game, build a door.

Working on: Make room

The word Posey leaves behind: There’s room



Fort Night

The first Friday of every month.

Build one. Read one. Ask one.



1

Build one.

Fort plans are in the *Build the Whole Block* pack.



2

Read one.

Any story from this book.



3

Ask one.

Tonight's question is at the end of every story.

★ Story Stars

Color a star each time you read one.



Lyle



Pip



Flossie



Sunday



Hattie



Ellis



Mochi



Una



Tully



Clementine



Posey



Soft on the outside.
Brave on the inside.



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