

The **FLAT STANLEY** Collection

FLAT STANLEY



by Jeff Brown

FLAT STANLEY



Invisible
Stanley

by Jeff Brown



FLAT STANLEY



Stanley
in Space

by Jeff Brown

FLAT STANLEY



Stanley,
Flat
Again!

by Jeff
Brown

THE FLAT STANLEY COLLECTION

By Jeff Brown
Pictures by Macky Pamintuan

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FLAT STANLEY



His Original
Adventure!

by **Jeff Brown**

FLAT STANLEY

His Original Adventure!

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Pictures by Macky Pamintuan

 HarperCollins e-books

DEDICATION

For J.C. and Tony
—J.B.

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The Big Bulletin Board

Breakfast was ready.

“I will go wake the boys,” Mrs. Lambchop said to her husband, George Lambchop. Just then their younger son, Arthur, called from the bedroom he shared with his brother, Stanley.

“Hey! Come and look! Hey!”

Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop were both very much in favor of politeness and careful speech. “Hay is for horses, Arthur, not people,” Mr. Lambchop said as they entered the bedroom. “Try to remember that.”

“Excuse me,” Arthur said. “But look!”

He pointed to Stanley’s bed. Across it lay the enormous bulletin board that Mr. Lambchop had given the boys a Christmas ago so that they could pin up pictures and messages and maps. It had fallen, during the night, on top of Stanley.

But Stanley was not hurt. In fact, he would still have been sleeping if he had not been woken by his brother’s shout.

“What’s going on here?” he called out cheerfully from beneath the enormous board.

Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop hurried to lift it from the bed.

“Heavens!” said Mrs. Lambchop.

“Gosh!” said Arthur. “Stanley’s flat!”



“As a pancake,” said Mr. Lambchop. “Darndest thing I’ve ever seen.”

“Let’s all have breakfast,” Mrs. Lambchop said. “Then Stanley and I will go see Dr. Dan and hear what he has to say.”

In his office, Dr. Dan examined Stanley all over.

“How do you feel?” he asked. “Does it hurt very much?”

“I felt sort of tickly for a while after I got up,” Stanley Lambchop said, “but I feel fine now.”

“Well, that’s mostly how it is with these cases,” said Dr. Dan.

“We’ll just have to keep an eye on this young fellow,” he said when he had finished the examination. “Sometimes we doctors, despite all our years of training and experience, can only marvel at how little we really know.”





Mrs. Lambchop said she thought Stanley's clothes would have to be altered by the tailor now, so Dr. Dan told his nurse to take Stanley's measurements.

Mrs. Lambchop wrote them down.

Stanley was four feet tall, about a foot wide, and half an inch thick.



Being Flat

When Stanley got used to being flat, he enjoyed it. He could go in and out of rooms, even when the door was closed, just by lying down and sliding through the crack at the bottom.

Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop said it was silly, but they were quite proud of him.

Arthur got jealous and tried to slide under a door, but he just banged his head.



Being flat could also be helpful, Stanley found.

He was taking a walk with Mrs. Lambchop one afternoon when her favorite ring fell from her finger. The ring rolled across the sidewalk and down between the bars of a grating that covered a deep, dark shaft. Mrs. Lambchop began to cry.

“I have an idea,” Stanley said.

He took the laces out of his shoes and an extra pair out of his pocket and tied them all together to

make one long lace. Then he tied one end of that to the back of his belt and gave the other end to his mother.

“Lower me,” he said, “and I will look for the ring.”





“Thank you, Stanley,” Mrs. Lambchop said. She lowered him between the bars and moved him carefully up and down and from side to side, so that he could search the whole floor of the shaft.

Two policemen came by and stared at Mrs. Lambchop as she stood holding the long lace that ran down through the grating. She pretended not to notice them.

“What’s the matter, lady?” the first policeman asked. “Is your yo-yo stuck?”

“I am not playing with a yo-yo!” Mrs. Lambchop said sharply. “My son is at the other end of this lace, if you must know.”

“Get the net, Harry,” said the second policeman. “We have caught a cuckoo!”

Just then, down in the shaft, Stanley cried out, “Hooray!”

Mrs. Lambchop pulled him up and saw that he had the ring.

“Good for you, Stanley,” she said. Then she turned angrily to the policemen.

“A cuckoo, indeed!” she said.

“Shame!”

The policemen apologized. “We didn’t get it, lady,” they said. “We have been hasty. We see that now.”

“People should think twice before making rude remarks,” said Mrs. Lambchop. “And then not make them at all.”



The policemen realized that was a good rule and said they would try to remember it.

One day Stanley got a letter from his friend Thomas Anthony Jeffrey, whose family had moved recently to California. A school vacation was about to begin, and Stanley was invited to spend it with the Jeffreys.

“Oh, boy!” Stanley said. “I would love to go!”

Mr. Lambchop sighed. “A round-trip train or airplane ticket to California is very expensive,” he said. “I will have to think of some cheaper way.”

When Mr. Lambchop came home from the office that evening, he brought with him an enormous brown-paper envelope.



“Now then, Stanley,” he said. “Try this for size.”

The envelope fit Stanley very well. There was even room left over, Mrs. Lambchop discovered, for an egg-salad sandwich made with thin bread, and a toothbrush case filled with milk.

They had to put a great many stamps on the envelope to pay for both airmail and insurance, but it was still much less expensive than a train or airplane ticket to California.

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop slid Stanley into his envelope, along with the egg-salad sandwich and the toothbrush case full of milk, and mailed him from the box on the corner. The envelope had to be folded to fit through the slot, but Stanley was a limber boy, and inside the box he straightened right up again.





Mrs. Lambchop was nervous because Stanley had never been away from home alone before. She rapped on the box.

“Can you hear me, dear?” she called. “Are you all right?”

Stanley’s voice came quite clearly. “I’m fine. Can I eat my sandwich now?”

“Wait an hour. And try not to get overheated, dear,” Mrs. Lambchop said. Then she and Mr. Lambchop cried out, “Good-bye, good-bye!” and went home.

Stanley had a fine time in California. When the Jeffreys returned him in a beautiful white envelope they had made themselves. It had red-and-blue markings to show that it was airmail, and Thomas Jeffrey had lettered it “Valuable” and “Fragile” and “This End Up” on both sides.

Back home Stanley told his family that he had been handled so carefully he never felt a single bump. Mr. Lambchop said it proved that jet planes were wonderful, and so was the Postal Service, and that this was a great age in which to live.

Stanley thought so too.

Stanley the Kite

Mr. Lambchop had always liked to take the boys out with him on Sunday afternoons, to a museum or roller-skating in the park, but it was difficult when they were crossing streets or moving about in crowds. Stanley and Arthur would often be jostled from his side and Mr. Lambchop worried about speeding taxis or that hurrying people might accidentally knock them down.



It was easier after Stanley got flat.

Mr. Lambchop discovered that he could roll Stanley up without hurting him at all. He would tie a piece of string around Stanley to keep him from unrolling and make a little loop in the string for himself. It was as simple as carrying a parcel, and he could hold on to Arthur with the other hand.

Stanley did not mind being carried because he had never much liked to walk. Arthur didn't like to walk either, but he had to. It made him mad.

One Sunday afternoon, in the street, they met Ralph Jones, an old college friend of Mr. Lambchop's.

"Well, George, I see you have bought some wallpaper," Mr. Jones said. "Going to decorate your house, I suppose?"

"Wallpaper?" said Mr. Lambchop. "Oh, no. This is my son Stanley."

He undid the string and Stanley unrolled.

"How do you do?" Stanley said.

"Nice to meet you, young feller," the man said. "George," he said to Mr. Lambchop, "that boy is flat."



"Smart, too," Mr. Lambchop said. "Stanley is third from the top in his class at school."

"Phooey!" said Arthur.

"This is my younger son, Arthur," Mr. Lambchop said. "And he will apologize for his rudeness."

Arthur could only blush and apologize.

Mr. Lambchop rolled Stanley up again and they set out for home. It rained quite hard while they were on the way. Stanley, of course, hardly got wet at all, just around the edges, but Arthur got soaked.

Late that night Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop heard a noise out in the living room. They found Arthur lying on the floor near the bookcase. He had piled a great many volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on top of himself.

"Put some more on me," Arthur said when he saw them. "Don't just stand there. Help me."





Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop sent him back to bed, but the next morning they spoke to Stanley. “Arthur can’t help being jealous,” they said. “Be nice to him. You’re his big brother, after all.”

The next Sunday, Stanley and Arthur went to the park by themselves. The day was sunny, but windy too, and many older boys were flying beautiful, enormous kites with long tails, made in all the colors of the rainbow.

Arthur sighed. “Someday,” he said, “I will have a big kite, and I will win a kite-flying contest and be famous like everyone else. *Nobody* knows who I am these days.”

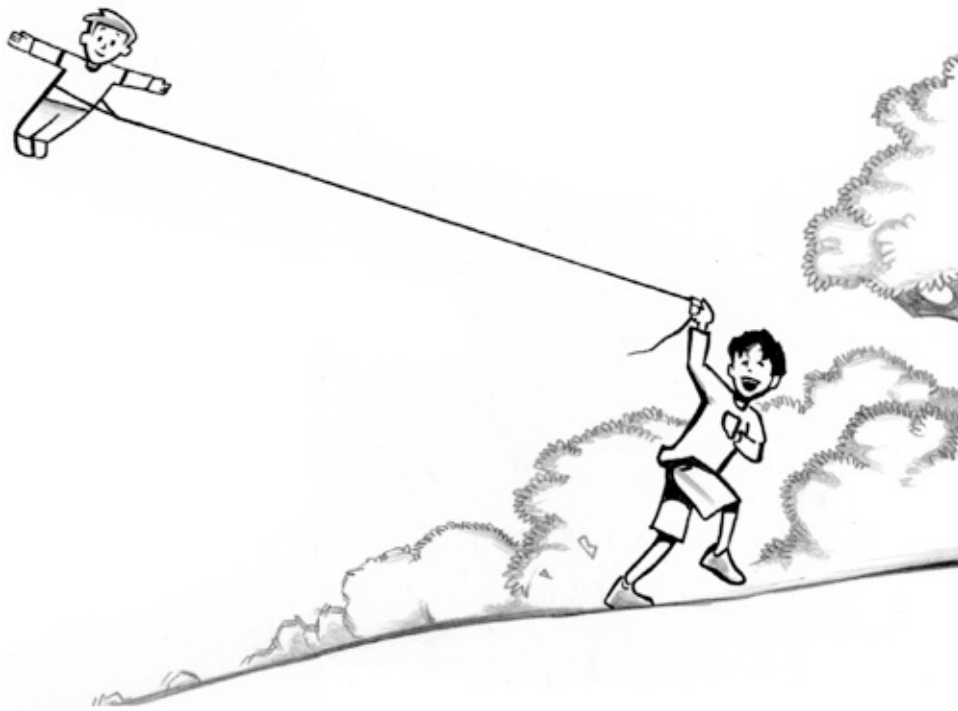
Stanley remembered what his parents had said. He went to a boy whose kite was broken and borrowed a large spool of string.

“You can fly me, Arthur,” he said. “Come on.”

He attached the string to himself and gave Arthur the spool to hold. He ran lightly across the grass, sideways to get up speed, and then he turned to meet the breeze.

Up, up, up ... UP! went Stanley, being a kite.

He knew just how to manage on the gusts of wind. He faced full into the wind if he wanted to rise, and let it take him from behind when he wanted speed. He had only to turn his thin edge to the wind, carefully, a little at a time, so that it did not hold him, and then he would slip gracefully down toward the earth again.



Arthur let out all the string, and Stanley soared high above the trees, a beautiful sight in his red shirt and blue trousers against the pale blue sky.

Everyone in the park stood still to watch.

Stanley swooped right and then left in long, matched swoops. He held his arms by his sides and zoomed at the ground like a rocket and curved up again toward the sun. He side-slipped and circled, and made figure eights and crosses and a star.

Nobody has ever flown the way Stanley Lambchop flew that day. Probably no one ever will again.

After a while, of course, people grew tired of watching, and Arthur got tired of running about with the empty spool. Stanley went right on, though, showing off.

Three boys came up to Arthur and invited him to join them for a hot dog and some soda pop. Arthur left the spool wedged in the fork of a tree. He did not notice, while he was eating the hot dog, that the wind was blowing the string and tangling it about the tree.



The string got shorter and shorter, but Stanley did not realize how low he was until leaves brushed his feet, and then it was too late. He got stuck in the branches. Fifteen minutes passed before Arthur and the other boys heard his cries and climbed up to set him free.



Stanley would not speak to his brother that evening, and at bedtime, even though Arthur had apologized, he was still cross.

Alone with Mr. Lambchop in the living room, Mrs. Lambchop sighed and shook her head. “You’re at the office all day, having fun,” she said. “You don’t realize what I go through with the boys. They’re very difficult.”

“Kids are like that,” Mr. Lambchop said. “Phases. Be patient, dear.”

The Museum Thieves

Mr. and Mrs. O. Jay Dart lived in the apartment above the Lambchops. Mr. Dart was an important man, the director of the Famous Museum of Art downtown in the city.

Stanley Lambchop had noticed in the elevator that Mr. Dart, who was ordinarily a cheerful man, had become quite gloomy, but he had no idea what the reason was. And then at breakfast one morning he heard Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop talking about Mr. Dart.



“I see,” said Mr. Lambchop, reading the paper over his coffee cup, “that still another painting has been stolen from the Famous Museum. It says here that Mr. O. Jay Dart, the director, is at his wits’ end.”

“Oh, dear! Are the police no help?” Mrs. Lambchop asked.

“It seems not,” said Mr. Lambchop. “Listen to what the Chief of Police told the newspaper. ‘We

suspect a gang of sneak thieves. These are the worst kind. They work by sneakery, which makes them very difficult to catch. However, my men and I will keep trying. Meanwhile, I hope people will buy tickets for the Policemen's Ball and not park their cars where signs say don't."





The next morning Stanley Lambchop heard Mr. Dart talking to his wife in the elevator.

“These sneak thieves work at night,” Mr. Dart said. “It is very hard for our guards to stay awake when they have been on duty all day. And the Famous Museum is so big, we cannot guard every picture at the same time. I fear it is hopeless, hopeless, hopeless!”

Suddenly, as if an electric light bulb had lit up in the air above his head, giving out little shooting lines of excitement, Stanley Lambchop had an idea. He told it to Mr. Dart.



“Stanley,” Mr. Dart said, “if your mother will give her permission, I will put you and your plan to work this very night!”

Mrs. Lambchop gave her permission. “But you will have to take a long nap this afternoon,” she said. “I won’t have you up till all hours unless you do.”

That evening, after a long nap, Stanley went with Mr. Dart to the Famous Museum. Mr. Dart took him into the main hall, where the biggest and most important paintings were hung. He pointed to a huge painting that showed a bearded man, wearing a floppy velvet hat, playing a violin for a lady who lay on a couch. There was a half-man, half-horse person standing behind them, and three fat children with wings were flying around above. That, Mr. Dart explained, was the most expensive painting in the world!



There was an empty picture frame on the opposite wall. We shall hear more about that later on.

Mr. Dart took Stanley into his office and said, "It is time for you to put on a disguise."

"I already thought of that," Stanley Lambchop said, "and I brought one. My cowboy suit. It has a red bandanna that I can tie over my face. Nobody will recognize me in a million years."

"No," Mr. Dart said. "You will have to wear the disguise I have chosen."

From a closet he took a white dress with a blue sash, a pair of shiny little pointed shoes, a wide straw hat with a blue band that matched the sash, and a wig and a stick. The wig was made of blond hair, long and done in ringlets. The stick was curved at the top and it, too, had a blue ribbon on it.

"In this shepherdess disguise," Mr. Dart said, "you will look like a painting that belongs in the main hall. We do not have cowboy pictures in the main hall."

Stanley was so disgusted, he could hardly speak. "I will look like a girl, that's what I will look like," he said. "I wish I had never had my idea."



But he was a good sport, so he put on the disguise.

Back in the main hall, Mr. Dart helped Stanley climb up into the empty picture frame. Stanley was able to stay in place because Mr. Dart had cleverly put four small spikes in the wall, one for each hand and foot.

The frame was a perfect fit. Against the wall, Stanley looked just like a picture.

“Except for one thing,” Mr. Dart said. “Shepherdesses are supposed to look happy. They smile at their sheep and at the sky. You look fierce, not happy, Stanley.”

Stanley tried hard to get a faraway look in his eyes and even to smile a little bit.

Mr. Dart stood back a few feet and stared at him for a moment. “Well,” he said, “it may not be art, but I know what I like.”

He went off to make sure that certain other parts of Stanley’s plan were taken care of, and Stanley was left alone.

It was very dark in the main hall. A little bit of moonlight came through the windows, and Stanley could just make out the world’s most expensive painting on the opposite wall. He felt as though the bearded man with the violin and the lady on the couch and the half-horse person and the winged children were all waiting, as he was, for something to happen.

Time passed and he got tired and tired. Anyone would be tired this late at night, especially if he had to stand in a picture frame balancing on little spikes.

Maybe they won’t come, Stanley thought. Maybe the sneak thieves won’t come at all.

The moon went behind a cloud and then the main hall was pitch-dark. It seemed to get quieter, too, with the darkness. There was absolutely no sound at all. Stanley felt the hair on the back of his neck prickle beneath the golden curls of the wig.

Cr-eee-eee-k ...

The creaking sound came from right out in the middle of the main hall, and even as he heard it, Stanley saw, in the same place, a tiny yellow glow of light!

The creaking came again, and the glow got bigger. A trapdoor had opened in the floor, and two men came up through it into the hall!

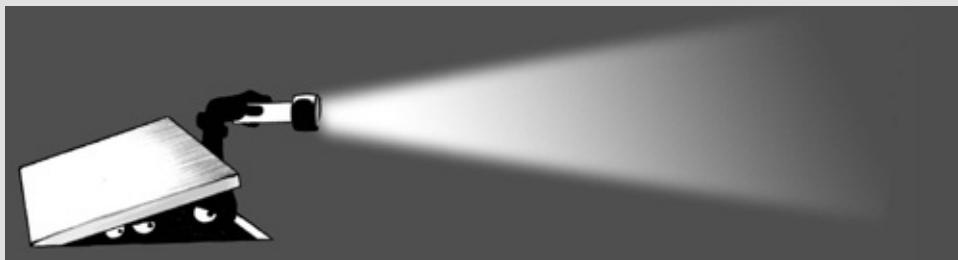
Stanley understood everything all at once. These must be the sneak thieves! They had a secret trapdoor entrance into the museum from outside. That was why they had never been caught. And now, tonight, they were back to steal the most expensive painting in the world!

He held very still in his picture frame and listened to the sneak thieves.

“This is it, Max,” said the first one. “This is where we art robbers pull a sensational job whilst the civilized community sleeps.”

“Right, Luther,” said the other man. “In all this great city, there is no one to suspect us.”

Ha, ha! thought Stanley Lambchop. That’s what you think!



The sneak thieves put down their lantern and took the world’s most expensive painting off the wall.

“What would we do to anyone who tried to capture us, Max?” the first man asked.



“We would kill him. What else?” his friend replied.

That was enough to frighten Stanley, and he was even more frightened when Luther came over and stared at him.



“This sheep girl,” Luther said. “I thought sheep girls were supposed to smile, Max. This one looks scared.”

Just in time, Stanley managed to get a faraway look in his eyes again and to smile, sort of.

“You’re crazy, Luther,” Max said. “She’s smiling. And what a pretty little thing she is, too.”

That made Stanley furious. He waited until the sneak thieves had turned back to the world’s most expensive painting, and he shouted in his loudest, most terrifying voice: “POLICE! POLICE! MR. DART! THE SNEAK THIEVES ARE HERE!”



The sneak thieves looked at each other. “Max,” said the first one, very quietly. “I think I heard the sheep girl yell.”

“I think I did too,” said Max in a quivery voice. “Oh, boy! Yelling pictures. We both need a rest.”

“You’ll get a rest, all right!” shouted Mr. Dart, rushing in with the Chief of Police and lots of guards and policemen behind him. “You’ll get *ar-rested*, that’s what! Ha, ha, ha!”

The sneak thieves were too mixed up by Mr. Dart’s joke and too frightened by the policemen to put up a fight.

Before they knew it, they had been handcuffed and led away to jail.

The next morning in the office of the Chief of Police, Stanley Lambchop got a medal. The day after that his picture was in all the newspapers.



Arthur's Good Idea

For a while Stanley Lambchop was a famous name. Everywhere that Stanley went, people stared and pointed at him. He could hear them whisper, "Over there, Agnes, over there! That must be Stanley Lambchop, the one who caught the sneak thieves ..." and things like that.

But after a few weeks the whispering and the staring stopped. People had other things to think about. Stanley did not mind. Being famous had been fun, but enough was enough.



And then came a further change, and it was not a pleasant one. People began to laugh and make fun of him as he passed by. "Hello, Super-Skinny!" they would shout, and even ruder things, about the way he looked.

Stanley told his parents how he felt. "It's the other kids I mostly mind," he said. "They don't like me anymore because I'm different. Flat."

“Shame on them,” Mrs. Lambchop said. “It is wrong to dislike people for their shapes. Or their religion, for that matter, or the color of their skin.”

“I know,” Stanley said. “Only maybe it’s impossible for everybody to like *everybody*.”

“Perhaps,” said Mrs. Lambchop. “But they can try.”

Later that night Arthur Lambchop was woken by the sound of crying. In the darkness he crept across the room and knelt by Stanley’s bed.

“Are you okay?” he said.

“Go away,” Stanley said.

“Don’t be mad at me,” Arthur said. “You’re still mad because I let you get tangled the day you were my kite, I guess.”

“Skip it, will you?” Stanley said. “I’m not mad. Go away.”

“Please let’s be friends....” Arthur couldn’t help crying a little, too. “Oh, Stanley,” he said. “Please tell me what’s wrong.”

Stanley waited for a long time before he spoke. “The thing is,” he said, “I’m just not happy anymore. I’m tired of being flat. I want to be a regular shape again, like other people. But I’ll have to go on being flat forever. It makes me sick.”

“Oh, Stanley,” Arthur said. He dried his tears on a corner of Stanley’s sheet and could think of nothing more to say.

“Don’t talk about what I just said,” Stanley told him. “I don’t want the folks to worry. That would only make it worse.”



“You’re brave,” Arthur said. “You really are.”

He took hold of Stanley’s hand. The two brothers sat together in the darkness, being friends. They were both still sad, but each one felt a *little* better than he had before.

And then, suddenly, though he was not even trying to think, Arthur had an idea. He jumped up and turned on the light and ran to the big storage box where toys and things were kept. He began to rummage in the box.

Stanley sat up in bed to watch.

Arthur flung aside a football and some lead soldiers and airplane models and lots of wooden blocks, and then he said, “Aha!” He had found what he wanted—an old bicycle pump. He held it up, and Stanley and he looked at each other.

“Okay,” Stanley said at last. “But take it easy.” He put the end of the long pump hose in his mouth and clamped his lips tightly about it so that no air could escape.

“I’ll go slowly,” Arthur said. “If it hurts or anything, wiggle your hand at me.”

He began to pump. At first nothing happened except that Stanley’s cheeks bulged a bit. Arthur watched his hand, but there was no wiggle signal, so he pumped on. Then, suddenly, Stanley’s top half began to swell.



“It’s working! It’s working!” shouted Arthur, pumping away.

Stanley spread his arms so that the air could get around inside him more easily. He got bigger and bigger. The buttons of his pajama top burst off—*Pop! Pop! Pop!* A moment more and he was all rounded out; head and body, arms and legs. But not his right foot. That foot stayed flat.

Arthur stopped pumping. “It’s like trying to do the very last bit of those long balloons,” he said. “Maybe a shake would help.”

Stanley shook his right foot twice, and with a little *whooshing* sound it swelled out to match the left one. There stood Stanley Lambchop as he used to be, as if he had never been flat at all.

“Thank you, Arthur,” Stanley said. “Thank you very much.”

The brothers were shaking hands when Mr. Lambchop strode into the room with Mrs. Lambchop right behind him. “We heard you!” said Mr. Lambchop. “Up and talking when you ought to be asleep, eh? Shame on—”

“GEORGE!” said Mrs. Lambchop. “Stanley’s *round* again!”

“You’re right!” said Mr. Lambchop, noticing. “Good for you, Stanley!”

“I’m the one who did it,” Arthur said. “I blew him up.”

Everyone was terribly excited and happy, of course. Mrs. Lambchop made hot chocolate to celebrate the occasion, and several toasts were drunk to Arthur for his cleverness.



When the little party was over, Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop tucked the boys back into their beds and kissed them, and then they turned out the light. “Good night,” they said.

“Good night,” said Stanley and Arthur.

It had been a long and tiring day. Very soon all the Lambchops were asleep.

The End

TURN THE PAGE FOR A SNEAK PEEK AT:



A Morning Surprise

Mrs. Lambchop was making breakfast. Mr. Lambchop, at the kitchen table, helped by reading bits from the morning paper.

“Here’s an odd one, Harriet,” he said. “There’s a chicken in Sweden that rides a bike.”

“So do I, George,” said Mrs. Lambchop, not really listening.

“Listen to this. ‘Merker Building emptied. To be collapsed next week.’ Imagine! Eight floors!”

“Poor thing!” Mrs. Lambchop set out plates. “Boys!” she called. “Breakfast is ready!”

Her glance fell upon a row of photographs on the wall above the sink. There was a smiling Stanley, only half an inch thick, his big bulletin board having fallen from the bedroom wall to rest upon him overnight. Next came reminders of the many family adventures that had come after Stanley’s younger brother, Arthur, had cleverly blown him round again with a bicycle pump. There were the brothers with Prince Haraz, the young genie who had granted wishes for them all after being accidentally summoned by Stanley from a lamp. There was the entire family with Santa Claus and his daughter, Sarah, taken during a Christmas visit to the North Pole. There was the family again in Washington, D.C., in the office of the President of the United States, who had asked them to undertake a secret mission into outer space. The last picture showed Arthur standing beside a balloon on which Mrs. Lambchop had painted a picture of Stanley’s face. The balloon, its string in fact held by Stanley, had been a valuable guide to his presence, since he was invisible at the time. “Boys!” she called again. “Breakfast!”

In their bedroom, Stanley and Arthur had finished dressing.

While Stanley filled his backpack, Arthur bounced a tennis ball. “Let’s go,” he said. “Here! Catch!”

Stanley had just reached for a book on the shelf by his bed. The ball struck his back as he turned, and he banged his shoulder on a corner of the shelf.

“Ouch!”

“Sorry,” Arthur said. “But let’s go, okay? You know how long—STANLEY!”

“Why are you shouting?” Stanley adjusted his pack. “C’mon! I’m so hungry—” He paused. “Oh, boy! Arthur, do you see?”

“I do, actually.” Arthur swallowed hard. “You’re, you know ... flat.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Brown created the beloved character of Flat Stanley as a bedtime story for his two sons. He has written other outrageous books about the Lambchop family, including *Flat Stanley*, *Stanley and the Magic Lamp*, *Invisible Stanley*, *Stanley's Christmas Adventure*, *Stanley in Space*, and *Stanley, Flat Again!* You can learn more about Jeff Brown and Flat Stanley at www.flatstanleybooks.com.

Macky Pamintuan is an accomplished illustrator. He lives in San Diego, California, with his wife and dog.

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PROLOGUE

Stanley Lambchop spoke into the darkness above his bed. "I can't sleep. It's the rain, I think."

There was no response from the bed across the room.

"I'm hungry, too," Stanley said. "Are you awake, Arthur?"

"I am now," said his younger brother. "You woke me."

Stanley fetched an apple from the kitchen and ate it by the bedroom window. The rain had worsened.

"I'm still hungry," he said.



"Raisins ... shelf ..." murmured Arthur, half asleep again.

Crash! came thunder. Lightning flashed.

Stanley found the little box of raisins on a shelf by the window. He ate one.

Crash! Flash!

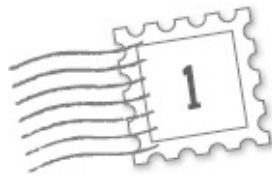
Stanley ate more raisins.

Crash! Flash!

Arthur yawned. "Go to bed. You can't be hungry still."

"I'm not, actually." Stanley got back into bed. "But I feel sort of ... oh, *different*, I guess."

He slept.



Where Is Stanley?

“Breakfast is ready, George. We must wake the boys,” Mrs. Lambchop said to her husband.

Just then, Arthur Lambchop called from the bedroom he shared with his brother.

“Hey! Come here! Hey!”

Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop smiled, recalling another morning that had begun like this. An enormous bulletin board, they discovered, had fallen on Stanley during the night, leaving him unhurt but no more than half an inch thick. And so he had remained until Arthur blew him round again, weeks later, with a bicycle pump.



“Hey!” The call came again. “Are you coming? Hey!”

Mrs. Lambchop held firm views about good manners and correct speech. “Hay is for horses, not

people, Arthur,” she said as they entered the bedroom. “As well you know.”

“Excuse me,” said Arthur. “The thing is, I can *hear* Stanley, but I can’t *find* him!”

Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop looked about the room. A shape was visible beneath the covers of Stanley’s bed, and the pillow was squashed down, as if a head rested upon it. But there was no head.



“Why are you staring?” The voice was Stanley’s.

Smiling, Mr. Lambchop looked under the bed but saw only a pair of slippers and an old tennis ball. “Not here,” he said.

Arthur put out a hand, exploring. “Ouch!” said Stanley’s voice. “You poked my nose!”

Arthur gasped.

Mrs. Lambchop stepped forward. “If I may ...?” Gently, using both hands, she felt about.

A giggle rose from the bed. “That *tickles!*”

“Oh, my!” said Mrs. Lambchop. She looked at Mr. Lambchop and he at her, as they had during past great surprises. Stanley’s flatness had been the first of these. Another had come the evening they discovered a young genie, Prince Haraz, in the bedroom with Stanley and Arthur, who had accidentally summoned him from a lamp.

Mrs. Lambchop drew a deep breath. “We must face facts, George. Stanley is now invisible.”

“You’re *right!*” said a startled voice from the bed. “I can’t see my feet! Or my pajamas!”

“Darnedest thing I’ve ever seen,” said Mr. Lambchop. “Or *not* seen, I should say. Try some other pajamas, Stanley.”

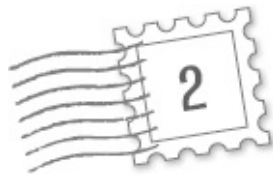
Stanley got out of bed and put on different pajamas, but these too vanished, reappearing only when he took them off. It was the same with the shirt and trousers he tried on next. “Gracious!” Mrs. Lambchop



“I know!” said Arthur. Untying a small red balloon, a party favor, that floated above his bed, he gave Stanley the string to hold. “Try this,” he said.

The string vanished, but not the balloon.

“There!” said Mrs. Lambchop. “At least we can tell, approximately, where Stanley is. Now let’s all have breakfast. Then, George, we must see what Dr. Dan makes of this.”



Dr. Dan

“What’s that red balloon doing here?” asked Dr. Dan. “Well, never mind. Good morning, Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop. Something about Stanley, my nurse says. He’s not been taken flat again?”

“No, no,” said Mrs. Lambchop. “Stanley has remained round.”

“They mostly do,” said Dr. Dan. “Well, let’s have the little fellow in.”

“I am in,” said Stanley, standing directly before him. “Holding the balloon.”

“Ha, ha, Mr. Lambchop!” said Dr. Dan. “You are an excellent ventriloquist! But I see through your little joke!”

“What you see through,” said Mr. Lambchop, “is Stanley.”

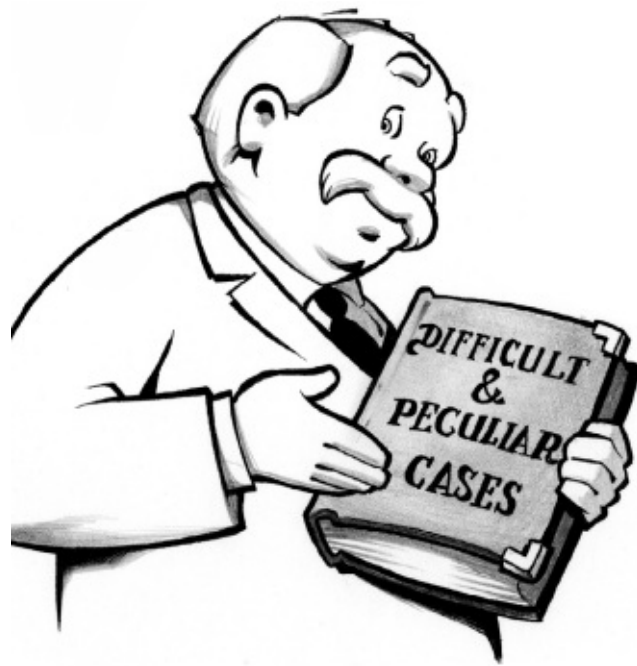


“Beg pardon?” said Dr. Dan. &

“Stanley became invisible during the night,” Mrs. Lambchop explained. “We are quite unsettled by it.”

“Headache?” Dr. Dan asked Stanley’s balloon. “Throat sore? Stomach upset?”

“I feel fine,” Stanley said.



“I see. Hmmmm ...” Dr. Dan shook his head. “Frankly, despite my long years of practice, I’ve not run into this before. But one of my excellent medical books.

Difficult and Peculiar Cases by Dr. Franz Gemeister, may help.”

He took a large book from the shelf behind him and looked into it.

“Ah! ‘Disappearances,’ page 134.” He found the page. “Hmmmm ... Not much here, I’m afraid. France, 1851: a Madame Poulenc vanished while eating bananas in the rain. Spain, 1923: the Gonzales twins, age eleven, became invisible after eating fruit salad. Lightning had been observed. The most recent case, in 1968, is Oombok, an Eskimo chief, last seen eating canned peaches during a blizzard.”

Dr. Dan returned the book to the shelf.

“That’s it,” he said. “Gemeister suspects a connection between bad weather and fruit.”

“It stormed last night,” said Stanley. “And I ate an apple. Raisins, too.”

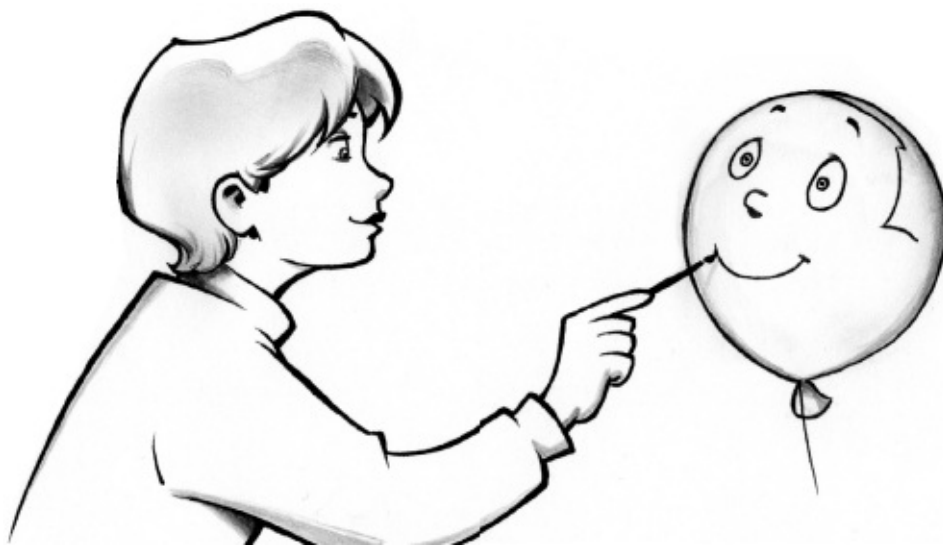
“There you are,” said Dr. Dan. “But we must look on the bright side, Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop. Stanley seems perfectly healthy, except for the visibility factor. We’ll just keep an eye on him.”

“Easier said than done,” said Mr. Lambchop. “Why do his *clothes* also disappear?”

“Not my field, I’m afraid,” said Dr. Dan. “I suggest a textile specialist.”

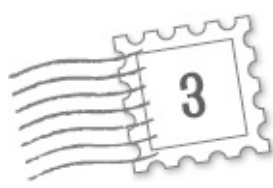
“We’ve kept you long enough, Doctor,” Mrs. Lambchop said. “Come, George, Stanley—Where *are* you, Stanley? Ah! Just hold the balloon a bit higher, dear. Good-bye, Dr. Dan.”

By dinnertime Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop and Arthur had become quite sad. The red balloon, though useful in locating Stanley, kept reminding them of how much they missed his dear face and smile.



But after dinner Mrs. Lambchop, who was artistically talented, replaced the red balloon with a pretty white one and got out her watercolor paints. Using four colors and several delicate brushes, she painted an excellent likeness of Stanley, smiling, on the white balloon.

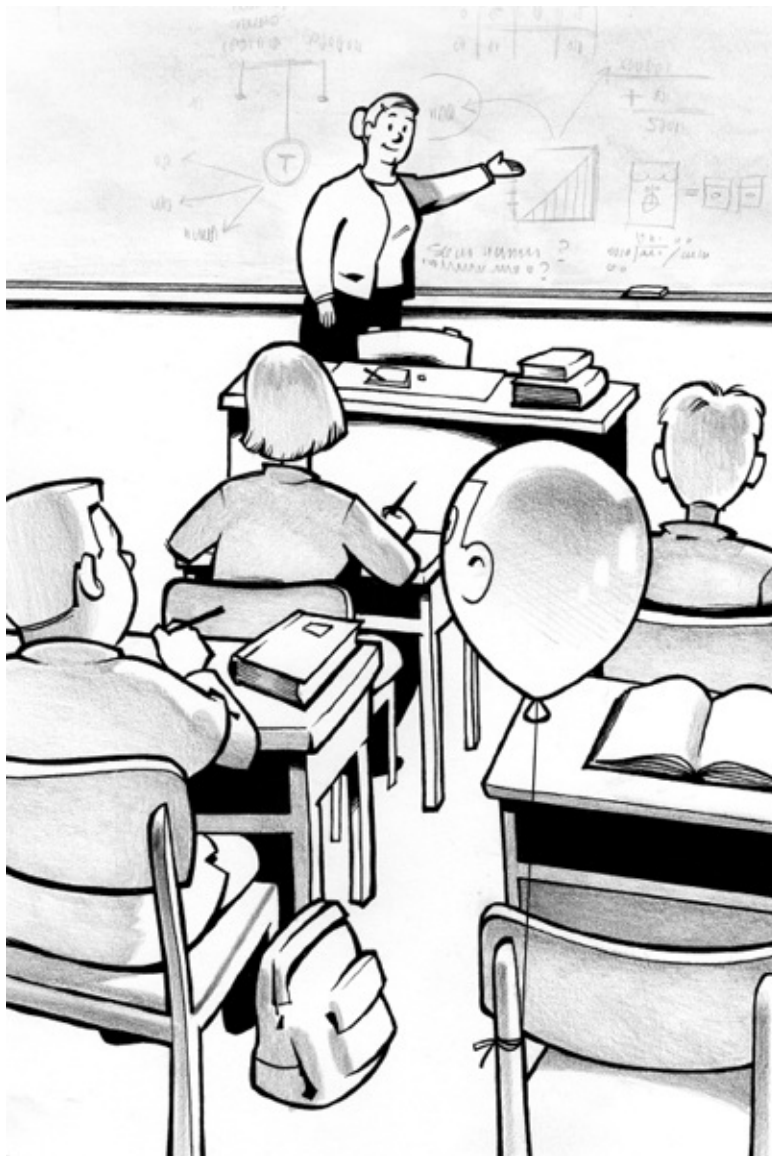
Everyone became at once more cheerful. Stanley said he felt almost his old self again, especially when he looked in the mirror.



The First Days

The next morning Mrs. Lambchop wrote a note to Stanley's teacher, tied a stronger string to his balloon, and sent him off to school.

"Dear Miss Benchley," the note said. "Stanley has unexpectedly become invisible. You will find the balloon a useful guide to his presence. Sincerely, Harriet Lambchop."



Miss Benchley spoke to the class. "We must not stare at where we suppose Stanley to be," she said. "Or gossip about his state."

Nevertheless, word soon reached a newspaper. A reporter visited the school and his story appeared the next day.

The headline read: SMILING STUDENT: "ONCE YOU SAW HIM, NOW YOU DON'T!" Beneath it were two

photographs, a Before and an After.



The Before, taken by Miss Benchley a week earlier, showed a smiling Stanley at his desk. The After, taken by the reporter, showed only Stanley's desk and his smiley-face balloon bobbing above it. The story included a statement by Miss Benchley that Stanley was in fact at the desk and, to the best of her knowledge, smiling.

Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop bought several copies of the paper for out-of-town friends. Her colorful balloon artwork lost something in black and white, Mrs. Lambchop said, but on the whole it had photographed well.

Arthur said that "Invisible Boy's Brother" would have been an interesting picture, and that Stanley should suggest it if the reporter came around again.

Being invisible offered temptations, Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop warned, but Stanley must resist them. It would be wrong to spy on people, for example, or sneak up on them to hear what they were saying.

But the next Saturday afternoon, when the Lambchops went to the movies, it was Arthur who could not resist.

"Don't buy a seat for Stanley," he whispered at the ticket window. "Just hide his balloon. Who'd know?"

"That would be deceitful, dear," said Mrs. Lambchop. "Four seats, please," she told the ticket lady. "We want one for our coats, you see."

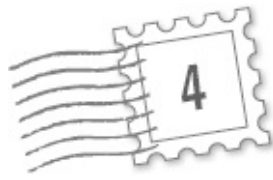
"Wasn't *that* deceitful, sort of?" Arthur asked as they went in.

"Not in the same way," said Mr. Lambchop, tucking Stanley's balloon beneath his seat.

Just as the film began, a very tall man sat directly in front of Stanley, blocking his view. Mr. Lambchop took Stanley on his lap, from which the screen was easily seen, and the people farther back saw right through him without knowing it. Stanley greatly enjoyed the show.

"See?" said Arthur as they went out. "Stanley didn't even *need* a seat."

"You have a point," said Mr. Lambchop, whose legs had gone to sleep.



In the Park

It was Sunday afternoon. Arthur had gone to visit a friend, so Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop set out with Stanley for a nearby park. The streets were crowded, and Stanley carried his balloon to lessen the risk of being jostled by people hurrying by.

Near the park they met Ralph Jones, an old college friend of Mr. Lambchop's.



“Always a treat running into your family, George!” said Mr. Jones. “The older boy was flat once, I recall. You had him rolled up. And once you had a foreign lad with you. A prince, yes?”

“What a memory you have!” said Mr. Lambchop, recalling the young genie who had been with them at the time.

“How are you, Ralph?” said Mrs. Lambchop. “Stanley? Say hello to Mr. Jones.”

“Take care!” said Mr. Jones. “That balloon is floating—hmmmm ... Just where *is* Stanley?”

“Holding the balloon,” Stanley said. “I got invisible somehow.”

“Is that so? First flat, now invisible.” Ralph Jones shook his head. “Kids! Always one thing or another, eh, George? My oldest needs dental work. Well, I must run! Remember me to that prince. Prince Fawzi Mustafa Aslan Mirza Melek Namerd Haraz, as I recall.”

“A truly *remarkable* memory,” said Mrs. Lambchop as Mr. Jones walked away.

By a field in the park, the Lambchops found a bench on which to rest.

On the field, children were racing bicycles, round and round. Suddenly, shouts rose. “Give up, Billy! ... Billy’s no good! ... Billy, Billy, silly Billy, he can’t ride a bike!”

“That must be Billy,” said Mrs. Lambchop. “The little fellow so far behind the rest. Oh, dear! How he teeters!”

Stanley remembered how nervous he had been when he was learning to ride and how his father had steadied him. Poor Billy! If only ... I’ll do it! he thought, and tied his balloon to the bench.

When Billy came round again, Stanley darted onto the field. Taking hold of the teetering bicycle from behind, he began to run.

“Uh-oh!” said little Billy, surprised to be gaining speed.



Stanley ran harder, keeping the bicycle steady. The pedals rose and fell, faster and faster, then faster still.

“Yikes!” cried Billy.

Stanley ran as fast as he could. Soon they passed the boy riding just ahead, then another boy and another! Not until they had passed all the other riders did Stanley, now out of breath, let go.

“Wheeee!” Billy shouted, and went round once more by himself.

“You win, Billy!” shouted the other boys. “How did you get so good? ... And so *suddenly!* ... You sure had us fooled!”

Stanley got his breath back and returned to Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop on the bench.

“Too bad you missed it, Stanley,” said Mr. Lambchop, pretending he had not guessed the truth. “That teetery little boy—he rode very well suddenly.”

“Oh?” said Stanley, pretending also. “I wasn’t paying attention, I guess.”

Mr. Lambchop gave him a little poke in the ribs.

Half an hour passed, and Mrs. Lambchop worried that they might be sitting too long in the sun. In Stanley’s present state, she said, over-tanning would be difficult to detect.

Just then, a young man and a pretty girl strolled past, hand in hand, and halted in a grove of trees

close by.

“That is Phillip, the son of my dear friend Mrs. Hodgson,” Mrs. Lambchop said. “And the girl must be his sweetheart, Lucia. Such a sad story! They are in love and Phillip wants very much to propose marriage. But he is too shy. He tries and tries, Mrs. Hodgson says, but each time his courage fails. And Lucia is too timid to coax the proposal from him.”

Mr. Lambchop was not the least bit shy. “I’ll go introduce myself,” he said. “And pop the question for him.”

“No, George.” Mrs. Lambchop shook her head. “Lucia must hear the words from Phillip’s own lips.”

An idea came to Stanley.

“Be right back!” he said, and ran to the grove in which the young couple stood. Once beside them, he stood very still.

“... nice day, Lucia, don’t you think?” Phillip was saying. “Though they say it may rain. Who knows?”

“You are quite right, I’m sure, Phillip,” the girl replied. “I do value your opinions about the weather.”

“You are kind, very kind.” Phillip trembled a bit. “Lucia, I want to ask ... I mean ... Would you ... Consent, that is ...” He gulped. “What a pretty dress you have on!”

“Thank you,” said Lucia. “I like your necktie. You were saying, Phillip?”

“Ah!” said Phillip. “Right! Yes! For some time now, dear Lucia ... My dearest wish ... Oh, my! I want ...” He bit his lip. “Look! A dark cloud, there in the west! It may rain after all.”

“I hope not.” Lucia seemed close to tears. “I mean, if it rained ... Well, we might get wet.”

This is very boring, Stanley thought.

The conversation grew even more boring. Again and again Phillip failed to declare his love, chattering instead about the weather, or the look of a tree, or children playing in the park.

“I want to ask, dear Lucia,” Phillip began again for perhaps the twentieth time, “if you will ... That is ... If you ... If ...”

“Yes?” said Lucia, also perhaps for the twentieth time. “*What, Phillip? What do you wish to say?*”

Stanley leaned forward.

“Lucia ...?” said Phillip. “Hmmm ... Ah! I ...”

“*Marry me!*” said Stanley, making his voice as much like Phillip’s as he could.

Lucia’s eyes opened wide. “I *will*, Phillip!” she cried. “Of course I will marry you!”

Phillip looked as if he might faint. “What? Did I—? You will?”



Lucia hugged him, and they kissed.

“I’ve proposed at last!” cried Phillip. “I can hardly believe I spoke the words!”

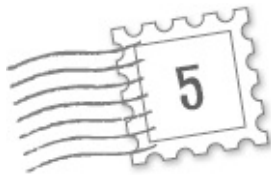
You didn’t, Stanley thought.

Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop had seen the lovers embrace. “Well done, Stanley!” they said when he returned to their bench, and several more times on the way home.

Mrs. Hodgson called that evening to report that Phillip and Lucia would soon be wed. How wonderful! Mrs. Lambchop said. She had glimpsed them in the park just that afternoon. Such a handsome pair! So much in love!

Stanley teased her. “You said never to sneak up on people or spy on them. But I did today. Are you mad at me?”

“Oh, very angry,” said Mrs. Lambchop, and kissed the top of his head.



The TV Show

Arthur was feeling left out. “Stanley always gets to have interesting adventures,” he said. “And that newspaper story was just about him. Nobody seems interested in me.”

“The best way to draw attention, dear,” said Mrs. Lambchop, “is by one’s character. Be kindly. And fair. Cheerfulness is much admired, as is wit.”

“I can’t manage all that,” said Arthur.

Mrs. Lambchop spoke privately to Stanley. “Your brother is a bit jealous,” she said.

“When I was flat, Arthur was jealous because people stared at me,” Stanley said. “Now they can’t see me at all, and he’s jealous again.”



Mrs. Lambchop sighed. “If you can find a way to cheer him, do.”

The very next day an important TV person telephoned Mr. Lambchop.

“Teddy Talker here, Lambchop,” he said. “Host of the enormously popular TV show, *Talking with Teddy Talker*. Will Stanley appear on it?”

“It would please us to have Stanley *appear* anywhere at all,” Mr. Lambchop said. “People can’t see him, you know.”

“I’ll just say he’s there,” said Teddy Talker. “Speak to the boy. Let me know.”

Stanley said that he did not particularly care to go on TV. But then he remembered about cheering up Arthur.

“All right,” he said. “But Arthur, too. He likes to tell jokes and do magic tricks. Say we’ll *both* be on the show.”

Arthur was very pleased, and that evening the brothers planned what they would do. The next morning Mr. Lambchop told Teddy Talker.

“Excellent plan!” said the TV man. “This Friday, yes? Thank you, Lambchop!”

“Welcome, everybody!” said Teddy Talker that Friday evening from the stage of his TV show. “Wonderful guests tonight! Including an invisible boy!”

In the front row, applauding with the rest of the audience, Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop thought of Stanley and Arthur, now waiting in a dressing room backstage. How excited they must be!

The other guests were already seated on the sofa by Teddy Talker’s desk. He chatted first with a lady who had written a book about sausage, next with a tennis champion who had become a rabbi, then with a very pretty young woman who had won a beauty contest, but planned now to devote herself to the cause of world peace.



At last came the announcement that began the Lambchop plan.

“Invisible Stanley has been delayed but will be here shortly,” Teddy Talker told the audience. “Meanwhile, we are fortunate in having with us his very talented brother!”

Protests rose. “Brother? ... A *visible* brother? ... Drat! ... Good thing we got in free!”

“Ladies and gentlemen!” said Teddy Talker. “Mirth and magic with Arthur Lambchop!”



Arthur stepped out onto the stage wearing a smart black magician's cape Mrs. Lambchop had made for him and carrying a small box, which he placed on Teddy Talker's desk.

"Hello, everybody!" he said. "The box is for later. Now let's have fun! Heard the story about the three holes in the ground?" He waited, smiling. "Well, well, well!"

Two people laughed, but that was all.

"I don't understand," said a lady sitting behind Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop.

Mr. Lambchop turned around in his seat. "A 'well' is a hole in the ground," he said. "'Well, well, well.' Three holes."

"Ah! I see!" said the lady.

"A riddle, ladies and gentlemen!" cried Arthur. "Where do kings keep their armies?"

"Where?" someone called.

"In their sleeveies!" said Arthur.

Many people laughed now, including the lady who had missed the first joke. "I got that one," she said.

"A mind-reading trick!" Arthur announced. He shuffled a deck of cards and let Teddy Talker draw one.

"Don't let me see it!" he said. "But look at it! Picture it in your mind! I will concentrate, using my magic powers!" Arthur closed his eyes. "Hmmm ... hmmm ... Your card, sir, is the four of hearts!"

"It is!" cried Teddy Talker. "It is the four of hearts!"

Voices rose again. "Incredible! ... He can read minds? ... So young, too! ... Do that one again, lad!"

"Certainly!" said Arthur.

But he had used a false deck in which *every* card was the four of hearts, and the audience would surely guess if that card was named again. Fortunately, the brothers had thought of this. Backstage, Stanley tied his balloon to a chair.

Arthur now shuffled a real deck of cards, then called for a volunteer. When an elderly gentleman came up onto the stage, Stanley tiptoed out to stand behind him. The audience applauded the volunteer. How peculiar this is! Stanley thought. Hundreds of people looking, but not one can see me!

"Draw a card, sir!" said Arthur. "Thank you! Keep it hidden! But picture it in your mind!" Again

closing his eyes, he pretended to be thinking hard.

A quick peek showed Stanley that the volunteer held the ten of clubs. He tiptoed over to whisper in his brother's ear.

Arthur opened his eyes. "I have it. The card is ... the ten of clubs!"

"Yes! Bravo!" cried the old gentleman. The audience clapped hard as he returned to his seat.

Mr. Lambchop smiled at the lady behind him. "Our son," he said.

"So clever!" said the lady. "What *will* he do next?"

Mrs. Lambchop drew a deep breath. That morning Stanley and Arthur had borrowed a pet frog from the boy next door. What came next, she knew, would be the most daring part of the evening's plan!

"Ladies and gentlemen!" said Arthur. "A new kind of magic! Arthur Lambchop—that's me!—and Henry, the Air-Dancing Frog!"

He lifted Henry from the box on Teddy Talker's desk and held him up. Henry, who appeared to be smiling, wore a little white shirt with an H on it, also made by Mrs. Lambchop.

"Fly, Henry!" cried Arthur. "Fly out and stand still in the air!"

Stepping forward, Stanley took Henry from Arthur's hands and ran to the far side of the stage. There he stopped, holding the frog high above his head. Henry wriggled his legs.

"Amazing!" shouted the audience. "Who'd believe it?... That's some frog! ... What keeps him up there?"

"Circle, Henry!" Arthur commanded. "Circle in the air!"

Stanley walked rapidly in circles, swaying Henry as he went.



The audience was tremendously impressed. "What a fine magician! ... Mind reading *and* frog flying! ... You don't see that every day!"

Pretending to control Henry's flight, Arthur kept a finger pointed as Stanley swooped the frog all about the stage. "Whoops!" cried Teddy Talker as Henry flew above his desk. On the long sofa, the sausage writer and the tennis rabbi and the beauty-contest winner ducked down. Even Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop, who knew the secret of Henry's flight, thought it an amazing sight.

At last, to great applause, Arthur took Henry into his own hands and returned him to the little box.

Stanley tiptoed off to get his smiley-face balloon. The plan now called for Teddy Talker to announce the arrival of the invisible boy and introduce him.

But Arthur had stepped forward again.

“Thank you for cheering me,” he told the audience. “But I have to say something. That first mind-reading trick, I really did do that one. But the second trick ... Actually, I can’t read minds at all. And the flying frog, he—”

Voices rose. “Can’t read minds?” ... “We’ve been lied to?” ... “The *frog* was lying?” ... “Not the frog, stupid!” ... “Wait, he’s not done!”

“Please! Listen!” said Arthur. “It wouldn’t be fair to let you think I did everything by myself. I had a helper! For the second trick, he saw the card and told me what it was. And Henry ... Well, my helper was whooshing him in the air!”

By now the audience was terribly confused. “Who?” ... “What helper?” ... “It was just a regular frog?” ... “But *some* frogs fly!” ... “No, squirrels, not frogs!” ... “*Whooshing?*”

Arthur went on. “My brother, Stanley, helped me! He fixed it for me to be on this show! He’s a really nice brother, and I thank him a lot!”

Teddy Talker had sprung to his feet.

“Ladies and gentlemen! May I now present a very special guest, who has been here all along! The invisible boy! Stanley Lambchop!”

Stanley came onto the stage, carrying his smiley-face balloon. Arthur put out his hand, and the audience could tell that Stanley had taken it. There was tremendous applause.



The brothers bowed again and again, Stanley’s balloon bobbing up and down. Arthur’s smile was plain to see, and Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop, as they applauded, thought that even the balloon’s painted smile seemed brighter than before.

“I have two children myself,” said the lady behind them. “Both entirely visible and without theatrical flair. We are a very *usual* family.”

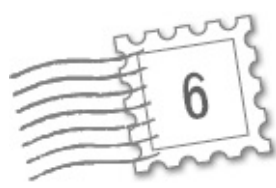
“As are we,” said Mr. Lambchop, smiling. “Mostly, that is.”

Arthur left the stage, and Stanley sat on the sofa between the sausage writer and the beauty-contest winner and answered Teddy Talker’s questions. He had no idea *how* he became invisible, he said, and it wasn’t actually a great treat being that way, since he often got bumped into and had to keep reminding people he was there. After that, Teddy Talker thanked everyone for coming, and the show was over.

Back home, Arthur felt the evening had gone well.

“I got lots of applause,” he said. “But maybe it was mostly because of what Stanley did. I shouldn’t be too proud, I guess.”

“Poise and good humor contribute greatly to a performer’s success,” said Mrs. Lambchop. “You did well on both those counts. Return Henry in the morning, dear. Time now for bed.”



The Bank Robbers

Mr. Lambchop and Stanley and Arthur were watching the evening news on TV.

“... more dreadful scandal and violence tomorrow,” said the newscaster, ending a report on national affairs. “Here in our fair city another bank was robbed today, the third this month. The unusual robbers—”



“Enough of crime!” Bustling in, Mrs. Lambchop switched off the TV. “Come to dinner!”

Stanley supposed he would never know how the robbers were unusual. But the next afternoon, while strolling with his father, he found out. On the way home they passed a bank.

“I must cash a check, but it is very crowded in there,” said Mr. Lambchop. “Wait here, Stanley.” Stanley waited.

Suddenly, cries rose from within the bank. “Lady bank robbers! Just like they said on TV!” ... “I laughed when I heard it!” ... “Me, too!”

Two women in dresses and fancy hats, one stout and the other very tall, ran out of the bank, each with a money bag in one hand and a pistol in the other.



“Stay in there!” the stout woman called back into the bank, her voice high and scratchy. “Don’t anyone run out! Or else ... Bang! Bang!”

“Right!” shouted the tall woman, also in an odd, high voice. “Just because we are females doesn’t mean we can’t shoot!”

Being invisible won’t protect me if bullets go flying about! Stanley thought. He looked for a place to hide.

An empty Yum-Yum ice cream van was parked close by and he jumped into it. His balloon still floated outside the van, its string caught in the door, but he did not dare to rescue it. Scrunching down behind cardboard barrels marked CHOCOLATE YUM, STRAWBERRY YUM, and YUM CRUNCH, he peeked out.

An alarm was ringing inside the bank, and shouts rose again. “Ha! Now you’re in trouble!” ... “The police will come!” ... “Put that money back where you found it, ladies!”

Then Stanley saw that the two robber women were running toward him, carrying the money bags. They were stopping! They were getting into the Yum-Yum van!

Scrunching down again, he held his breath.

The robbers were in the van now, close to where he hid. “Hurry up!” said the stout woman in a surprisingly deep voice. “These shoes are killing me!”

The tall woman opened the YUM CRUNCH barrel, and Stanley saw that it was empty. Then both robbers poured packets of money from their bags into the barrel and put the lid back on.

Stanley could hardly believe what he saw next!

The robbers threw aside their fancy hats and tugged off wigs. And now they were undressing, pulling their dresses over their heads!

They were *men*, Stanley realized, not women! Yes! Underneath the dresses they wore white ice-cream-man pants, with the legs rolled up, and white Yum-Yum shirts!



“Whew! What a relief, Howard!” The stout robber kicked off his women’s shoes and put on white sneakers.

“They’ll never catch us now, Ralph!” said the tall one.

The robbers unrolled their trouser legs and threw their female clothing into another empty barrel, the one marked CHOCOLATE YUM. Then they jumped into the front seats, the tall man driving, and the van sped off.

Behind the barrels, Stanley held his breath again. This pair was too clever to be caught! They were sure to get away! No one would suspect two Yum-Yum men of being the lady—But the van was slowing! It was stopping!



Stanley peeked out again.

A police car blocked the road and two policemen stood beside it, inspecting cars as they passed by. In a moment they were at the Yum-Yum van.

“A bank got robbed,” the first policeman told the driver. “By two women. You ice-cream fellows seen any suspicious-looking females?”

“My!” The tall man shook his head. “More and more these days, women filling roles once played by men. Bless ’em, I say!”

Beside him, the stout man said hastily, “But bank robbing, Howard, that’s *wrong*”

The second policeman looked into the back of the van. “Just ice cream here,” he told his partner.

The trickery is working! Stanley thought. How can I ...? An idea came to him. Reaching out, he flipped the lid off the CHOCOLATE YUM barrel.

“Loose lid,” said the second policeman. “Better tighten—Hey! This barrel is full of female clothes!”



“Oh!” The tall robber made a sad face. “For the needy,” he said. “They were my late mother’s.”

Stanley flipped the lid off the YUM CRUNCH barrel and the packets of money were plain to see!

“Your mother was a mighty rich woman!” shouted the first policeman, drawing his pistol. “Hands up, you two!”

As the robbers were being handcuffed, another police car drove up. Mr. Lambchop jumped out of it.

“That balloon, on that van!” he shouted. “We’ve been following it! Stanley ...? Are you in there?”

“Yes!” Stanley called back. “I’m fine. The bank robbers are caught! They weren’t ladies at all, just dressed that way!”

The handcuffed robbers were dreadfully confused. “Who’s yelling in our van? ... Who stuck a balloon in the door? ... Have we gone crazy?” they asked.

“It’s my son Stanley,” said Mr. Lambchop. “He is invisible, unfortunately. Thank goodness he was not hurt!”

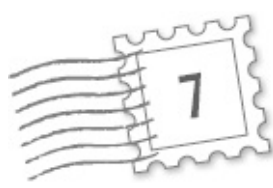
“That must be the same invisible boy they had on TV!” said the first policeman.

“An invisible boy?” The tall robber groaned. “After all my careful planning!”

The stout robber shrugged. “You can’t think of *everything*, Howard. Don’t blame yourself.”

The robbers were driven off to jail, and Stanley went home with Mr. Lambchop in a cab.

Stanley had been far too brave, Mrs. Lambchop said when she heard what he had done. Really! Flipping those ice cream lids! Arthur said he’d have flipped them too, if he’d thought of it.



Arthur's Storm

Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop had said good night. For a moment the brothers lay silent in their beds. Then Arthur yawned. "Good night, Stanley. Pleasant dreams."

"Pleasant dreams? Hah!"

"Hah?"

"Those robbers today, they had *guns!*" said Stanley. "They could have shot me by accident and nobody would even know."



"I never thought of that." Arthur sat up. "Are you mad at me?"

"I guess not. But ..." Stanley sighed. "The thing is, I don't want to go on being invisible. I was really scared today, and I hate carrying that balloon, but when I don't, people bump into me. And I

can't see myself in the mirror, so I don't even remember how I look! It's like when I was flat. It was all right for a while, but then people laughed at me."

"That's why I blew you round again," Arthur said proudly. "Everyone said how smart I was."

"If you're so smart, get me out of *this* fix!" There was a little tremble in Stanley's voice.

Arthur went to sit on the edge of his brother's bed. Feeling for a foot beneath the covers, he patted it. "I'm really sorry for you," he said. "I wish—"

There was a knock at the door, and Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop came in. "Talking, you two? You ought to be asleep," they said.

Arthur explained about Stanley's unhappiness.

"There's more," Stanley said. "Twice my friends had parties and didn't invite me. They sometimes forget me even if I *do* keep waving that balloon!"

"Poor dear!" Mrs. Lambchop said. "'Out of sight, out of mind,' as the saying goes." She went to put her arms around Stanley, but he had just sat up in bed and she missed him. She found him and gave him a hug.

"This is awful!" Arthur said. "We have to *do* something!"

Mr. Lambchop shook his head. "Dr. Dan knew of no cure for Stanley's condition. And little about its cause except for a possible connection between bad weather and fruit."

"Then I'll always be like this." Stanley's voice trembled again. "I'll get older and bigger, but no one will ever see."

Arthur was thinking. "Stanley did eat fruit. And there *was* a storm. Maybe ... Wait!"

He explained his idea.

Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop looked at each other, then at where they supposed Stanley to be, and at each other again.

"I'm not afraid," said Stanley. "Let's *try*!"

Mr. Lambchop nodded. "I see no harm in it."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Lambchop. "Very well, Arthur! Let us gather what your plan requires!"

"Everyone ready?" said Arthur. "It has to be just the way it was the night Stanley got invisible."

"I'm wearing the same blue-and-white stripey pajamas," said Stanley. "And I have an apple. And a box of raisins."

"We can't make a real storm," Arthur said. "But maybe this will work."

He stepped into the bathroom and ran the water in the sink and shower. "There's rain," he said, returning. "I'll be wind."

Mrs. Lambchop held up a wooden spoon and a large skillet from the kitchen. "Thunder ready," she said.

Mr. Lambchop showed the powerful flashlight he had fetched from his tool kit. "Lightning ready."

Stanley raised his apple. "Now?"

"Go stand by the window," said Arthur. "Now let me think. Hmmm ... It was dark." He put out the light. "Go on, eat. *Whoosh!*" he added, being wind.

Stanley began to eat the apple.

Water pattered down in the bathroom into the sink, and from the shower into the tub.



“Whoosh... whoosh!” said Arthur, and Mrs. Lambchop struck her skillet with the wooden spoon. The *crash!* was much like thunder.

“Lightning, please,” Arthur said.

Mr. Lambchop aimed his flashlight and flicked it on and off while Stanley finished the apple.





“Now the raisins,” said Arthur. “One at a time. *Whoosh!*”

Stanley opened the little box and ate a raisin.

Still *whooshing*, Arthur conducted as if an orchestra sat before him. His left hand signaled Mrs. Lambchop to strike the skillet, the right one Mr. Lambchop to flash the light. Nods told Stanley when to eat a raisin.

Patter... splash went the water in the bathroom. “*Whoosh!*” went Arthur. *Crash!* went the skillet. *Flash!... Flash!* went the light.

“If anyone should see us now,” Mrs. Lambchop said softly, “I would be hard put to explain.”

Stanley looked down at himself. “It’s no use,” he said. “I’m still invisible.”

“Twist around!” said Arthur. “Maybe the noise and light have to hit you just a certain way!”

Twisting, Stanley ate three more raisins. The light flickered over him. He heard the water splashing, Arthur *whooshing*, the pounding of the skillet with the spoon. How hard they were trying, he thought. How much he loved them all!

But he was still invisible.

“There’s only one raisin left,” he said. “It’s no use.”

“Poor Stanley!” cried Mrs. Lambchop.

Arthur could not bear the thought of never seeing his brother again. “Do the last raisin, Stanley,” he said. “Do it!”

Stanley ate the raisin and did one more twist. Mrs. Lambchop tapped her skillet and Mr. Lambchop flashed his light. Arthur gave a last *Whoosh!*

Nothing happened.

“At least I’m not hungry,” Stanley said bravely. “But—” He put a hand to his cheek. “I feel ... sort of tingly.”

“Stanley!” said Mr. Lambchop. “Are you touching your cheek? I see your hand, I think!”

“And your pajamas!” shouted Arthur, switching on the light.

A sort of outline of Stanley Lambchop, with hazy stripes running up and down it, had appeared by the window. Through the stripes they could see the house next door.

Suddenly the outline filled in. There stood Stanley in his striped pajamas, just as they remembered him!

“I can see my feet!” Stanley shouted. “It’s *me!*”

“*I, dear, not me,*” said Mrs. Lambchop before she could catch herself, then ran to hold him tight.

Mr. Lambchop shook hands with Arthur, and then they all went into the bathroom to watch Stanley look at himself in the mirror. It hadn’t mattered when he was invisible, Mrs. Lambchop said, but he was greatly in need of a haircut now.



LShe made hot chocolate to celebrate the occasion, and Arthur’s cleverness was acknowledged by all.

“But false storms cannot be relied upon,” Mr. Lambchop said. “We must think twice before eating fruit during bad weather. Especially by a window.”

Then the brothers were tucked into bed again. “Good night,” said Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop, putting

out the light.

“Good night,” said Stanley and Arthur.

Stanley got up and went to have another look in the bathroom mirror. “Thank you, Arthur,” he said, coming back. “You saved me from being flat, and now you’ve saved me again.”

“Oh, well ...” Arthur yawned. “Stanley? Try to stay, you know, *regular* for a while.”

“I will,” said Stanley.

Soon they were both asleep.

The End

**TURN THE PAGE
FOR A SNEAK PEEK AT:**



THE CALL

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Mr. Lambchop knew just what she meant. Excitement was often troublesome. The flatness of their son Stanley, for example, after his big bulletin board settled on him overnight. Exciting, but worrying too, till Stanley got round again. And that genie visiting, granting wishes. Oh, very exciting! But all the wishes had to be *unwished* before the genie returned to the lamp from which he sprung.

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Stanley smiled. “The King of France.”

“They don’t have kings in France. Not anymore.”

“Excuse me, but I’m too busy for jokes.” Stanley kept his eyes on the TV. “My brother and I are watching the *Tom Toad Show*”



“Well, you *keep* watching, young fellow!” The caller hung up, just as Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop came in to watch the rest of the show.

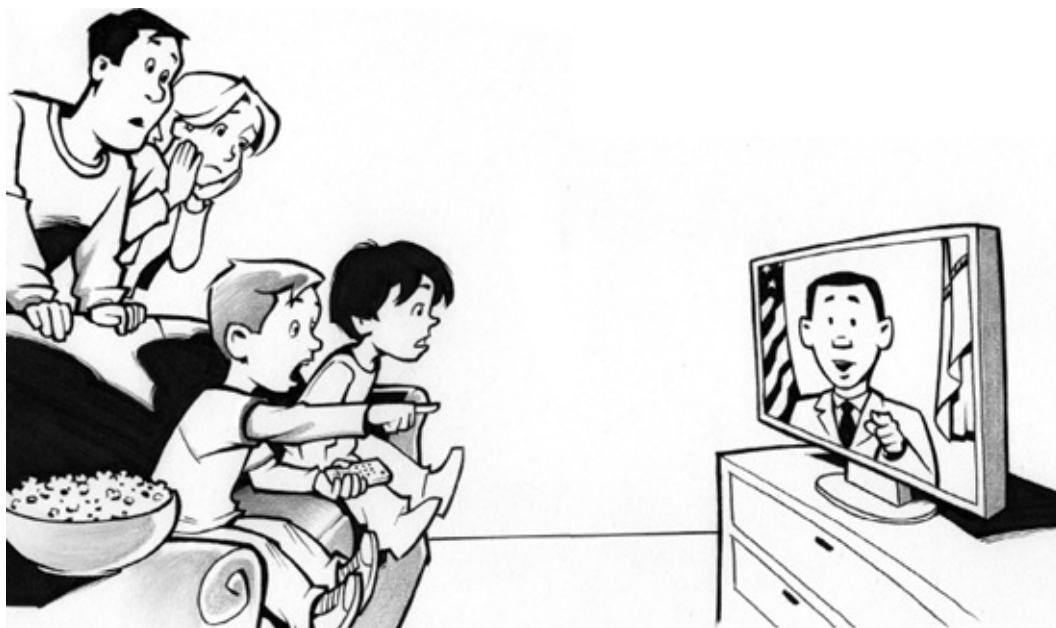
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“I had to be sure,” said the President. “We have to get together, Lambchop! I’ll send my private plane right now, fetch you all here to Washington, D.C.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Brown created the beloved character of Flat Stanley as a bedtime story for his two sons. He has written other outrageous books about the Lambchop family, including *Flat Stanley*, *Stanley and the Magic Lamp*, *Invisible Stanley*, *Stanley's Christmas Adventure*, *Stanley in Space*, and *Stanley, Flat Again!* You can learn more about Jeff Brown and Flat Stanley at www.flatstanleybooks.com.

Macky Pamintuan is an accomplished illustrator. He lives in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, with his wife and dog.

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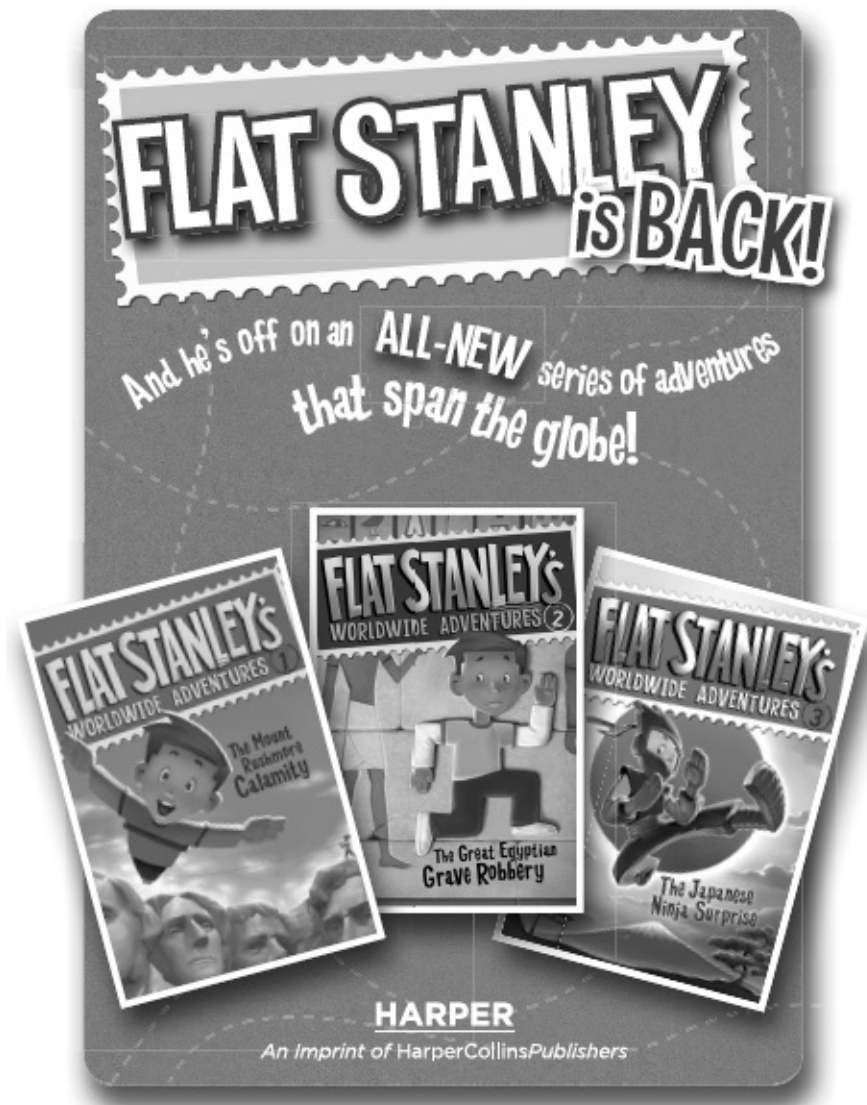
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FLAT STANLEY



Stanley
in Space

by Jeff Brown

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Pictures by Macky Pamintuan

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DEDICATION

For Sidney Urquhart,
the godmother to whom Flat Stanley owes so much

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PROLOGUE

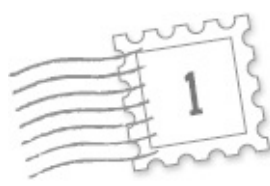
“Will you meet with us? Does anyone hear?”

From the great farness of space, from farther than any planet or star that has ever been mentioned in books, the questions came.

Again and again.

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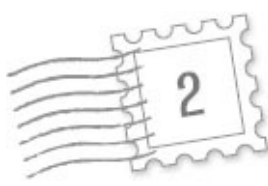
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“I had to be sure,” said the President. “We have to get together, Lambchop! I’ll send my private plane right now, fetch you all here to Washington, D.C.”

Mr. Lambchop gasped. “Private plane? Washington? *All* of us?”

“The whole family.” The President chuckled. “Including the King of France.”





Washington

At the White House, in his famous Oval Office, the President shook hands with all the Lambchops.

“Thanks for coming.” He chuckled. “Bet you never thought when you woke up this morning that you’d get to meet me.”

“Indeed not,” Mr. Lambchop said. “This is quite a surprise.”



“Well, here’s another one,” said the President. “The reason I asked you to come.”

He sat down behind his desk, serious now. “Tyrra! Never heard of it, right?”

The Lambchops all shook their heads.

“*Nobody* ever heard of it. It’s a planet, up there somewhere. They sent a message, the first ever from outer space!”

The Lambchops were greatly interested. “Imagine!” Mrs. Lambchop exclaimed. “What did it say?”

“Very friendly tone,” the President said. “Peaceful, just checking around. Asked us to visit. Now, my plan—”

A side door of the Oval Office had opened suddenly to reveal a nicely dressed lady wearing a crown. Mrs. Lambchop recognized her at once as the Queen of England.

“About the banquet, also the—” the Queen began, and saw that the President was busy. “Ooops! We beg your pardon.” She closed the door.

“This place is a *madhouse*,” the President said. “Visitors, fancy dinners, no end to it. Now, where—? Ah, yes! The *Star Scout*!”

He leaned forward.

“That’s our new top-secret spaceship, just ready now! Send somebody up in the *Star Scout*, I thought, to meet with these Tyrrans. But who? Wouldn’t look peaceful to send soldiers, or even scientists. Then I thought: What could be more peaceful than just an ordinary American boy?”

The President smiled. “Why not Stanley Lambchop?”

“Stanley?” Mrs. Lambchop gasped. “In a spaceship? To meet with an alien race?”

“Oh, boy!” said Stanley. “I would love to go!”

“Me too,” said Arthur. “It’s not fair if—”

“Arthur!” Mr. Lambchop drew in a deep breath. “Mr. President, why *Stanley*?”

“It has to be someone who’s already had adventure experience,” the President said. “Well, my Secret Service showed me a newspaper story about when Stanley was flat and caught two robbers. Robbers! That’s adventure!”

“I’ve had them too!” Arthur said. “A genie taught me to fly, and we had a Liophant, and—”

“A *what*?”

“A Liophant,” Arthur said. “Half lion, half elephant. They’re nice.”

“Is that right? The Secret Service never—”

“Mr. President?” Mrs. Lambchop did not like to interrupt, but her concern was great.

“Mr. President?” she said. “This *mission*: Is it safe?”

“My goodness, of course it’s safe!” the President said. “We have taken great care, Mrs. Lambchop. The *Star Scout* has all the latest scientific equipment. And it has been very carefully tested. First, we tried it on automatic pilot, with no passengers. It worked perfectly! Even then, ma’am, we were not satisfied. We sent the *Star Scout* up again, this time with our cleverest trained bird aboard. But hear for yourself.” The President spoke into a little box on his desk. “Send in Dr. Schwartz, please.”

A bearded man entered, wearing a white coat and carrying a birdcage with a cloth over it. Bowing, he removed the cloth to reveal a large, brightly colored parrot.



“Thank you, Herman,” the President said. “Dr. Schwartz is our top space scientist,” he told the Lambchops, “and this is Polly, the bird I spoke of. Polly, tell the folks here about your adventure into space.”

“Piece of cake,” said the parrot. “Terrific! Loved every minute of it!”

“Thank you, Herman,” the President said, and Dr. Schwartz carried Polly away.

“That was very reassuring, but it is out of the question for Stanley to go alone,” Mrs. Lambchop said. “However, we were planning a family vacation. Would it be possible, Mr. President, for us all to go?”

“Well, if you didn’t mind the crowding,” the President said. “And skimping on baggage.”

“Actually, we had in mind the seaside,” Mr. Lambchop said. “Or a tennis camp. But—”

The Queen of England looked in again. “May we ask if—”

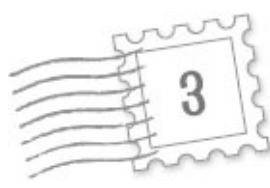
“Just a *minute*, for heaven’s sake!” said the President.

“We shall return anon.” Looking peeved, the Queen went away.

Mr. Lambchop had decided. “Mr. President, the seaside will keep. We will go to Tyrra, sir.”

“Wonderful!” The President jumped up. “To the stars, Lambchops! Some training at the Space Center, and you’re on your way!”





Taking Off

“Ten!” said the voice of Mission Control.

The countdown had begun. When it reached “zero,” Chief Pilot Stanley Lambchop would press the “Start” button, and the *Star Scout* would blast off for Tyrra.

“Nine!”

Strapped into their seats, the Lambchops held their breaths, each thinking very different thoughts.

Stanley was wondering if the Tyrrans would mind that Earth had sent just an ordinary family. Suppose they were big stuck-ups and expected a general or a TV star, or even the President? Suppose —“Eight!” said Control, and Stanley fixed his eyes on the panel before him.

Mr. Lambchop was thinking that serving one’s country was noble, but this was a bit much. How did these things happen? Off to an unknown planet, the entire family! Other families didn’t have a son become flat. Other families didn’t find genies in the house. Other—Oh, well! Mr. Lambchop sighed.

“Seven!” said Control.

Mrs. Lambchop thought that Mr. Lambchop seemed fretful. But why, now that the *Star Scout* looked so *nice*? Thanks to her, in fact. “They may call it a spaceship,” she had said when she first saw it, “but where’s the *space*? Just one room! And all gray ...? Drab, I say!” Much of the training at the Space Center, however, was physical, and Mrs. Lambchop, who jogged and exercised regularly, quickly passed the tests required. In the days that followed, while the others were being made fit, she used her free time to make the *Star Scout* more like home. Only so much weight was permitted, but she managed a bathroom scale for the shower alcove and a plastic curtain, pretty shades for the portholes, a venetian blind for the Magnifying Exploration Window, and posters of Mexico and France.

“Six! ... Five! ... Four! ... Three! ...”

Mrs. Lambchop made sure her purse was snug beneath her seat.

Arthur, by nature lazy, was thinking that he was glad to be done with all the jogging, jumping, climbing ladders, and scaling walls. When he was super-strong, thanks to the genie, it would have been easy. But for just plain Arthur Lambchop, he thought, it was tiring.

“Two!” said Control. “Good luck, everybody! One!”

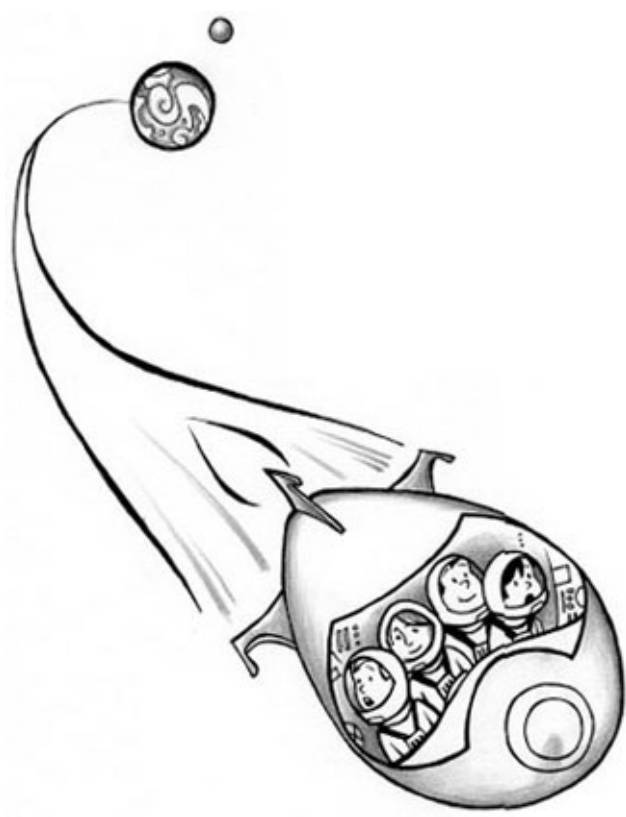


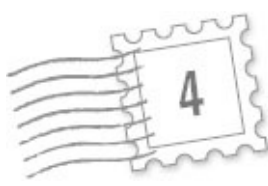
“Pay attention, dear,” Mrs. Lambchop told Stanley.

“Zero!” said Control, and Stanley pressed the “Start” button.

Whrooom! Rockets roaring, the *Star Scout* rose from its launching pad.

Whroooooom! Whroooooom! Gaining speed, it soared higher and higher, carrying the Lambchops toward the farness where Tyrra lay.





In Space

“I’ll just flip this omelette,” said Mrs. Lambchop, making breakfast in the *Star Scout*, “and then— Oh, dear!” The omelette hovered like a Frisbee in the air above her.

Mostly, however, after weeks in space, the Lambchops remembered that gravity, the force that held things down, did not exist beyond Earth’s atmosphere. Mr. Lambchop often read now with his hands clasped behind his head, allowing his book to float before him, and Stanley and Arthur greatly enjoyed pushing from their chairs to drift like feathers across the room.



Raising her pan, Mrs. Lambchop brought down the omelette. “After breakfast, what?” she said. “A game of Monopoly?”

“Please, not again.” Arthur sighed. “If I’d known this adventure would be so boring, I’d never have come.”

“The worst part,” Stanley said, “is not knowing how long it will last.”

“The beginning wasn’t boring,” Arthur said as they began their breakfast. “The beginning was fun.”

The first days had in fact been tremendously exciting. They had spent many hours at the *Star Scout*’s

Magnifying Window, watching the bright globe of Earth grow steadily smaller, until it seemed at last only a pale marble in the black of space. And there had been many special sights to see: the starry beauty of the Milky Way, the planets—red Mars, giant Jupiter, cloudy Venus, Saturn with its shining rings.

The third evening they appeared on TV news broadcasts on Earth. Word of their voyage had been released to the press, and all over the world people were eager to learn how this extraordinary adventure was proceeding. Standing before the spaceship's camera, the Lambchops said they felt fine, looked forward to meeting the Tyrrans, and would report nightly while they remained in TV range.

The fourth evening they floated before the camera, demonstrating weightlessness. This was greatly appreciated on Earth, and they floated again the following day.

By the sixth evening, however, they were hard-pressed to liven their appearances. Mr. Lambchop recited a baseball poem, "Casey at the Bat." Stanley juggled tennis balls, but the Earth audience, knowing now about weightlessness, saw the balls float when he tossed them up. Arthur did imitations of a rooster, a dog, and a man stuck in a phone booth. After this, while Mrs. Lambchop was singing her college song, he went behind the plastic curtain to undress for a shower and accidentally pulled the curtain down. He was mortified, and she tried later to comfort him.



"We will be remembered, Arthur, for our time in space," she said. "Nobody will care about a curtain."

"I will be remembered *forever*," Arthur said. "A hundred million people saw me in my underwear."

The next day was Stanley's birthday, and just after dinner the screen lit up. There was the President in his shirtsleeves, behind his desk in Washington, D.C.

"Well, here I am working late again," the President said. "It's a tough job, believe me. Happy birthday, Stanley Lambchop! I've arranged a surprise. First, your friends from school."

There was silence for a moment, broken only by the clearing of throats, and then, from all the millions of miles away, came the voices of Stanley's classmates singing, "Happy Birthday, dear Stanley! Happy Birthday to you!"

Stanley was tremendously pleased. "Thanks, everybody!" he said. "You too, Mr. President."

"That was just the U.S.A. part," said the President. "Ready over there in London, Queen?"

“We are indeed,” the Queen’s voice said cheerfully. “And now, Master Lambchop, our famous Westminster Boys’ Choir!”

From England, the beautiful voices of the famous choir sang “Happy Birthday, Stanley!” all over again, and then other children sang it from Germany, Spain, and France.

All this attention to Stanley made Arthur jealous, and when the President said, “By the way, Arthur, you entertained us wonderfully the other night,” he was sure this was a tease about his appearance in underwear. But he was wrong.

“Those imitations!” the President said. “Especially the fellow in the phone booth. Darn good!”

“Indeed!” the Queen added from England. “We were greatly amused.”

“Oh, thank you!” said Arthur, cheered. “I—”

The screen had gone blank.

They had traveled too far. There would be no more voices from Earth, no voices but their own until they heard what the Tyrrans had to say.

“Suppose the Tyrrans have forgotten we’re coming?” Stanley said. “We might just sail around in space *forever*.”

They had finished the breakfast omelette, and were now setting out the Monopoly board because there was nothing more interesting to do.

“They don’t even know our names,” Arthur said. “What will they call us?”

“Earth people!” said a deep voice.

“Very probably,” said Mr. Lambchop. “‘Earth people’ seems—Who said that?”

“Not me,” said both Stanley and Arthur.

“Not *I*,” said Mrs. Lambchop, correcting. “But who—”

“Earth people!” The voice, louder now, came from the *Star Scout*’s radio. “Greetings from the great planet Tyrra and its mighty people! Do you hear?”

“Oh, my!” Mr. Lambchop turned up the volume. “It’s them!”

“*They*,” said Mrs. Lambchop.

“For heaven’s sake, Harriet!” Mr. Lambchop said, and spoke loudly into the microphone. “Hello, Tyrra. Earth people here. Party of four. Peace-loving family.”

“Peace-loving?” said the voice. “Good! So is mighty Tyrra! Where are you, Earth people?”

Stanley checked his star maps. “We’re just where the tail of Ralph’s Comet meets star number three million and forty-seven. Now what?”

“Right,” said the Tyrran voice. “Keep going till you pass a star formation that looks like a foot. You can’t miss it. Then, just past a lopsided little white moon, start down. You’ll see a pointy mountain, then a big field. Land there. See you soon, Earth people!”

“You bet!” Mr. Lambchop said, and turned to his family. “The first contact with another planet! We are making history!”

They passed the foot-shaped star formation, then the lopsided moon, and Stanley piloted the *Star Scout* down. The darkness of space vanished as it descended, and at last the Lambchops saw clearly the planet it had taken so long to reach.

Tyrra was smallish as planets go, but nicely round and quite pretty, all in shades of brown with markings not unlike the oceans and continents of Earth. A pointy mountain came into sight, and beyond it a big field.



“There!” Stanley pressed the “Landing” button.

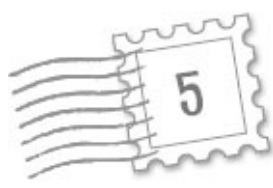
Whrooom! went the *Star Scout*’s rockets. The spaceship hovered, then touched down.

Peering out, the Lambchops saw only a brown field, with tan trees at the far side and brownish hills beyond.

“Curious,” said Mr. Lambchop. “Where are—”

Suddenly a message came, but not the sort they expected.

“Surrender, Earth people!” said the radio. “Your spaceship is trapped by our unbreakable trapping cable! You are prisoners of Tyrra! Surrender!”



The Tyrrans

Unbreakable trapping cable? Prisoners? Surrender? The Lambchops could scarcely believe their ears.

“I don’t call *that* peaceful,” said Mrs. Lambchop. “Our President has been misled.”

“I wish we had gone to the seaside.” Mr. Lambchop shook his head. “But *how* are we trapped? I don’t—” He pointed to the Magnifying Window. “What’s that?”

A thin blue line, like a thread, had been passed over the *Star Scout*. Stanley switched on the wiper above the big window and the first flick of its blade parted the blue line.

“Drat!” said the radio.

Other voices rose, startled, and then the deep voice spoke again. “Earth people! We’re sending a messenger! A regular, ordinary Tyrran, just to show what we’re like.”

For long moments, the Lambchops kept their eyes on the tan trees across the field.

“There!” Arthur said suddenly. “Coming toward—Oh! Oh, my ...” His voice trailed away.

The Tyrran messenger came slowly forward to stand before the big window, a muscular, scowling young man with a curling mustache, wearing shorts and carrying a club.

The mustache was very large. The messenger was not.

“That man,” Mrs. Lambchop said slowly, “is only three inches tall.”

“At most,” Mr. Lambchop said. “It is a magnifying window.”

The Tyrran seemed to be calling something. Arthur opened the door a crack, and the words came clearly now. “... afraid to let us see you, Earth people? Because I’m so enormous? Hah! *All* Tyrrans are this big!”



Flinging the door wide, Arthur showed himself. “Well, I’m a *small* Earth person!” he shouted. “The rest are even bigger than me!”

“I, not me,” Mrs. Lambchop said. “And don’t tease, Arth— Oh! He’s fainted!”

Wetting her handkerchief with cold water, she jumped down from the *Star Scout* and ran to dab the Tyrran’s tiny brow.

Cries rose again from the spaceship’s radio. “A giant killed Ik! ... There’s another, even bigger! ... Oh, gross! ... Look! Ik’s all right!”

The Tyrran, by grasping Mrs. Lambchop’s handkerchief, had indeed pulled himself up. Furious, he swung his club, but managed only to tap the top of her shoe. “Ouch! Scat!” she said, and he darted back across the field.

“Oh, my!” said the radio. “Never mind about surrendering, Earth people! A truce committee is on the way!”

At first they saw only a tiny flag, fluttering like a white butterfly far across the brown field, but at last the Tyrran committee drew close, and the Lambchops, waiting now outside the *Star Scout*, could make each little person out.

The flag was carried by the scowling young man with the mustache and the club. The other members of the committee, a bit smaller even than he, were a red-faced man wearing a uniform with medals across the chest, a stout lady in a yellow dress and a hat with flowers on it, and two older men in blue suits, one with wavy white hair, the other thin and bald.



The committee halted, staring bravely up.

“I am General Ap!” shouted the uniformed man. “Commander of all Tyrran forces!”

Stanley stepped forward. “Chief Pilot Stanley Lambchop,” he said. “From Earth. These are my parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Lambchop. And my brother, Arthur.”

“President Ot of Tyrra, and Mrs. Ot,” said General Ap, indicating the wavy-haired man and the lady. “The bald chap is Dr. Ep, our Chief Scientist. The grouchy one with the flag is my aide, Captain Ik.”

No one seemed sure what to say next. A few polite remarks were exchanged—“Nice meeting you, Earth people!” ... “Such a pretty planet, Tyrra!” ... “Thank you. Were you very long in space?”—and Mr. Lambchop realized suddenly that the Tyrrans were uncomfortable talking almost straight up. He got down on his knees, the other Lambchops following his example, and the Tyrrans at once lowered their heads in relief.

“Right!” said General Ap. “All reasonable people here! A truce, eh?”

“I’m for war, frankly,” growled Captain Ik, but Stanley pretended not to hear. “A truce? Good idea,” he said. “We come in peace.”

Mrs. Ot sniffed. “Not very peaceful, frightening poor Captain Ik.” She pointed at Arthur. “That giant shouted at him!”

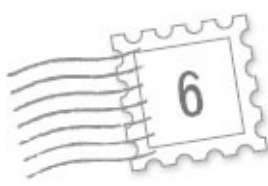
“My son is not a giant,” Mrs. Lambchop said. “It’s just that you Tyrrans are—how to put it?—unusually *petite*.”

“Ik’s the biggest we’ve got, actually,” said General Ap. “We hoped he’d scare you.”

President Ot raised his hand. “No harm done! Come! TyrraVille, our capital, is but a stroll away.”

The Lambchops, equipped now with handy magnifying lenses from the *Star Scout*’s science kit, followed the committee.

TyrraVille lay just across the brown field, behind the tan trees, no larger than an Earth-size tennis court.



TyrraVille

“Gosh!” Stanley said. “It makes me homesick, in a way.”

Except for its size, and the lack of greenness, the Tyrran capital was indeed much like a small village on Earth. A Main Street bustled with Tyrrans shopping and running errands; there were handsome school and public buildings, two churches with spires as high as Mr. Lambchop’s waist, and side streets of pretty houses with lawns like neat brown postage stamps.

Captain Ik, still angry, marched on ahead, but the rest of the committee halted at the head of Main Street.

“We’ll just show you *around*, eh?” said President Ot. “Safer, I think.”

The Lambchops saw at once the risk of walking streets scarcely wider than their feet. Escorted by the committee, they circled the little capital, bending often to make use of their magnifying lenses. Mrs. Ot took care to indicate points of particular interest, among them Ux Field, a sports center, Admiral Ux Square, Ux Park, and the Ux Science Center Building. (“Mrs. Ot’s grandfather,” whispered General Ap. “Very rich!”)



The tour caused a great stir. Everywhere the tiny citizens of TyrraVille waved from windows and rooftops. At the Science Center, the last stop, journalists took photographs, and the Lambchops were treated to Grape Fizzola, the Tyrran national drink, hundreds of bottles of which were emptied into four tubs to make Earth-size portions.



Refreshed by his Fizzola, Arthur took a little run and hurdled a large part of TyrraVille, landing in Ux Square. “Arthur!” Mrs. Lambchop scolded, and he hurdled back.

“Aren’t kids the dickens?” said a Tyrran mother, looking on. “Mine—Stop *tugging*, Herbert!” These last words seemed addressed to the ground beside her. “My youngest,” she explained. Stanley squinted. “I can hardly—He’s just a *dot*.”

“Dot yourself!” said an angry voice. “Big-a-rooney! *You’re* the funny-looking one!”

“Herbert!” his mother said. “It is rude to make fun of people for their shape or size!”

“As I said myself, often, when Stanley was flat!” Mrs. Lambchop exclaimed. “If only—”

“Surrender, Earth people!”

The cry had come from Captain Ik, who appeared now from behind the Science Center, staggering beneath the weight of a boxlike machine almost as big as he was, with a tube sticking out of it.

“Surrender!” he shouted. “You cannot resist our Magno-Titanic Paralyzer Ray! Tyrra will yet be saved!”

“There’s a truce, Ik!” barked General Ap. “You can’t—”

“Yes, I can! First—Ooops!” Captain Ik’s knees had buckled, but he recovered himself. “First I’ll paralyze the one who scared me back there in the field!”

Yellow light flickered up at Arthur from the Magno-Titanic Paralyzer.

“Yikes!” said Arthur, as shrieks rose from the crowd.

But it was not on Arthur that the Magno-Titanic beam landed. Stanley had sprung forward to protect his brother, and the light shone now on his chest and shoulders. Mrs. Lambchop almost fainted.



Suddenly her fright was gone.

Stanley was smiling. The yellow rays still flickering upon him, he rolled his head and wiggled his hands to show that he was fine. “It’s nice, actually,” he said. “Like a massage.”

The crowd hooted. “It only works on people Tyrran-size!” someone called. “You’re a ninny, Ik!” Then Captain Ik was marched off by a Tyrran policeman, and the crowd, still laughing, drifted away.

Mrs. Lambchop spoke sternly to the committee. “‘Tyrra will yet be saved’? What did Captain Ik mean? And why, pray tell, did he attempt to paralyze my son?”

The Ots and General Ap exchanged glances. Dr. Ep stared at the ground.

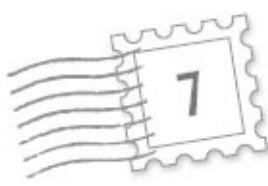
“Ah!” said President Ot. “Well ... The fact is, we’re having a ... A crisis, actually. Yes. And Ik, well, he, ah—”

“Oh, tell them!” Mrs. Ot burst suddenly into tears. “About the Super-Gro! Tell, for heaven’s sake!”

Puzzled, the Lambchops stared at her. The sky had darkened, and now a light rain began to fall.

“Wettish, eh?” said General Ap. “Can’t offer shelter, I’m afraid. No place large enough.”

“The *Star Scout* will do nicely,” said Mrs. Lambchop. “Let us return to it for tea.”



President Ot's Story

"Tea *does* help. I am quite myself again." Mrs. Ot nodded to her husband. "Go on, dear. Tell."

Rain drummed faintly on the *Star Scout*, making even cozier the scene within. Around the dining table, the Lambchops occupied their usual places. The Tyrrans sat atop the table on thumbtacks pushed down to serve as stools, sipping from tiny cups Mrs. Lambchop had fashioned from aluminum foil, and nibbling crumbs of her homemade ginger snaps.



Now, sighing, President Ot set down his cup.

"You will have observed, Lambchops," he said, "how greatly we have enjoyed these tasty refreshments. The fact is, Tyrra has for some time been totally without fresh food or water fit to drink. We live now only by what tins and bottles we had in store."

Mrs. Ot made a face. "Pink meat spreads, and spinach. And that *dreadful* Fizzola."

"A bit sweet, yes," said General Ap. "Gives one gas, too. But—"

“Never mind!” cried Mrs. Ot.

President Ot continued. “The cause of our tragedy, Lambchops, was Super-Gro. An invention of Dr. Ep’s. Super-Gro, Ep promised, would double our crops, make them double size, double delicious as well. A great concept, he said.”

“We scientists,” said Dr. Ep, “dream larger than other men.”

“For three days, at the Science Center,” President Ot went on, “Ep brewed his Super-Gro. Great smelly vats of it, enough for the whole planet. But then ... Oh, no Tyrran will ever forget that fourth day! I myself was strolling through Ux Park. How beautiful it was! The trees and grass so green, the sky—”

“Green?” said Arthur. “But everything’s *brown* here, not green!”

“A mishap,” murmured Dr. Ep. “With the Super-Gro.”

“Mishap?” barked General Ap. “The stuff *exploded*, Ep! All over the place!”

“Well, nobody’s perfect.” Dr. Ep hung his head.

“All those huge vats, Lambchops!” President Ot continued. “Boom! One after another! Shattered windows, blew the roof off the Science Center! No one hurt, thank goodness, but great clouds of smoke, darkening the sky! And then—such dreadful luck!—it began to rain. A *tremendous* rain, mixing with the smoke, falling all over Tyrra, into the rivers, on to every field and garden, every bit of greenery.”

Rising from his thumbtack, he paced back and forth across the table.

“When the rain stopped, there was no green. None. Just brown. Worse, Ep’s tests proved that our water was undrinkable, and that nowhere on Tyrra would anything grow. I broadcast at once to the nation. ‘Do not despair,’ I said, ‘Tyrra will soon recover.’”

“Oh, good!” Mr. Lambchop said.

President Ot shook his head. “I lied. I couldn’t tell the truth, for fear of causing panic, you see. The tests showed that it would be a year at least before Tyrra was green again. And long before that we will have emptied our last tin, our last bottle of Fizzola.”

He sat down again, covering his face with his hands.



“So then we ... We sent a message, into space. Lure some other planet’s spaceship, we thought.

Hold it for ransom, you see, make them send food and water. Oh, shameful! Underhanded. You will never forgive us, I know ...”

His voice trailed away, and there was only the patter of the rain.

Close to tears, the Lambchops looked at each other, then at the little people on the tabletop. The Tyrrans seemed particularly tiny now, and brave, and nice.

“You poor dears!” Mrs. Lambchop said. “There was no need to *conquer* us. We would help you willingly, if we could.”

The Tyrrans seemed at first unable to believe their ears. Then, suddenly, their faces shone with joy.

“Bless you!” cried General Ap.

“Saved!” Mrs. Ot clapped her hands. “We are saved!”

“Saved ...?” said Mrs. Lambchop.

“Of course!” said President Ot. “Don’t you see? Earth’s spaceships can bring food and water till— Oh! What’s wrong?”

It was Arthur who explained.

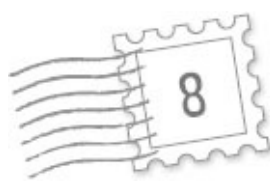
“I’m very sorry,” he said. “But there’s just the *Star Scout*. Earth hasn’t got any other spaceships. And it would take years to build them.”

The Tyrrans gasped. “Years ...?” said Dr. Ep.

Stanley felt so sad he could hardly speak. “And it’s no use going for food in the *Star Scout*,” he said. “By the time we returned from Earth, you’d all be— Well, you know.”

“Dead,” said Mrs. Ot.

In the *Star Scout*, a terrible silence fell. The facts were clear. The cupboards of Tyrra would soon be empty. And then all its tiny people would starve to death.



Stanley's Good Idea

The teapot was cold now, and a last cookie crumb lay unwanted on a plate. Gloom hung like a dark cloud within the *Star Scout*.

"It's not fair," Arthur said for the third time. "It's just not."

"Stop saying that," Stanley told him. "That's four times now."

"Five," said Dr. Ep.



General Ap tried to be cheerful. "Ah, well ... Still some tinned meat, eh? And plenty of Grape Fizzola. Much to be thankful for."

"I will *never* be thankful for Grape Fizzola," said Mrs. Ot.

"It's just that ..." Arthur sighed. "I mean, Earth has so *much* food. Millions of people, and there's mostly still enough."

The Tyrrans seemed amazed. "Millions? You're joking?" said President Ot.

"Hah!" said General Ap. "Dreadful crush, I should think. Millions?"

Mrs. Lambchop smiled. "With all our great nations, many millions. And still the numbers grow."

"Well, here too." President Ot shook his head. "Youthful marriages, babies one after another. But *millions*? Our population—there's just TyrraVille, of course—is six hundred and eighty-three."

"Eighty-four," said Mrs. Ot. "Mrs. Ix had a baby last night."

Now it was the Lambchops who were amazed.

"Just TyrraVille?" Arthur cried. "But TyrraVille's your *capital*, you said!"

"Well, it would have to be, wouldn't it, dear?" said Mrs. Ot.

Stanley shook his head. "On the whole planet, only six hundred and eighty-four Tyrrans! Gosh, I'll bet—Wait!"

An idea had come to him. Stanley had had exciting ideas before, but none that excited him as this one did.

"Mrs. Ot!" he shouted. "How much do you weigh?"



"Stanley!" said Mrs. Lambchop.

Mrs. Ot was not offended. "Actually, I've slimmed a bit. Though not, sadly, in the hips. I'm six ounces, young man. Why do you ask?"

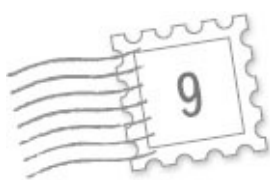
The words rushed out of Stanley. "Because if you're average, only children would be even lighter, then all the Tyrrans put together would weigh—Let me figure this out!"

"Less than three hundred pounds," said Mr. Lambchop, who was good at math. "Though I don't see—" Then he did see. "Oh! Good for you, Stanley!"

"The lad's bright, we know," said General Ap. "But what—"

"General!" said Mr. Lambchop. "Summon all Tyrrans here to the *Star Scout*! Fetch what remains of your tinned food and Grape Fizzola! Perhaps Earth can be your home till Tyrra is green again!"





The Weighing

From each little house on each little street, the Tyrrans came, every man, woman, and child, even Captain Ik with a guard from the jail. The rain had stopped, and the evening light shone gold on the brown field in which the tiny people stood assembled.

President Ot addressed them. “Fellow Tyrrans! I must confess that your government has deceived you! The truth is: It will be at least a year before our fields and streams are fit again.”

Cries rose from the crowd. “We were lied to!” ... “Lordy, talk about bad news!” ... “We’ll starve!” ... “Shoot the scientists!”

“Wait!” shouted President Ot. “We are offered refuge on Earth, if the voyage is possible! Pay attention, please!”

Stepping forward, Mr. Lambchop read aloud from the booklet that had come with the *Star Scout*.

“Your spacecraft has been designed for safety as well as comfort. Use only as directed.” He raised his voice. “Do not add weight by bringing souvenirs aboard *or by inviting friends to ride with you.*”

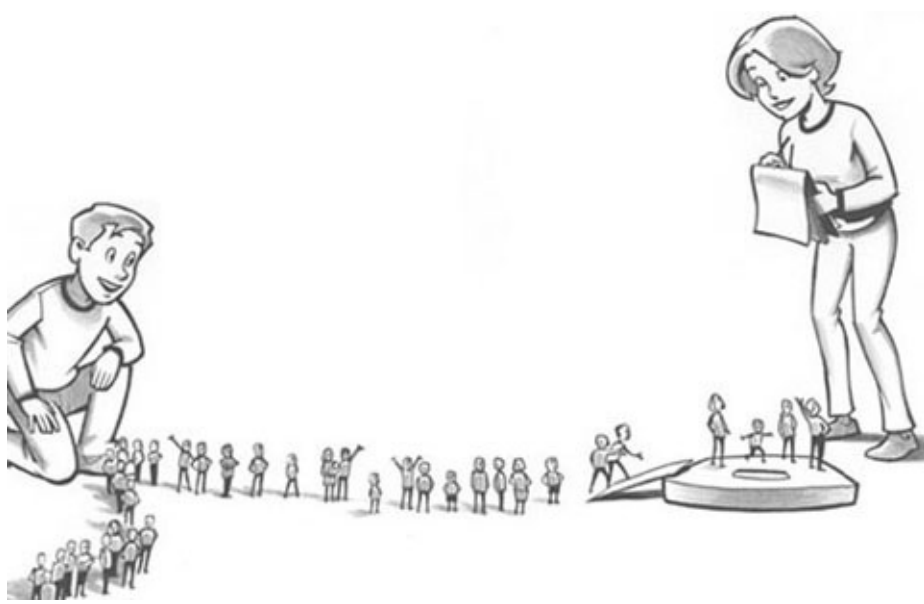
Cries rose again. “That did it!” ... “We’re not *souvenirs!*” ... “He said no friends either, stupid!” ... “We’ve had it, looks like!”

Mr. Lambchop raised his hand. “There is still hope! But you must all be weighed! Also the supplies you would require for the trip!”

The *Star Scout*’s bathroom scale, set down in the field, proved too high for the Tyrrans, and the weighing was briefly delayed until Arthur, using the Monopoly board, made a ramp by which they could easily mount.

General Ap barked orders. “Right, then! Groups of twenty to twenty-five, families together! And don’t jiggle!”

The Ots and six other families marched up onto the scale, beside which Mrs. Lambchop stood with pad and pencil. “Seven and one-quarter pounds!” she said, writing it down.



“Next!” shouted General Ap, but the Ot group was already starting down, and another marching up.

Group after group mounted the scale. There was jiggling, due to excited children, but Mrs. Lambchop took care to wait until the needle was still. Within an hour the entire population of Tyrra had been weighed, along with its supplies of tinned food and Fizzola, and she added up.

“Tyrrans, two hundred and thirty-nine,” she announced. “Food and Fizzola, one hundred and forty. Total: Three hundred and seventy-nine pounds!”

“Are we saved? Or are we too fat?” came a cry.

“Too soon to tell!” Mr. Lambchop called back. “We must see how we can lighten our ship!”

A good start was made by discarding the *Star Scout*’s dining table and one steel bunk, since Stanley and Arthur could easily share. Then out went Stanley’s tennis balls, extra sweater, and his Chief Pilot zip jacket with the American flag; out went Arthur’s knee socks, raincoat, and a plastic gorilla he had smuggled aboard. Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop added their extra clothing, lamps, kitchenware, the Monopoly game, and at last, the posters of Mexico and France.

The crowd stood hushed as the pile was weighed. Somewhere a baby cried, and its parents scolded it.

“Three hundred and seventy-seven pounds!” Mrs. Lambchop announced. “Oh, dear!” she whispered to President Ot. “Two less than we need.”

“I see.” President Ot, after a moment’s thought, climbed up onto the scale. “Good news, Tyrrans!” he called. “Almost all of us are saved!”

Cheers went up, and then someone shouted, “What do you mean, *almost* all?”

“We weigh, as a nation, a bit too much,” President Ot explained. “But only four, if largish, need stay behind. I shall be one. Will three more volunteer?”

Murmurs rose from the crowd. “That’s *my* kind of President!” ... “Leave Ik behind!” ... “How about you, Ralph?” ... “Ask somebody else, darn you!”

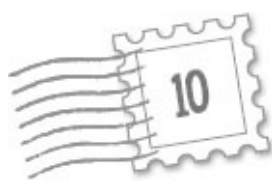
The matter was quickly resolved. “I won’t go without you, dear,” Mrs. Ot told her husband, and Captain Ik, hoping to regain popularity, announced that he too would remain.

General Ap was the fourth volunteer. “Just an old soldier, ma’am,” he told Mrs. Lambchop. “Lived a full life, time now to just fade away, to—”

“Hey! Wait!”

Arthur was pointing to the scale.

“We forgot *that*,” he said. “We can leave the scale behind. Now nobody has to stay!”



Heading Home

“Mr. and Mrs. Ix, and the new baby?” said President Ot, beside his wife on a ledge above the Magnifying Window. “Ah, yes, on the fridge!”

The people of Tyrra were being made as comfortable as possible in the various nooks and crannies of the *Star Scout*. Stanley and Arthur had cleared a cupboard where Tyrra High School students could study during the trip, and Mrs. Lambchop had cut up sheets to make hundreds of little blankets, and put out bits of cotton for pillows. “Makeshift, Mrs. Ix,” she said now, settling the Ixes on the fridge. “But *such* short notice. Back a bit from the edge, yes?”



“Short notice indeed,” said Mrs. Ix. “So many—”

“Not to worry.” Mrs. Lambchop smiled proudly. “My son, the Chief Pilot, will call ahead.”

From a nearby shelf, Captain Ik whispered an apology for attempting to paralyze Arthur. “Between you and I, I didn’t really think it would work,” he said.

“Between you and *me*,” said Mrs. Lambchop. “But thank you, Captain Ik.” She turned to Stanley.

“We’re all ready, dear!”

Stanley checked his controls. “Let’s go!”

“Tyrrans!” President Ot called for attention. “Our national anthem!”

Everywhere in the *Star Scout*, Tyrrans rose, their right hands over their hearts. “HmMMM ...” hummed Mrs. Ot, setting a key, and they began to sing.

“Tyrra, the lovely! Tyrra, the free!

Hear, dear planet, our promise to thee!

Where e’er we may go, where e’er we may roam,

We’ll come back to Tyrra, Tyrra our home!”

The words echoed in the softly lit cabin. Many Tyrrans were weeping, and the eyes of the Lambchops, as they took their seats, glistened too.

“Be it ever so humble, there’s no planet so dear,

We’ll always love Tyrra, from far or from—”

Stanley pressed the “Start” button, and—*Whrooom!*—the *Star Scout*’s rockets roared to life.

The singing stopped suddenly, and Mrs. Ix cried out from the fridge. “Oh, my! Is this thing safe?”

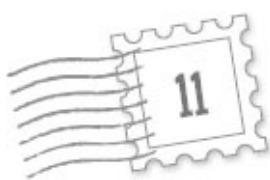
“Yes indeed,” Mrs. Lambchop called back.

“Perhaps,” said Mrs. Ix. “But it is my belief that if Tyrrans were meant to fly, we’d have wings.”

Whrooom! Whrooom!

The *Star Scout* lifted now, gaining speed as it rose. Its mission was done. The strangers who had called from a distant planet were no longer strangers, but friends.

It was all very satisfactory, Stanley thought. The other Lambchops thought so too.



Earth Again

“... real pleasure to welcome you, Tyrrans,” said the President, almost done with his speech. “I wish you a fine year on Earth!”

Before him on the White House lawn, with newspaper and TV reporters all about, sat the Lambchops and, in a tiny grandstand built especially for the occasion, the people of Tyrra.



The Tyrrans were now applauding politely, but they looked nervous, and Mrs. Lambchop guessed why. That crowd at the Space Center for the *Star Scout*'s landing, that drive through crowded streets into Washington, D.C.! Poor Tyrrans! Everywhere they looked, giant buildings, giant people. How could they feel comfortable here?

But a surprise was in store. Across the lawn, a great white sheet had been spread. Now, at the President's signal, workmen pulled the sheet away.

“Welcome,” said the President, “to TyrraVille Two!”

Gasps rose from the Tyrrans, then shouts of joy.

Before them, on what had been the White House tennis court, lay an entire village of tiny houses, one for each Tyrran family, with shops and schools and churches, and a miniature railway serving all principal streets. Begun when Stanley called ahead from space, TyrraVille Two had been completed well before the *Star Scout*'s arrival, thanks to rush deliveries from leading toy stores in Washington and New York.

The excited Tyrrans ran from the grandstand to explore their new homes, and soon happy voices rose from every window and doorway of TyrraVille Two. “Nice furniture!” ... “Hooray! Fresh lemonade! No more Fizzola!” ... “In the cupboards, see? Shirts, dresses, suits, shoes!” ... “Underwear, even!”

The Ots, General Ap, Dr. Ep, and Captain Ik came back to say good-bye, and the Lambchops knelt to touch fingertips in farewell. The TV men filmed this, and Arthur made everyone laugh, pretending to be paralyzed by the touch of Captain Ik. Then the newsmen left, the Tyrrans returned to TyrraVille Two, and only the President remained with the Lambchops on the White House lawn.

“Well, back to work.” The President sighed. “Good-bye, Lambchops. You’re all heroes, you know. Saved the nation.”

“Not really,” Stanley said. “They couldn’t have conquered us.”

“Well, you know what I mean,” the President said. “You folks care to stay for supper?”

“Thank you, no,” Mrs. Lambchop said. “It is quite late, and this has been an exciting but very tiring day.”

It was bedtime when they got home. Stanley and Arthur had a light supper, with hot chocolate to help them sleep, after which Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop tucked them in and said good night.

The brothers lay quietly in the darkness for a moment. Then Arthur chuckled.



“The Magno-Titanic Paralyzer was sort of scary,” he said. “You were brave, Stanley, protecting me.”

“That’s okay,” Stanley said. “You’re my brother, right?”

“I know ...” Arthur was sleepy now. “Stanley? When the Tyrrans go back, will their land and water be okay? Will they let us know?”

“I guess so.” Stanley was drowsy too. “Good night, Arthur.”

“Good night,” said Arthur, and soon they were both asleep.

And in time, from the great farness of space, but a farness no longer strange or unknown, another message came.

“We are home. All is well.”

And again.

“We are home! Thank you, Earth! All is well!”

The End

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Jeff Brown created the beloved character of Flat Stanley as a bedtime story for his two sons. He has written other outrageous books about the Lambchop family, including *Flat Stanley*, *Stanley and the Magic Lamp*, *Invisible Stanley*, *Stanley in Space*, *Stanley's Christmas Adventure*, and *Stanley, Flat Again!* You can learn more about Jeff Brown and Flat Stanley at www.flatstanleybooks.com.

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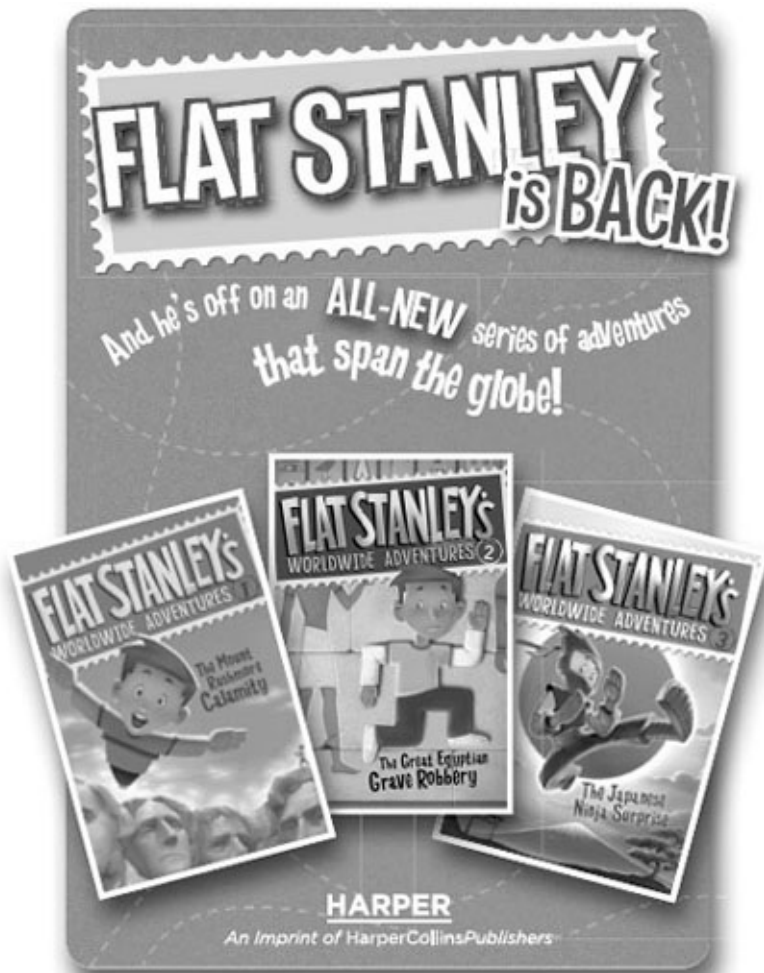
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FLAT STANLEY



Stanley,
Flat
Again!

by Jeff
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Stanley, Flat Again!

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Pictures by Macky Pamintuan

 HarperCollins e-books

DEDICATION

For Peter and Wendy,
Ozinger, Betsy, and Ash

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About the Publisher



A Morning Surprise

Mrs. Lambchop was making breakfast. Mr. Lambchop, at the kitchen table, helped by reading bits from the morning paper.

“Here’s an odd one, Harriet,” he said. “There’s a chicken in Sweden that rides a bike.”

“So do I, George,” said Mrs. Lambchop, not really listening.

“Listen to this. ‘Merker Building emptied. To be collapsed next week.’ Imagine! Eight floors!”

“Poor thing!” Mrs. Lambchop set out plates. “Boys!” she called. “Breakfast is ready!”

Her glance fell upon a row of photographs on the wall above the sink. There was a smiling Stanley, only half an inch thick, his big bulletin board having fallen from the bedroom wall to rest upon him overnight. Next came reminders of the many family adventures that had come after Stanley’s younger brother, Arthur, had cleverly blown him round again with a bicycle pump. There were the brothers with Prince Haraz, the young genie who had granted wishes for them all after being accidentally summoned by Stanley from a lamp. There was the entire family with Santa Claus and his daughter, Sarah, taken during a Christmas visit to the North Pole. There was the family again in Washington, D.C., in the office of the President of the United States, who had asked them to undertake a secret mission into outer space. The last picture showed Arthur standing beside a balloon on which Mrs. Lambchop had painted a picture of Stanley’s face. The balloon, its string in fact held by Stanley, had been a valuable guide to his presence, since he was invisible at the time. “Boys!” she called again. “Breakfast!”

In their bedroom, Stanley and Arthur had finished dressing.

While Stanley filled his backpack, Arthur bounced a tennis ball. “Let’s go,” he said. “Here! Catch!”

Stanley had just reached for a book on the shelf by his bed. The ball struck his back as he turned, and he banged his shoulder on a corner of the shelf.

“Ouch!”

“Sorry,” Arthur said. “But let’s go, okay? You know how long—STANLEY!”

“Why are you shouting?” Stanley adjusted his pack. “C’mon! I’m so hungry—” He paused. “Oh, boy! Arthur, do you see?”

“I do, actually.” Arthur swallowed hard. “You’re, you know ... flat.”

The brothers stared at each other.

“The pump?” Stanley said. “It might work again.”



Arthur fetched the bicycle pump from their toy chest, and Stanley lay on his bed with the hose end in his mouth.

Arthur gave a long, steady, pump.

Stanley made a face. "That hurts!"

Arthur pumped again, and Stanley snatched the hose from his mouth. "Owww! That really hurts! It wasn't like that before. We'd better stop."

"Now what?" Arthur said. "We can't just hide in here forever, you know."

Mrs. Lambchop's call came again. "Boys! Please come!"

"Do me a favor," Stanley said. "You tell them. Sort of get them ready, okay?"

"Okay," said Arthur, and went to tell.

Arthur stood in the kitchen doorway.

"Hey, guess what?" he said.

"Hay is for horses, dear," said Mrs. Lambchop. "Good morning! Breakfast is ready."

"Good morning, Arthur," Mr. Lambchop said from behind his newspaper. "Where's Stanley?"

"Guess what?" Arthur said again.

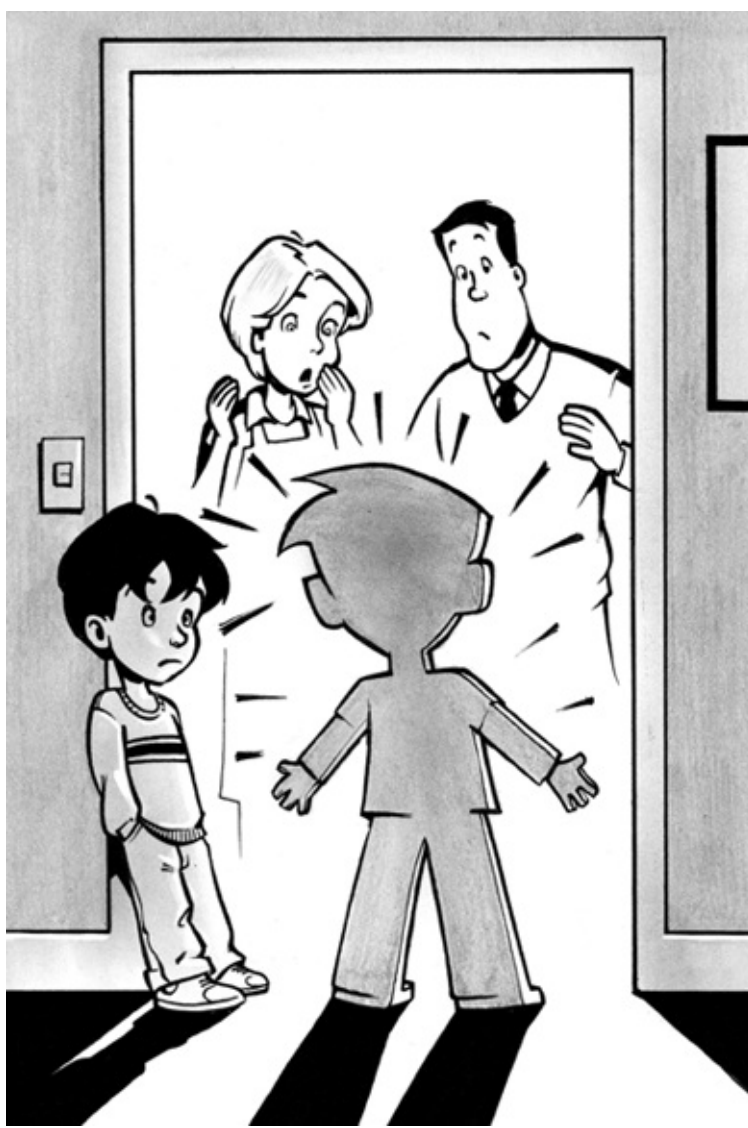
Mrs. Lambchop sighed. "Oh, all right! I can't guess. Tell."

"Stanley's flat again," said Arthur.

Mr. Lambchop put down his paper.

Mrs. Lambchop closed her eyes. "Flat again? Is that what you said?"

"Yes," said Arthur.



“It’s true.” Stanley stood now beside Arthur in the doorway. “Just look.”

“Good grief!” said Mr. Lambchop. “I can’t believe that bulletin board—”

“It didn’t fall on me this time,” Stanley said. “I just got flat. Arthur tried to pump me up, like before, but it hurt too much.”

“Oh, Stanley!” Mrs. Lambchop ran to kiss him. “How do you feel now?”

“Fine, actually,” Stanley said. “Just surprised. Can I go to school?”

Mrs. Lambchop thought for a moment. “Very well. Eat your breakfast. After school we’ll hear what Dr. Dan has to say.”

Dr. Dan

“Ah, Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop! And the boys!” said Dr. Dan as they entered his office. “How nice to—”

His eyes widened. “Good heavens, Stanley! Mr. Lambchop, you really must do something about that bulletin board!”

“It is still firmly in place, Dr. Dan,” Mrs. Lambchop said. “We are at a loss to account for this attack of flatness.”



“Hmmm.” Dr. Dan thought for a moment. “Is there, perhaps, a family history of flatness?”

“No,” Mr. Lambchop said. “We’d remember that.”

“We got dressed for school,” Stanley explained. “We didn’t even have breakfast. And all of a sudden, I got flat.”

Dr. Dan frowned. “Nothing happened? Nothing at all?”

“Well, Arthur hit me with a tennis ball,” Stanley said. “And then I banged my shoulder on—”

“Aha!” Jumping up, Dr. Dan took a large book from the case behind his desk and began turning pages. “This is Dr. Franz Gemeister’s excellent *Difficult and Peculiar Cases*. Just let me find ... here it is! ‘Flatness, page two seventeen!’”

He read aloud. “‘Sudden flatness ... extremely rare ... minimal documentation ... hearsay reports ...’ Ah, here it is! Dates back to the fifth century! ‘During battle, Mongo the Fierce, an aide to Attila the Hun, was struck twice, simultaneously, from behind, and at once became no thicker than his shield. He became known as Mongo the Plate, and lived to old age without regaining his original girth.’”



Dr. Dan closed the book. “As I suspected! The OBP.”

“Beg pardon?” said Mrs. Lambchop.

“The OBP. Osteal Balance Point,” Dr. Dan explained. “A little-known anatomical feature. The

human body, of course, is a complex miracle, its skeleton a delicate framework of supports and balances. The Osteal Balance Point may occur almost anywhere in the upper torso. It is vulnerable only to the application of simultaneous pressures at two points which vary depending on the age and particular 'design,' let us say, of the individual involved. In my opinion, the pressures created by the tennis ball and the shelf corner affected Stanley's OBP, thereby turning him flat."

For a moment, everyone was silent.

"The first time Stanley went flat, you were greatly puzzled by his condition," Mr. Lambchop said at last. "Now you seem remarkably well informed."

"I read up on it," said Dr. Dan.

Mrs. Lambchop sighed. "Perhaps we should seek a second opinion. Who is the world's leading authority on the OBP?"

"That would be me," said Dr. Dan.

"I see. ... Well, we've taken enough of your time." Mr. Lambchop rose, motioning his family to follow. "Thank you, Dr. Dan."

At the door, Mrs. Lambchop turned. "Perhaps if we found the, you know, the OBP, we could make Stanley—"

"No, no!" said Dr. Dan. "It would be dangerous to put the lad through such a skeletal strain again! And finding the OBP? Not very likely, I'm afraid."

Arthur had an idea. "I know! If we all got sticks and hit Stanley all over at the same time, and kept doing it, then—"

"That will do, Arthur," Mr. Lambchop said, and led his family out.

Stanley Sails

Early the next Sunday morning, Mr. Lambchop had a call from an old college friend, Ralph Jones.

“Just wanted to remind you, George, that Stanley and I have a date to go sailing today,” he said.

“He’s looking forward to it, Ralph.” Mr. Lambchop hesitated. “I should mention, perhaps, that Stanley has gone flat again.”

Mr. Jones sighed. “I thought he’d got over that. Well, I’ll pick him up at ten.”

Later that morning, driving with Stanley to his sailing club on the seashore, Mr. Jones inquired about a foreign visitor he had once met with the Lambchops. “A prince, yes? He around these days?”

Stanley knew he meant the young genie, Prince Haraz, but it would be difficult to explain not only the genie part, but also that Haraz had returned to the genie kingdom from which he had come.

“No,” Stanley said. “He went home, actually.”

“Too bad.” Mr. Jones was famous for his amazing memory. “Haraz, as I recall. Prince Fawzi Mustafa Aslan Mirza Malek Namerd Haraz?”

“Right,” said Stanley.

In the harbor of the sailing club, Mr. Jones prepared his boat, *Lovebug*, and explained it to Stanley. “This big sail here is the mainsail, and that’s the rudder back there, for steering. In this zip bag is another sail, called a spinnaker. We’ll use that one for extra speed when we’re running before the wind. See that boat way out there, how its spinnaker is puffing out front?”

Stanley laughed. The spinnaker looked like an open umbrella lying on its side.

“See over there,” Mr. Jones went on, “between the committee boat, with the judges on it, and the red buoy? That’s the starting line. The race ends back there too. First boat to cross that line wins!”



He cast off the mooring line, and the mainsail filled. *Lovebug* headed out to join the other boats.

Mr. Jones pointed. “There! That’s Jasper Green’s boat, *Windswept*. He’s the one I want especially to beat!”

“Why? Are you mad at him?” Stanley asked.

“He was very rude to me once. But never mind. Let’s just make sure we win!”

Behind the start line, they found themselves beside *Windswept*. Jasper Green gave a friendly wave, but Ralph Jones ignored him.

“You’re always in a bad mood with me, Ralph,” Mr. Green said. “Why? I don’t—Here we go!”

A pistol shot had signaled the start of the race. *Lovebug* and *Windswept* and the other racers glided across the start line behind the motor-powered committee boat, which led them along a course marked by buoys with bright green streamers.

Stanley sat back, enjoying himself. The sun was bright, the breeze fresh against his face, the sky clear and blue, the water a beautiful slate color. There were boats on both sides of them, boats ahead, boats behind. How pretty they were, their white sails making cheerful crackling sounds as they billowed in the wind!



Along the shore, people waved from the porches of houses, their voices carrying faintly on the wind. “Way to go! ... Looking good, sailors! ... Looking flat, one of them!” Stanley waved back, knowing that the teasing was kindly meant.

Lovebug passed other boats, but there were many more still ahead. And now they were almost abreast of *Windswept*.

Stanley saw that Jasper Green had hoisted his spinnaker, and that other boats had too.

“I’ve got you beat, Ralph!” Jasper Green shouted.

“We’ll just round this point, Stanley! Then—Now!” exclaimed Ralph Jones. “Let’s show Jasper what running before the wind really means!”

He attached his spinnaker to a halyard and ran it up the mast. *Who-o-oosh!* The spinnaker billowed out, and Stanley felt *Lovebug* surge forward, as if pushed by an invisible hand.

“Here we go!” shouted Ralph Jones.

They passed five more boats, three more, then *Windswept!* They were ahead of everyone now, and the finish line lay ahead!

“We’re going to win!” Stanley shouted.

“Yes!” Ralph Jones shouted back. “Just wait till Jasper—”

R-i-i-i-i-p!

The sound came from above. Looking up, they saw that the top of the spinnaker had torn.

R-i-i-i-i-i-i-p!

The rip streaked downward, and now the spinnaker, torn all the way down, flapped uselessly in the wind. *Lovebug* slowed.

“Drat!” Mr. Jones did his best with the mainsail. “Drat, drat, drat!”

Windswept came up behind them. “Tough luck!” called Jasper Green. “Ha, ha!”

“Drat!” Mr. Jones sighed. “Nothing we can do, Stanley. Unless—This may be crazy, but ... Stanley, perhaps you could be our spinnaker?”

“What?” Stanley shouted. “How?”

“Good question,” said Mr. Jones. “Let’s see. ... First, go take hold of the mast. That’s it. Now maybe—”

“Excuse me,” Stanley said. “But did you ever do this before?”

“Stanley, *nobody* ever did this before.” Mr. Jones took a deep breath. “Okay. Now twist around to face forward, and grab the mast behind you above your head!”

Stanley did as he was told, planting his feet on the sides of the boat to hold him in place. The wind pressed him from behind, driving *Lovebug* toward the finish line.

“Yes! Chest forward! Butt back!” shouted Mr. Jones. “Best spinnaker I ever had!” In a moment they had passed *Windswept*, and Stanley could not help laughing at the surprise on Jasper Green’s face.

And then they were across the finish line! *Lovebug* had won!

Back in the clubhouse, Jasper Green would not admit that he had lost. A flat person used as a sail? He had never seen *that* before, he said, and went to the race committee office to complain. But he returned shortly to report that *Lovebug* had indeed won. The committee had advised him, he said, that there was no rule against a crew member allowing the wind to blow against him.

“Great sailing, Ralph!” he said. “I thought it was my race, I really did!”

“Thank you, Jasper,” Mr. Jones said, but Stanley noticed that he did not smile.

Jasper Green noticed too. “Ralph, you’re still mad at me,” he said. “But *why*?”

“You spilled coffee on my white pants, Jasper,” said Ralph Jones. “And you just laughed when I jumped up.”

“What?” Jasper Green seemed greatly surprised. “I don’t remember—Where? When?”

“We were having lunch,” said Mr. Jones. “At the old Vandercook Hotel.”

“The Vandercook? It closed down twenty years ago!” Mr. Green slapped his forehead. “I *do* remember! That lunch was twenty years ago, Ralph!”

“Twenty-one, actually.”

“All right, all right!” said Mr. Green. “I apologize, for heaven’s sake!”

Ralph Jones smiled warmly. “Perfectly all right, Jasper,” he said. “Don’t give it another thought.”

Back to School

Stanley was pleased that his classmates, who still remembered his previous flatness, made no great fuss about it now. Mostly they expressed only cheerful interest. “Feeling okay, Stan?” they said, and “Lookin’ sharp, man! Sharp, see? Get the joke?” Only mean Emma Weeks was unpleasant. “Huh! Mr. Show-off again!” Emma said one day, but Stanley pretended not to hear.



He had been back at school for a week when a newspaper, learning of this unusually shaped student, sent a photographer to investigate. He found Stanley watching a practice on the soccer field.

“Flash Tobin,” he said. “From the *Daily Sentinel*. You’re the flat kid, right?”

Stanley thought he must be joking. “How did you know?” he said, joking back.

“How did I—” The photographer laughed. “Oh, I get it! Can I take your picture, kid? Right here by the goal posts?”

Stanley nodded, and Flash Tobin took his picture. “I heard there was a flat kid here before,” he

said. "Helped catch sneak thieves at the Famous Museum of Art. But that kid, I heard he got round again."

"It was me," Stanley told him.

"You go back and forth, huh?" The photographer was impressed. "Okay, get round now. I'd like a shot of that too."



"I can't just do it when I want," Stanley explained. "The first time, my brother had to blow me up. With a bicycle pump."

"Make a great picture!" Flash Tobin shook his head. "Well, we'll just go with flat."

Stanley's picture was in the *Daily Sentinel* the next morning, and Arthur could not help showing his jealousy. Stanley was always getting his picture in the paper, he said. Didn't they see how interesting it would be to have a picture of his brother?

There was a soccer team practice that afternoon, and the day was windy. It was worrisome, the coach said, the way Stanley got blown about. Perhaps, for the sake of the team, he should switch to an indoor sport.

Stanley loved soccer, and the more he thought about what the coach had said, the sadder he felt.



Miss Elliott, his homeroom teacher, noticed that he was not his usual cheerful self. “Mr. Redfield, the new guidance counselor, is said to be very helpful to troubled students,” she told him. “I will ask him to find time for you.”

Miss Elliott spoke to him again after lunch. “Such good luck, Stanley! Mr. Redfield will see you right after school today!”

“Come in, Stanley. Sit right there!” Mr. Redfield pointed to a comfortable chair.

Stanley sat, and Mr. Redfield leaned back behind his desk. “Now then.... You do understand that anything you say here is completely confidential? I won’t tell anybody.”

Stanley wondered what he could say that would interest anybody else.

“Miss Elliott tells me you seem troubled.” Mr. Redfield lowered his voice. “What’s wrong?”

“I’m not sure, actually,” Stanley said.

Mr. Redfield picked up a pad and a pen. “Speak freely. Whatever comes into your head. Anything special happen lately?”

“Well, I got flat,” Stanley said.

Mr. Redfield made a note on his pad. “I do see that, yes. How did that make you feel?”

Stanley thought for a moment. “Flat.”

“I see.” Mr. Redfield nodded. “This flatness, it’s come upon you before, I’m told. Is it possible that somehow, without even admitting it to yourself, you wanted it to happen again?”



“No way!” Stanley said firmly. “The first time, it was kind of fun for a while. Flying like a kite, and being mailed to California, things like that. But then I got, you know, tired of it. And now I might get put off the soccer team.”

Mr. Redfield nodded again. “You take no pleasure now in your unusual shape?”

Stanley thought for a moment. “Well, sometimes.” He told about being a sail, and helping Ralph Jones win a race.

Mr. Redfield made another note. “I see. This dream of being a sail, have you dreamed it before?”

Stanley stared at him. “It wasn’t a ... it really happened! I’m just tired of being different, I guess.”

Mr. Redfield pressed his fingertips together. “Different? How do you feel different, would you say?”

Stanley wondered how Mr. Redfield could be a good guidance counselor if he had both terrible eyesight and a terrible memory.

“Well, I’m the only one in my class who’s flat,” he said. “The whole school, actually.”

“Interesting.” Mr. Redfield made another note and glanced at his watch. “I’m afraid our time is up, Stanley. Would you like to see me again? Just let Miss Elliott know.”

“Okay,” Stanley said politely, but he didn’t think he would.

Why Me?

Stanley had looked sad all evening, Arthur thought. At bedtime, as they lay waiting for Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop to come say good night, he wondered how to cheer his brother up.

It was raining hard, and he remembered suddenly the rainy evening that Stanley had snacked on raisins, and by morning had become invisible. A little-known consequence, Dr. Dan had explained, of eating fruit during bad weather.

“Hear the rain, Stanley?” he said. “Better not eat any fruit.”

“Ha, ha, ha.” Stanley sounded cross. “Just leave me alone, okay?”

“Stanley’s in a terrible mood,” Arthur told Mr. and Mrs. Lambchop when they came in. “He won’t even talk to me.”



“What’s wrong, my boy?” Mr Lambchop asked.

“Nothing.” Stanley put his pillow over his head.

“If my picture was in the newspaper practically every day, I’d be happy,” Arthur said. “I mean, why—”

Mrs. Lambchop hushed him. “Stanley, dear? What is troubling you?”

“Nothing. Nothing,” Stanley said from under the pillow, and sat up. “But why me? Why am I always getting flat, or invisible or something? Why can’t it just once be someone else?”

“I wouldn’t mind, actually,” Arthur said. “Just for a while. I—”

“Hush, Arthur!” Mrs. Lambchop put out the overhead light, lit a corner lamp, and sat by Stanley on his bed. Mr. Lambchop sat with Arthur. The gentle patter of the rain against the windows, the glow

of the little lamp, made the bedroom cozy indeed.

“I do see what you mean, Stanley,” Mr. Lambchop said at last. “Why do these things happen to you? Your mother and I don’t know the answer either. But things often happen without there seeming to be a reason, and then something else happens, and suddenly the first thing seems to have had a purpose after all.”

“Well put, George!” Mrs. Lambchop squeezed Stanley’s hand. “What we do know, Stanley dear, is that we’re very proud of you, and love you very much. And we understand about the flatness, and all the other unexpected happenings, how upsetting it must be.”

“It sure is!” said Stanley. “How would you like never knowing when you might get flat? Or invisible? Maybe someday I’ll wake up ten feet tall or one inch short, or with green hair, or a tail or something!”

“I know... .” Mrs. Lambchop said softly, and Mr. Lambchop came and patted Stanley’s shoulder. Then they kissed both boys, switched off the lamp, and went out.

Arthur spoke into the darkened room. “Stanley?”



“I’m trying to sleep,” said Stanley. “What?”

“I was just thinking,” Arthur said. “If you got invisible, and then you got flat, how would they know?”

“Huh? I don’t—” Stanley laughed. “Oh, I get it! About the flatness. Good one, Arthur.” Arthur laughed too.

“Quiet, please,” said Stanley. “I’m trying to sleep.”

“Okay,” Arthur said, but he chuckled several times before he fell asleep.

Emma

Mr. Lambchop came home early the next afternoon, full of excitement.

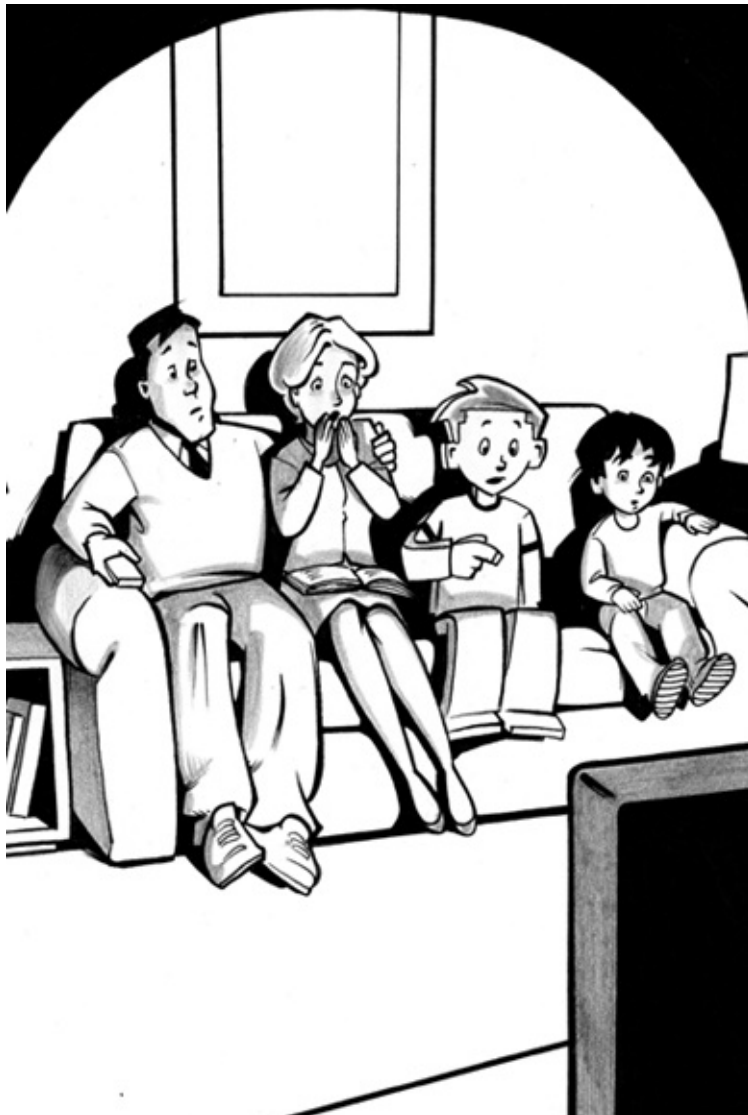
“Guess what?” he said. “The old Merker Department Store downtown? Eight floors, all emptied out, waiting to be torn down? Well, last night most of it fell down by itself!” He switched on the TV. “News time! Let’s get the latest!”

“... more on the Merker building collapse!” a newscaster was saying. “It’s just a mountain of rubble now, folks! Three workmen have been treated for minor bruises, but no other injuries are reported. The public is requested to avoid the area until—”

A young woman ran on, handed him a slip of paper, and ran off again.

“Hold on! This just in!” The newscaster read from the slip. “Wow! A little girl is trapped under all that wreckage! Emma Weeks, daughter of local businessman Oswald Weeks!”

“Emma Weeks!” Stanley exclaimed. “She’s in my class! No wonder she wasn’t at school today!”



“Emma’s not hurt, it appears,” the newscaster continued. “Firemen called to the scene can hear her calling up through chinks in the wreckage, demanding food and water! But Fire Chief Johnson has forbidden any rescue efforts! Any disturbance, any shifting of the wreckage, he says, might bring the rest of the building crashing down! Now, here’s Tom Miller!”



The TV screen showed a reporter with a microphone standing by the wrecked building.

“Emma Weeks!” shouted the reporter, holding his microphone up to a crack. “Do you hear me? Are you all right?”

Emma’s voice was faint but clear. “Oh, sure! I’m just great! I hope a building falls on me every day, you know? C’mon, get me out of here!”

Mrs. Lambchop sighed. “Such an unfortunate tone! She is under great strain, of course.”

“Emma’s always like that,” Stanley said.

Half an hour later, while Mrs. Lambchop was preparing supper, a siren sounded outside, then died away. Opening the front door, Mr. Lambchop saw a Fire Department car at the curb. On the doorstep stood Fire Chief Johnson and a very worried-looking man and woman.

“Mr. Lambchop?” said Chief Johnson. “I’ll get right to the point, sir. I reckon you heard about little Emma Weeks, trapped in the Merker wreck? Well, Mr. and Mrs. Weeks here, and me, we’d like a word with you folks.”

“Of course!” Mr. Lambchop led the visitors into the house and introduced them to his family.

“Oh, Mrs. Weeks!” Mrs. Lambchop cried. “Your poor daughter! You must be dreadfully worried!”

“We are indeed!” said Mr. Weeks. “But Chief Johnson thinks your Stanley might be able to save Emma!”

“Who, me?” and “Who, Stanley?” said Stanley and Arthur.

Chief Johnson explained. “Problem is that if a policeman, or one of my firemen, tries to dig his way in to Emma, the whole rest of the building could crash down on ’em! Too bad we don’t have a flat fireman, I was thinking. Flat fella could squeeze through all those narrow openings we know are there, ’cause we hear Emma when she calls. Then I recollected the newspaper story, with a picture of

Stanley here. Hit me right away! *That* boy could maybe wiggle in to Emma!”



For a moment, everyone was silent. Then Mrs. Lambchop shook her head.

“It sounds terribly dangerous,” she said. “I’m sorry, but I must say no.”

“It is a tad risky, ma’am,” said Chief Johnson. “But we’ve got to remember the boy is already flat.”

Mrs. Weeks sobbed. “Oh, poor Emma! How are we to save her?”

Mrs. Lambchop bit her lip.

Stanley remembered something. “I was just thinking.” He turned to Mr. Lambchop. “The other night? When I got mad about all the crazy things that keep happening to me? Remember what you said? You said that sometimes things happen that nobody can see a reason for, and then afterwards some other thing happens, and all of a sudden it seems like the first thing had a reason after all. Well, I was just thinking that me getting flat again was one crazy thing, and that maybe Emma getting stuck where I’m the only one who can try to save her, that might be the second thing.”

Mr. Lambchop nodded, and took Mrs. Lambchop’s hand. “We should be very proud of our son, Harriet.”

Mrs. Lambchop thought for a moment. “Stanley,” she said at last. “Will you be very, very, careful not to let that enormous building fall on you?”

“Okay. Sure,” Stanley said.

Mrs. Lambchop turned to Mr. and Mrs. Weeks. “We will allow Stanley to help,” she said. “He will do his best for Emma.”

“Fine boy we got here! Brave as a lion!” shouted Chief Johnson. “Now listen up, folks! Mrs. Lambchop, you help me get things ready! Then Stanley can go right in after Emma! Got that? Everybody meet us at the Merker Building, thirty minutes from now!”

Where Are You, Emma?

In the late afternoon sunlight, at the remains of the old Merker building, the Lambchops and the Weekses watched Chief Johnson prepare Stanley for his rescue attempt. Flash Tobin, the *Daily Sentinel* photographer, was there too, taking pictures.

Mrs. Lambchop had supplied two slices of bread and cheese, each wrapped in plastic, and her grandfather's flat silver cigarette case filled with grape soda. Chief Johnson taped the bread and cheese packets to Stanley's arms and legs, the cigarette case to his chest, and gave him a small, flat flashlight.

Then he led Stanley up to a tall crack in the wreckage. "Emma!" he shouted. "Fella's coming to help you! When he calls your name, you holler back 'Here!' so he knows which way to go. Got that?"

Emma's voice came faintly. "Yeah, yeah! Hurry up! I'm starving!"

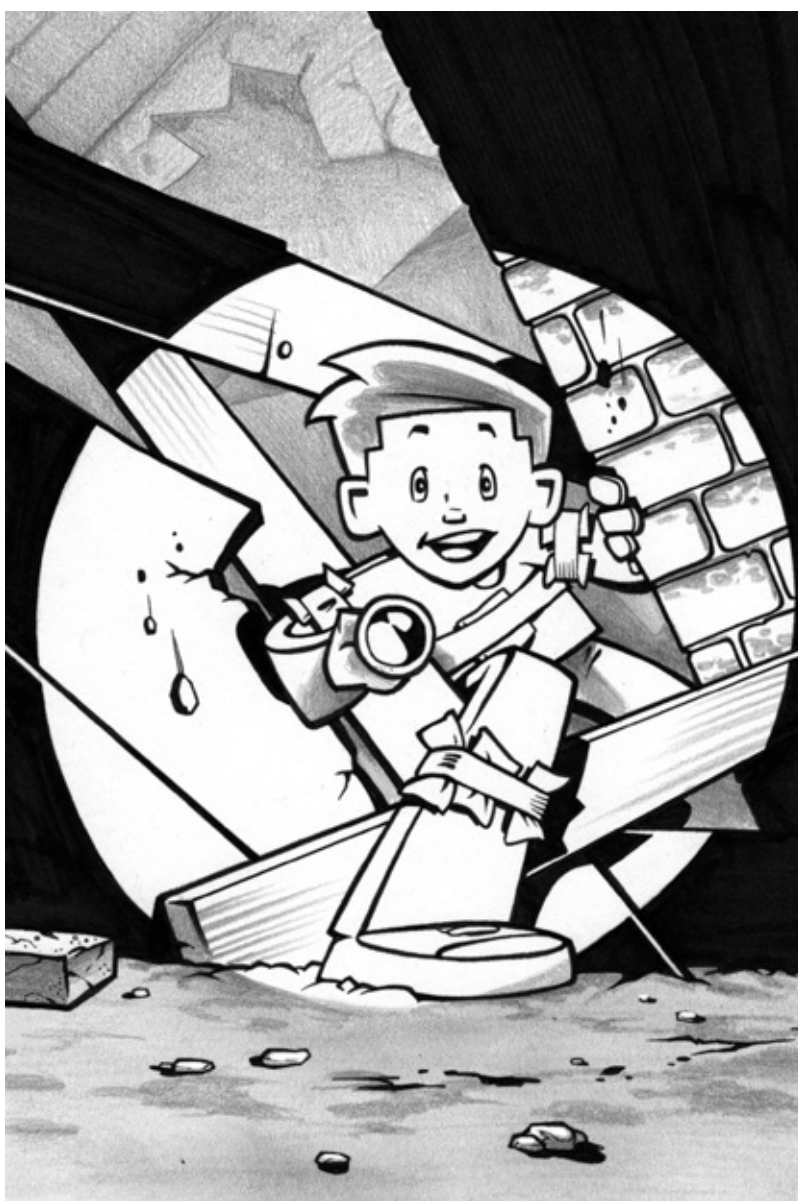
Chief Johnson shook Stanley's hand. "Good luck, son!"

The evening sunlight glowed warmly on the red bricks of the fallen building as Stanley stepped close to the crack. Mrs. Lambchop waved to him, and Stanley waved back. How handsome he is, she thought. How brave, how tall, how flat!

Stanley took two steps forward and disappeared sideways through the crack. A moment later they heard his shout. "Hey! It's really dark in here!"

"Hay is for horses, Stanley!" Mrs. Lambchop called back. "Oh, never mind! Good luck, dear!"

This was a dark greater than any he had ever known. Stanley could almost feel the blackness on his skin. He clicked on his flashlight and edged forward without difficulty, but then the crack narrowed, slowing him. The bread slice on his left leg had scraped something, loosening the tape that held it. Pressing the tape back into place, he wiggled forward until he came to what seemed a dead end, but a little swing of the flashlight showed cracks branching right and left.



“Emma?” he called.

“Here!”

Her voice came from the right, so he moved along that branch. “Emma?”

“Yeah, yeah! What?”

“When I say your name, you’re supposed to say ‘Here!’”

“I already did that!”

He followed another crack to the left. “Emma?”

There was no answer. Stanley managed a few more feet and then, quite suddenly, the crack widened. He called again. “Emma?”

“Bananas!”

“Keep talking,” he shouted. “I need to hear you!”

“Bananas! Here! Blah, blah! Whatever! Hey, I can see your light!”

And there she was. The crack had widened to become a small cave, at the back of which sat Emma. Her jeans and shirt were smudged with dirt, but it was most surely Emma, squinting against the brightness of his light.

“You!” she exclaimed. “From school! The flattie!”

Don’t lose your temper, Stanley told himself. “I was the only one they thought could get in here. How are you doing, Emma?”

Emma rolled her eyes. “Oh, just great! A whole building falls on me, and they send in a flattie! And now I’m starving to death!”

Stanley untaped the slices of bread and cheese, and handed them over.

“Cheese, huh?” Emma put her sandwich together and took a bite. “I hate cheese. Got anything to drink, flattie?”

“Please don’t call me flattie. Here.” He held out the silver cigarette case.

Emma rolled her eyes again. “I’m not allowed to smoke.”

“It’s soda.”

She opened the cigarette case and sipped. “Blaahh! I hate grape!”

Chief Johnson’s voice rose from a hole in the wall behind her. “Stanley? You there yet?”

Emma jerked a thumb at the hole. “It’s for you, flattie.”



“I’m here, Chief!” Stanley called. “Emma’s okay.”

He heard cheering, and then the Chief’s voice came again. “See a way out, Stan?”

“I haven’t had a chance to look around yet. Emma’s eating.”

“We’ll wait. Over and out, Stan!”

“You too!” Stanley called.

He waited until Emma had finished her sandwich. “Emma, how did you get into this mess? What made you come in here?”

“I just came over to look,” Emma said. “And they had all these signs! ‘Danger! Keep out!’ All over the place, even behind in the parking lot. ‘Keep out! Danger! Danger!’ I really hate that, you know? So there was this door, and it was open, so I went in.” She finished the grape soda. “Okay, let’s go.”

“Not the way I came in,” Stanley said. “I could just barely squeeze through. And we have to be careful, because—”

“I know!” Emma interrupted. “Chief whatshisname kept telling me: ‘Don’t move around! The whole rest of the building might crash down!’ So am I supposed to live down here forever?”

“This door you came through,” Stanley said. “How far did you come to find this sort of cave

we're in?"

"Who said anything about far? I just got inside, and there were these crashing noises, and the whole building was shaking, and I fell down right here! The crashing went on forever! I thought I was going to die!"

"Calm down." An idea came into Stanley's head. "Just where was this door? Do you remember?"

"Over there somewhere." Emma pointed into the darkness of a corner behind her.

Stanley swung his light, but saw only what seemed to be a solid wall of splintered boards, rock, and brick.

Emma pointed a bit left, then right. "Maybe there ... I don't know! Was I supposed to take pictures or something? What difference does it make?"

"We might be just a little bit inside that door," Stanley said. "And what we want is to be just outside of it."

Moving closer to the corner, he saw that a jagged piece of wood protruded at waist level. It came out easily when he tugged, followed by loose dirt.

Emma stood beside him. "Why are you making this mess?"

He poked in the hole with the stick. "Maybe I'll find—"

Dirt cascaded from the wall, covering his shoes. He saw light now, not just the little circle from his flashlight, but daylight! Unmistakably daylight!

"Oooohhhh!" said Emma.

Stanley made the hole still larger, and they saw that a door lay on its side across the bottom of the hole, wreckage limiting the opening on both sides. But it was big enough! They would be able to wiggle through! He ran back to the wall from which Chief Johnson's voice had come.

"We're on our way out!" he shouted. "We'll be in back, in the courtyard!"

"Got it!" came the Chief's voice. "Great work!"



Stanley turned to Emma. "Let's go!"

"I'll get all dirty, silly," Emma said. "Maybe we could just—"

"Come ON!"

"Don't yell!" Emma said, but she crawled quickly through the hole with Stanley right behind her.

Hero!

There was much rejoicing in the courtyard. Mrs. Lambchop kissed Stanley and Arthur. Mrs. Weeks kissed Emma, and then everyone else, even Flash Tobin, who had arrived to take pictures. Mr. Lambchop shook hands with Mr. Weeks and Chief Johnson, who announced several times that Stanley was a great hero.



Flash Tobin took a group picture of all the Lambchops. “Need one more,” he said. “Emma, just you and Stanley. Your hero, right? Saved your life!”

“I could have got out by myself,” Emma said. “I just didn’t know exactly where the door was.” But she went to stand by Stanley.

“Smile!” Flash Tobin took the picture. “Yes, that’s good!” He gave Stanley a cheerful slap on the back, just as Emma’s elbow jabbed hard into Stanley’s ribs.

“Owww!” Stanley yelled.

Emma grinned. "That's for you, Mr. Hero!"

"Are you crazy? What—" Stanley stopped. Everybody was staring at him. He felt peculiar, as if— Yes! He was getting round again!

"Wow!" Emma said. "How do you do that?"



"Hooray for you, dear!" shouted Mrs. Lambchop, and more cries rose from the others in the courtyard. "Do you see what I see? ... He's blowing up! ... Are we crazy or what?"

Flash Tobin aimed his camera again. "Hold it, kid!"

But he was too late. Before him now stood a smiling Stanley Lambchop, shaped like a regular boy!

Mr. Lambchop ran to hug him, and everyone else applauded.

"Been thirty years with the Fire Department, and never saw anything like that!" said Chief Johnson. "Wouldn't have missed it!"

"I'm really glad," Stanley said. "But what made it happen?"

"What Dr. Dan said!" shouted Arthur. "Remember? The Osteo-posteo-whatever!"

"The OBP! The Osteal Balance Point." Mr. Lambchop smiled. "Yes! The slap on the back from Flash Tobin, and the poke from Emma! That did it!"

A board fell from the tilting roof of the Merker Building, landing in a corner of the courtyard.

"Let's go, folks," said Chief Johnson. "We're not safe here!"

A moment later, back out in the street, there was more hugging and kissing and saying good night. Suddenly, behind them, there were great creaking and grinding sounds. Turning, they watched what was left of the Merker building come crashing down.

Emma spoke first. "Oh, boy," she said softly. "Wow!"

Mrs. Weeks caught her eye, and gave a little nod toward Stanley.

Emma looked puzzled. "Huh? ... Oh, yeah!" She turned to Stanley. "I guess maybe you, you know,

saved my life. Whatever.” She kissed his cheek. “Thank you very much, Stanley Lambchop.”

“It’s okay,” Stanley said, quite red in the face. “You’re welcome.”

Everyone went home.

Fame!

At bedtime the next evening, the Lambchops read again the *Daily Sentinel* they had enjoyed so much at breakfast that morning.

The front page headline read: RUDE GIRL SAVED! FLAT RESCUER REGAINS SHAPE! There were also two Flash Tobin photographs—the Lambchop family picture and the one of Stanley and Emma taken just before she poked him in the ribs. Arthur was particularly pleased with the family picture.

“Finally!” he said. “Not just Stanley! People could have been wondering if he had a brother, you know? Can I have this one?”



“You may,” said Mrs. Lambchop. “I want the one of Stanley with Emma, for my kitchen wall.”

“I don’t care about pictures,” Stanley said. “I just hope I never go back to being flat.”

Mrs. Lambchop patted his hand. “I told Dr. Dan of your recovery, dear. He thinks it most unlikely the flatness will occur again.”

“Yay!” said Stanley.

Arthur cut the family picture out of the paper, and used a red pencil to draw an arrow, pointing up at him, in the white space at the bottom. Under the arrow, he wrote, *Hero’s Brother*. Then he taped the picture to the wall above his bed.

Soon all the Lambchops were asleep.



The End

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