

Matchbox Dreams

Book 1: The Drapkin kids in Dreamland



DOUGLAS SCHWARTZ

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FOREWORD

(For parents to read before reading the first story)

About Dreams

What Do Toddlers Dream About?

By Dr. Harvey Karp

From infants to adults, everyone dreams. Psychologist David Foulkes studies children (from tots to teens) to bring the secrets of their dreams to the light of day. In his lab, he lets kids fall asleep and then wakes them three times a night—sometimes in REM and sometimes in NREM—and asks them to describe what they recall.

Foulkes' findings are surprising...in how unsurprising they are. Basically, little kids have little dreams. But exactly what kids see while dreaming depends on their age. As children develop and grow, their dreams do too.

Toddler dreams are usually just snapshots, looking much more like a slide show than a movie when compared to the dreams of adults.

They heavily feature animals and other familiar sights, like images of people eating. According to Foulkes, “Children’s dream life...seems to be similar to their waking imagination and narration,” he explains in his study, *Children’s Dreaming and the Development of Consciousness*. “Animals carry human concerns and readily become objects of identification.”

Understandably, dreams can confuse small kids. Pre-schoolers often think their dreams are magically placed in their heads by someone else, or by God.

What Do Children Dream About? (Ages 5 to 9)

In this age range, kids begin seeing moving images and characters in action. Dreams now include multiple events strung together, one after the other. Kids start developing greater ability to remember dreams. Still, that's not always the case: When roused during REM sleep, 25% of the kids in Foulkes' studies had no recollection of dreaming, a trend that continues through age 9.

Are you wondering what your kids are doing in their dreams? Good question, but the answer is...nothing! The "character of the self" hasn't even made an appearance yet!

Drumroll please.... Generally around age 8, children appear as central characters in their dreams. Dream narratives become more complex and longer. Not only do children dream up the action as it unfolds, they also have thoughts and feelings within the dream. While dreaming continues to evolve somewhat through the teenage years, Foulkes concludes that 9-year-olds are relatively mature dreamers!

So, Who Has the Sweetest Dreams of All?

It turns out that, on the balance, children do have happier dreams than adults. Foulkes found grown-up dreams often contain

aggression and misfortune. In contrast, children's dreams are embroidered with positive emotions.
<https://www.happiestbaby.com/>

Reading with Your Child

By: Bernice Cullinan, Brod Bagert

Start Young and Stay with It

Children learn to love the sound of language before they even notice the existence of printed words on a page. Reading books aloud to children stimulates their imagination and expands their understanding of the world. It helps them develop language and listening skills and prepares them to understand the written word. When the rhythm and melody of language become a part of a child's life, learning to read will be as natural as learning to walk and talk.

Even after children learn to read by themselves, it's still important for you to read aloud together. By reading stories that are on their interest level, but beyond their reading level, you can stretch young readers' understanding and motivate them to improve their skills.

It's Part of Life

Although the life of a parent is often hectic, you should try to read with your child at least once a day at a regularly scheduled time. But don't be discouraged if you skip a day or don't always keep to your schedule. Just read to your child as often as you possibly can.

If you have more than one child, try to spend some time reading alone with each child, especially if they're more than 2 years apart. However, it's also fine to read to children at different stages and ages at the same time. Most children enjoy listening to many types of stories. When stories are complex, children can still get the idea and can be encouraged to ask questions. When stories are easy or familiar, youngsters enjoy these "old friends" and may even help in the reading.

Talking about Stories

It's often a good idea to talk about a story you are reading, but you need not feel compelled to talk about every story. Good stories will encourage a love for reading, with or without conversation. And sometimes children need time to think about stories they have read. A day or so later, don't be surprised if your child mentions something from a story you've read together.

Taking the time to read with your children on a regular basis sends an important message: Reading is worthwhile.

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/reading-your-child>

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Introduction for Parents



About matchbox dreams:

Matchbox Dreams is a collection of short stories developed to be read by an adult or older sibling to a child between the ages of 3 and 10 years old before a nap or bedtime. The goal is to give the child a head-start on what to dream about by reading a short story that takes place in Dreamland. This book contains a series of 20 short stories with a new book available every few months.

These stories may also spark the interest of older children since they are written at a high enough level to engage the adult reader as well as the children being read to.

Many of the stories will simultaneously be informative and entertaining for both the children and the reader. Woven into the stories will be examples of positive behavior, positive character traits and other messages which will reinforce children to be respectful of others and to be honest. There are no witches, dangerous animals, monsters or other characters which may cause nightmares in young children.

The first series of stories are built around two incredibly adorable mice called Harper and Remy. Later in the book, Millie joins in.

Matchbox Dreams

Each night, Harper, Remy and Millie will come alive through the short stories while your child holds and play-acts with them. The stories are designed to be around 10-15 minutes. Some chapters may be longer so feel free to stop and continue the chapter on another evening.

Although you don't need to purchase the toy mice to enjoy the stories, the stuffed animals will help children imagine the journeys to Dreamland, and they may assist with the children going to sleep faster and without as much effort on your part.

Children today get more than enough screen time but not enough imagination time. As the stories are read, there are no photos or illustrations to look at; children must recreate the story in their mind, acting out the story with the aid of Harper and Remy if they wish.

One goal of *Matchbox Dreams* is to help kids go to bed smoothly, which is a task that many kids struggle with. Getting your child into a consistent nighttime routine is critical and has many benefits. There have been multiple studies done, looking at how sleep affects children. An article from Parents.com mentions a British study that looked at the sleeping patterns of children between the ages of 3 and 7. They found links between consistent bedtime and positive behavior. They also found that irregular bedtimes interrupt a child's circadian rhythm, which then affects the mental and physical function of a child.

While this information may seem obvious to some, parents are not paying as much attention to it as they need to. In today's world, many parents let their kid(s) watch TV or play on an iPad before bedtime. While this does keep them occupied, it throws off their sleep schedule because the brightness of the screen can delay the body from releasing melatonin, a sleep hormone.

With *Matchbox Dreams*, there are no screens or images, so all your child must do is rest in their bed, close their eyes and listen to the adventure that awaits. Hopefully, *Matchbox Dreams* can become a part of your child's bedtime routine and help to encourage them to fall asleep quickly so they can join their friends in Dreamland.

At the end of each story, you should factor in another five to ten minutes to either play-act with your child or allow him/her to play alone. At a specified time, the child should be instructed to tuck the mice into their little beds placed near your child's pillow so your child, and the mice, can all enter Dreamland together.

Harper, Remy and Millie are recommended for children three years and older. With children younger than three, you can allow the child to play with Harper and Remy while reading. After the story is over, you can use the mice to play-act with your child and when your child is ready for sleep, take the little critters with you, telling your child they are going off to Dreamland.

Resources:

<https://www.parents.com/health/healthy-happy-kids/young-children-behave-better-when-they-have-a-consistent-bedtime/>

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/why-electronics-may-stimulate-you-bed>

About the Author



Douglas Schwartz started creating stories about a character called Mr. Hamster when his two daughters were just toddlers. Each night, Mr. Hamster would find himself in a new adventure. These adventures, made up on the spot, would give his daughters something to feed their imaginations and dreams, helping them sleep nightmare-free.

One possible reason for having sweet dreams instead of nightmares is that the stories had a central figure: a cute and loveable animal. The bedtime stories would help them start to imagine an adventure that would frequently carry on into dream time. Now, with his daughters grown up, and each with three children, he has been enlisted again to start creating stories to be read to their children.

Douglas decided to build the first series of adventures around three cute vintage mice: Harper, Remy and Millie. Harper, Remy and Millie will become an important part of your child's memories and will hopefully survive to be handed down to their children, not only as collectible toys, but as little friends for life.

Douglas graduated with a degree in psychology and a master's degree in mass communication. He currently resides in Northern California and soon plans on traveling between the two coasts to visit his

Matchbox Dreams

daughters and grandchildren. One family lives in Florida and the other is in California. During his travels, new books will be developed in twenty-story installments and available to be downloaded to your Kindle reader.

For this book, Evie, a toddler; Constance, an intelligent four-year-old; and Titus, an adventurous six-year-old, will be the leading children from the real world. They will be whisked back to 1900 when Harper, Remy and Millie were created.

Please feel free to change the names of the children, as well as any other events that may make the stories more personalized to your children or grandchildren.

About Harper, Remy and Millie



Harper



Remy



Millie

Meet Harper, Remy and later in the story Millie, the dearest of friends through mischief and mirth, and the most divine mice on Earth. Each toy comes with a small plush mouse stuffed animal wearing a removable outfit, as well as a matching miniature blanket and pillow that nestle neatly inside the vintage-themed matchbox. Designed to foster creativity through pretend play, the Matchbox Mice reflect Foothill Toy Co's philosophy that simple toys create the purest joy.

More than meets the eye, each Matchbox Mouse playset is an invitation to a world where anything is possible. The vintage-inspired dress-up stuffed animals encourage imagination and the sort of make-believe play many parents will remember from their childhoods.

Matchbox Dreams

Foothill Toy Company crafts timeless treasures that kindle the imagination. Inspired by the classic toys of times past, they are aimed to deliver the magic of childhood, one Matchbox Mouse at a time.

FIRST STORY

**(OKAY, NOW YOU CAN
READ OUT LOUD)**

CHAPTER 1

The Introduction of Harper, Remy and Millie



Harper, Remy and Millie aren't your typical stuffed animals. They possess the ability to come alive in Dreamland. Oh yes, Dreamland is real. It exists in your mind, but it only comes alive when you are sleeping. Just like how the night is never around during the day, Dreamland is only around when you are sleeping.

So, what about daydreaming, you may ask, or what about pretend play? Well, Harper, Remy and Millie love to be with you when you are daydreaming or pretending, but they will just look and act like all your other stuffed animals and toys.

The real magic begins when you go to bed. As soon as you fall asleep, Harper, Remy and Millie, tucked into their little beds and snuggled up safe and warm by your side, wake up and begin a new adventure each night. Some experiences are so much fun, you may want to relive them again and again.

Like all adventures, there needs to be a beginning. For Harper and Remy and later Millie, the beginning started a very long time ago.

It was before you were born, before your mom and dad were born and even before your grandparents were born.

Harper and Remy got their start in 1900, at the turn of a new century, in a small village at the foothills of Boise, Idaho. A young toymaker named Jack wanted to create cute toys for his three children: his youngest Evie, his middle child Constance and his oldest Titus.

With snow all around his little cabin, his wife at the sewing machine and the children tucked in bed, Jack worked at his small workbench near the only fireplace in the cabin. Jack was sketching animals, which he and his wife could make as toys and sell at the store he worked at. You see, Jack started each day working at the local toy store, stocking shelves and selling toys to children in the village.

Each night, he would remember the expressions on the children's faces when they received their new toys. He used this knowledge to design what he thought would be the most desired toys in the world.

Jack noticed that small stuffed animals like mice, hamsters and puppies were the most popular toys with the children in the village. With that information, that night, he was inspired to create a couple of the cutest stuffed toys anyone had ever owned.

As it got later, Jack's wife, Mrs. Drapkin, kissed Jack on the cheek and said she was going to sleep. Soon after, Jack started yawning from all his hard work. It didn't help that he was also really cozy in

his chair near the fireplace. He soon put his head down on the workbench and fell fast asleep.

In the olden times, people didn't dream unless the Sandman visited them. And for the Sandman to come to your house, everyone had to be sleeping. Unlike Santa Claus, the Sandman could not get to every home in one night, so some nights, people just didn't dream.

With everyone in the Drapkin house fast asleep and the Sandman being in Idaho, he stopped by to sprinkle dream dust on each member of the family. When he got to Jack, he looked at the cute mice Jack had drawn on his sketch pad, and he accidentally spilled dream dust on the drawings. Later that night, Jack had a most colorful dream, like the kind he used to have as a kid. He dreamt he was in Dreamland, and he was being shown around by the two mice he had drawn in his sketchpad.

Harper, one of the mice, came up to Jack and said, "Hi, I am Harper, and this is my sister Remy."

"Wow, you can speak," said Jack. "You look exactly like the mice I was drawing."

"Well, when you were young, you probably went to our part of Dreamland, and you must have seen us there and remembered us," Remy replied. "Since the Sandman spilled dream dust on our sketch, now whenever anyone sleeps near us, they can join us in Dreamland even if the Sandman didn't visit their home."

Harper added, "Our part of Dreamland is usually just for kids, but since you design toys for kids, you can enter Dreamland even though you are a grown-up."

"Yes," Jack said, "now I remember. When I was young, I did visit Dreamland. I guess now when I dream, I go somewhere else."

"You are correct," said Remy. "Dreamland is just one part of Dreamworld, which has many different lands. When you sleep, you go to one of those other lands. They can be fun, but Dreamland is the nicest, safest and most fun land in of all Dreamworld." Remy continued, "There are no monsters, witches or ghosts in Dreamland, and there are lots of places to travel, adventures to be had and people and animals to meet."

"How long have you two been living in Dreamland?" asked Jack.

"Well, we are not sure," said Harper. "Ever since we can remember, we have been here. Time is different in Dreamland. Instead of having the past, present and future, we can visit all three times anytime we want."

Remy added, "We would show you around, but it may be best for you to wake up now while we are fresh in your memory, so you can finish the sketches and make us into real stuffed animals."

"Yes," said Harper, "and when you make us, please make us nice beds that we can sleep in while we travel off to Dreamland."

Jack woke up. He sat up in his chair and thought to himself that his dream was one of the most real dreams he had ever had. He had forgotten what a beautiful place Dreamland was. Then he looked down at his sketches and noticed a small pile of sparkling dust on each drawing. He paused. Had it all been a dream, or did it really happen?

That night, Jack finished his sketches of Harper and Remy, and in the morning, he gave the drawings to Mrs. Drapkin so she could make the two mice with her sewing machine. While Mrs. Drapkin was lighting the fire to make breakfast, she ran out of matches and was about to throw the empty matchbox in the fireplace when Jack told her to save it. He thought it was a perfect size for Harper and Remy's bed, so he asked Mrs. Drapkin for another one.

All during the day while Jack was working at the toy store, he kept thinking about the dream he had the night before and about how real it had seemed. When he got home, he couldn't wait to see what Mrs. Drapkin had sewn up while he was at work.

Sitting on his workbench were two large matchboxes. On the outside of each box, Mrs. Drapkin had drawn three mice pedaling a three mouse-powered bicycle under the name Royal Star Brand. He slowly opened the first box to see Harper tucked snugly between his bed and blanket smiling up at him. He opened the second box and found Remy tucked into bed, smiling too.

Although Jack had left his wife detailed sketches of Harper and Remy, he was surprised at how every detail was exactly like the Harper and Remy of his dream. At dinner time, when his wife and three children—Evie, Constance and Titus—were eating, he showed them Harper and Remy and told everyone about the dream he had the night before. The kids instantly fell in love with the mice and asked their dad if they could have them.

Jack had planned on taking Harper and Remy to the toy store the next day to see if Mr. Lambert, the owner of the store, wanted to place an order of copies of Harpers and Remys to sell in the store.

“Titus, since you are the oldest, you can pick which mouse you want to sleep with tonight,” Jack said. Titus picked Harper. Constance was happy because secretly she wanted Remy anyway. Evie was too young to speak, but Jack could tell she was not happy being left out of choosing a mouse.

“Evie, you are too young to be able to sleep with Harper or Remy, but when I read to all of you tonight, you can each take turns playing with the mice,” said Jack. “Evie, in a few days when you turn three years old, you can have your own mouse.” Evie seemed happy with that decision.

For the first time in ages, all three of the children had all their chores done, their teeth brushed, their faces washed and they were in bed even before Mrs. Drapkin had to ask them.

It was the Drapkin family tradition to gather all the children together in one bed and for Jack to tell a story each evening. Most of the time, he would make up stories based around the stuffed animals in the toy store. This evening, Jack told them about his trip to Dreamland and how he met Harper and Remy. He also told them what Remy had said: if the mice were tucked into their little matchboxes and sleeping near you at night, you could enter Dreamland anytime, even if the Sandman had not sprinkled dream dust on you.

Constance and Titus could not wait to fall asleep so they could start dreaming. Right after Jack told them a story, both children said they were tired and ready for bed. Constance took Remy to her bedroom and Titus took Harper to his. Poor Evie didn't have a new mouse to sleep with, so when Jack tucked her into her crib, she snuggled up to her old stuffed hamster doll that Jack called Mr. Hamster.

After everyone was tucked into bed, Jack went and sat by the fireplace with Mrs. Drapkin. Meanwhile, Titus took Harper out of his matchbox and told Harper that when he slept that night, he would like to go to Dreamland like his dad did and have Harper show him around. Harper continued to smile up at Titus in response. Before Titus fell asleep, he pretended that Harper was walking through sand dunes (his blankets) and that Harper could fly wherever he wanted to.

In the other room, Constance was doing the same thing, only she pretended that her blankets were knee-high soft green grass that she

and Remy were making their way through to find Titus and Harper. After a while, both Constance and Titus grew tired, so they tucked their new little friends into their matchbox beds, and both fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER 2

Dreamland



Within minutes of falling asleep, Titus was standing on the beach looking out over the ocean. He was so excited to be at the ocean since it was almost 400 miles from his cottage.

“Isn’t the sea pretty?” said Constance.

Titus looked to his right and saw Constance and Evie standing on the beach near him, holding hands and watching the seagulls swooping down over the waves looking for small fish to eat.

“Constance, how did we get to the ocean?” asked Titus. “The last thing I remember was putting Harper to sleep in his bed near my pillow.”

“Yep,” said Harper. “That’s what you did right before falling asleep. Now you are in Dreamland.”

Titus turned around to see Harper and Remy standing right behind them. “Harper how did you get so big?” asked Titus. “You are almost the same size as me!”



“Well, actually, we didn’t get big. You, Constance and Evie got small,” said Harper. “Whenever you visit Dreamland, you are the same size as your animal friends.”

Constance said, “Hey Titus, Harper is right. Either that or these seashells are gigantic.” She let out a giggle and pointed to seashells that were ten times their usual size.

“So, what part of Dreamland are we in?” Titus asked.

“Harper and I live in Puffin Village, which is just over the other side of the dunes behind us, heading east,” declared Remy. “To the north, up the coast, is the town of Willetts where the squirrel clan lives. To the south is Ploverville, where the kittens live, and the ocean to the west is called Shearwater. About 50 miles out to sea is the beautiful island of Sanderling, home of the puppies.”

“Hey everyone,” Harper said, “do you want to come to our house for tea and cookies?”

“Sure,” said Evie. Titus and Constance stared at Evie in confusion.

Both said at the same time, “Evie, you can’t speak yet; you’re too young.”

“Remember, this is Dreamland where everything is possible,” declared Harper.

With that, everyone started to walk up the dunes towards Harper and Remy’s house in Puffin Village. Their home was more of a burrow in the ground than a real house. Imagine a whole village

with a village center, a large fountain and shops constructed of boards made from driftwood with water-worn glass for windows. Radiating out in all directions from the village center, like a wagon wheel, were white lanes paved with small particles of broken shells and large grains of sand. These lanes went from the village center to the hills that surrounded Puffin Village. In the hills were hundreds of little burrows. Each burrow was decorated with colorful shells, glass, driftwood fences and other items that had been found on the beach. One burrow, exceptionally large and ornate, caught Constance's attention.

"Remy, whose house is that?" inquired Constance.

"That house belongs to Mr. Downing, the mayor of Puffin Village," said Remy. "The mayor is going up to Willets this week to meet with the mayor of the squirrels. Last week, some of the squirrels came to Puffin looking to purchase nuts, and one of the younger squirrels accidentally knocked over Mr. Springer's nut cart, causing all his roasted nuts to fall in the street. Before Mr. Springer could catch the youngster, he and his friends took off up a tree and jumped from tree to tree until they were out of Puffin Village. Mr. Downing is going to be traveling there soon to meet with the mayor of Willets to collect payment for the soiled nuts."

After a ten-minute walk, they arrived at Harper and Remy's home. Since the kids were the same size as the mice, they had no trouble entering the house and sitting down at the dinner table. Harper started the fire in the fireplace while Remy lit the stove.

Being that it was still 1900 in Dreamland, homes had yet to have electricity. Electricity, invented in 1882, didn't make it to Dreamland until the late 1920s when kids in the real world started getting electricity to their homes and began dreaming about things like electric lights, electric stoves, and electric heaters.

Soon, the water was boiling, and Remy served everyone tea while Harper took the cookie jar down from the cupboard and gave each person a peanut butter cookie.

"These cookies are great," said Titus. "Can I have another, please?"

"I like this tea. What is it called?" asked Constance.

"You can have as many cookies as you want, Titus," said Remy.

"After all, it is your dream. Constance, this is dandelion tea. We use the whole dandelion, petals, stem, roots and all to make the tea. One dandelion will last us over a month, even if we drink it every day."

After everyone had all the cookies and tea they could eat and drink, they got up to look around the house. Titus had six cookies, Constance had three and little Evie surprised everyone by eating 8 cookies. Now that Evie could speak, her favorite words were "more please."

First, they descended a rickety staircase made of wood planks and driftwood to the root cellar. Since they did not have electricity, Remy brought a candle with her made from beeswax and an old yo-yo string. The cellar was large and damp and in between the roots

were shelves lined with all kinds of yummy-looking jars of food. There were jars of cherries floating in a reddish liquid, peanut butter, grape jelly, and cans of peas, corn, and string beans, and there were burlap bags of every type of nut you could think of.

From the root cellar, they ascended to the ground floor where the kitchen, library and living room were. They continued up another flight of stairs to the bedrooms and bathroom. From the bedroom window, they could see an old sailing ship parked in the backyard.

“Harper, why do you have a ship in the backyard?” asked Titus.

“A few years ago, there was a large storm and a wave brought the ship all the way over the dunes to our backyard,” said Harper. “Do you want to go aboard?”

Without a word, but with shouts of glee, all three of the kids rushed down the stairs and were climbing the ladder to get aboard the ship.

The ship had three masts with the sails wrapped up, a large deck and the captain’s quarters in the back.

“This is great!” said Titus. “All the charts and furnishings are still here. What happened to the captain and crew?”

“We don’t know,” said Remy. “The ship washed up here like you see it, and we were never able to locate the owner.”

“Do you think we can sail it to Sanderling Island someday to see the puppies?” asked Constance.

“Sure, all you have to do is dream about it when you are here some night, and the ship will be ready to go,” responded Remy.

Titus, Constance and Evie spent the rest of the time exploring the ship. Below the deck, there were twenty cannons, thirty hammocks for the crew to sleep in, a galley to cook food and a large area under the deck stocked with all kinds of food and provisions for a long trip.

Titus climbed all the way to the top of the tallest mast and made his way into the crow’s nest. From there, he could see all of Puffin Village and how the village did, in fact, look like a wagon wheel.

“Harper, do you think this used to be a pirate ship?” asked Titus.

“It could have been,” answered Harper. “We did find some treasure aboard, which is now hidden in one of the caves up in those hills.”

“Can we go looking for the hidden treasure today?” Titus asked excitedly.

“We should probably make that a different dream,” responded Harper with a soft chuckle. “It is a long walk, and we will need to have supplies to take with us.”

Just as Titus was checking out the deck, he heard an alarm go off. Titus turned to Harper and asked him why an alarm was going off.

“That is your alarm at home telling you to wake up, so you can get ready for school,” said Harper.

“But I don’t want to leave,” protested Titus with a pout. “I like it here in Dreamland, and there is so much to see! What about Constance and Evie? Do they have to wake up too?”

“No,” said Remy. “They don’t have school yet, so they can stay longer.”

Just as Titus was about to protest again, he woke up, looked around and realized he was in his bedroom. He hit the top of his alarm harder than usual to turn it off and got out of bed. He almost went to wake up Constance and Evie too, so they would have to leave Dreamland, but he decided that was not a nice thing to do, so he went off the kitchen to see what his mom had prepared for him for his breakfast, still thinking about the magical land he had just come from.

CHAPTER 3

The Birthday Party



That night, Titus could not wait to return to Dreamland. After dinner, and after taking baths, Titus, Constance and Evie all gathered in one bed so Jack could tell them another story. After the story, Constance took Remy to her bedroom, and Titus took Harper to his bedroom. Jack and Mrs. Drapkin went into each child's room, said prayers, gave them big hugs, got each child water and tucked them in bed. Constance and Titus made sure to tuck their new friends into their little beds and lay down to go to sleep. They were so excited about revisiting Dreamland that they fell asleep fast. They didn't even play with their friends; they just laid their heads down on their pillows and were soon fast asleep.

“Hey Remy, it looks like Titus, Constance and Evie, our friends from the real world, may be coming to Mayor Downing's birthday party today,” said Harper.

“Yay! It is always great to have new friends to go on adventures and to share birthday cake with,” said Remy with a big smile.

Puffin Village is big on birthday parties. You see., no matter whose birthday it is, weather permitting (which is almost always permitting in Dreamland, unless of course you like cold and rain and want to dream about that), the whole village gets together in the village center and has a party. For each birthday, Mrs. Wilson, owner and chief baker at Mrs. Wilson's Bakery, makes a large cake for everyone in the village to share.

Titus, Constance and Evie woke up in the middle of Puffin Village surrounded by hundreds of villagers. The sun was shining, and there were hundreds of mice dressed in colorful outfits, all standing around and waiting for something to happen.

Constance turned to a mouse, wearing a beautiful floral dress with a yellow straw hat, and whispered, "What are we all waiting for?"

"Oh, how rude of me. I didn't introduce myself. My name is Kim, and I am Harper and Remy's next-door neighbor. Today is the mayor's birthday, and Harper and Remy are just up there by the giant birthday cake waiting for the mayor to officially start the party. Once the mayor gives his speech, he will cut the cake, and Harper and Remy will come over here and show you around Puffin Village," Kim went on to say.

"Ladies and gentlemice," Mayor Downing exclaimed with his outside voice, "today we are gathered here to celebrate my birthday. It seems like only yesterday I came to live here in Puffin Village. Since then, we have had hundreds of children from the real world

visit and teach us things we would have never learned. I am very grateful for the knowledge they have taught us.”

Mayor Downing went on to explain, “Many people, especially grown-ups, don’t realize how much they can learn from children. Unlike teenagers, who think they already know everything, children learn new things every day, and they like to share what they learn with grown-ups. If grown-ups took the time to listen and speak with children, they would learn something new too. It may be something new the grown-ups didn’t know, or it may be something they did know but forgot, as their minds get full of stuff as they get older. Grown-ups sometimes have so much in their minds, they take the old stuff and put it in the storage section of their minds to make room for more stuff. Sometimes, it takes a child to help a grown-up remember where a memory was stored.”

Like many important people in towns and villages, Mayor Downing could talk for hours. So, before the mayor could continue with his speech, Mr. Springer, the town roasted nut vendor, started singing happy birthday to the mayor. Soon, everyone was singing, including Titus, Constance and Evie. They were singing so loudly, they drowned out Mayor Downing’s speech, and even Mayor Downing joined in with the song. As everyone was singing, Mrs. Wilson cut the cake and passed out generous slices to everyone in the village. While she was passing the cake around, Harper and Remy made their way through the crowd over to Titus, Constance and Evie.

“Hello Harper and Remy,” said Evie.

“Thanks for coming to the birthday party,” Remy said. “Would all of you like to meet the mayor?”

“Sure, that would be great,” said Constance.

“Can we eat our cake first? Do you have any ice cream? Also, can we have seconds?” Titus blurted out.

“Titus, you haven’t even eaten the first slice yet,” said Constance rolling her eyes.

After everyone had their two servings of cake with chocolate chip ice cream, they walked over to where the mayor was standing and eating his cake, and Harper introduced them to Mayor Downing. Mayor Downing was a robust mouse, shorter than Harper but way more rounded at the waist.

The mayor wore a black coat with tails and a gray vest with a silver watch chain attached to a button; the watch rested in his right-side vest pocket. Titus noticed that the mayor’s tail poked out between the coattails. Titus started to giggle because every time the mayor talked, his tail would move around and sometimes get tangled up with the coattails. The mayor also had the longest set of whiskers Titus had ever seen. Titus figured the mayor put wax on his whiskers because they curled up on both sides and were almost as high as the mayor’s ears.

“Harper, who do we have here?” asked Major Downing.

“These are my human friends from the real world,” Harper explained. “This young lady is Constance; this young gentleman is Titus, and our little friend with cake all over her face and a dab of ice cream on the end of her nose is Evie.”

Constance did her best curtsy, Titus bowed deeply, and Evie licked her lips and wiped her nose on her sleeve.

Before the mayor could say another word, Evie whispered to Constance that she had to go to the bathroom, so she was going to wake up and cry for her mom. Within seconds, Evie disappeared from Dreamland. Apparently, her crying also woke up Constance, because she disappeared too.

The mayor looked at Titus and said, “Do you need to return to the real world too?”

“Nah,” Titus said. “Today is Saturday, so I am in no rush to wake up.”

The mayor turned to Harper and said, “Harper, since you and I are traveling to Willets to collect money from Mayor Bushytail, of the squirrel clan, do you think your little friend wants to join us?”

Harper asked Titus, and Titus said that he was always up for an adventure.

“Harper, you should introduce Titus to some of your friends who are at my birthday party while I get ready to travel to Willets,” Mayor Downing announced. “I will meet you and Titus at the train

station in one hour. I have a reserved sleeper car, which will be big enough for all of us, so don't worry about booking reservations."

"Sounds good," said Harper. "See you in an hour." Harper brought Titus back to the stage in the village center where birthday cake crumbs and icing were spread all over the table and on the floor.

"Looks like all of the cake is gone. Any more ice cream left?" asked Titus curiously.

"No, it looks like that is gone too, but there will be lots to eat on the train," said Harper. Just as he said that, Mr. Springer, the roasted nut vendor, walked up to Harper and Titus.

"You must be Titus," asked Mr. Springer. "I knew your father. He was a great kid. I haven't seen him in years since he grew up and stopped coming to Dreamland."

"Father never mentioned that he came to Puffin Village when he was young," said Titus.

"Oh yes, this was before Harper and Remy joined us," said Mr. Springer. "Your father was quite a little adventurer," Mr. Springer added with a smirk.

"Do you remember any stories about him?" asked Titus.

"Well, there was one time that your dad was here with a friend he called Squirrely, a squirrel from Willets, and they were getting supplies from Mr. Nordmo's General Store to go on a trip to Ploverville to check out Kitten Village," said Mr. Springer.

“Anyhow, after they got their supplies, they loaded them in a new Ford horseless carriage that your dad had dreamt up for the trip. Everyone in the village was here to see them off since it was the first horseless carriage anyone had ever seen. Now, they are just referred to as cars.

“After the car was loaded up, Squirrely was in front turning the crank to start the car, and your dad was in the car pushing on the gas pedal. Well, the car started so fast that the crank began spinning and Squirrely was tossed high into the air. When he returned to earth, he landed in the water fountain way over there. Your dad was laughing so hard, he woke up, and he and the car disappeared from Dreamland,” added Mr. Springer.

Just as Titus was going to ask about what more adventures his dad had gone on, Constance came into his room and woke him up for breakfast.

CHAPTER 4

Puffin Village



After breakfast, Titus and Constance went outside to do their chores in the barn. The weather was very cold, and there was snow piled high on the ground, but the sun was shining, and it looked like it was going to be a beautiful day. Titus took two pails for milking the cow, and Constance had a basket for collecting eggs. Little Evie was all bundled up with her hand-me-down coat from Constance, along with her pink gloves and matching hat her mother had knitted for her.

While Constance and Evie were collecting eggs, one of the eggs rolled under a loose plank on the floor. Constance asked Titus to get the egg, and when he lifted the plank, he found an old shoebox with a string around it. Titus pulled the string and opened the box. Inside, he found a small old tattered brown squirrel stuffed animal with a blue vest and a bushy tail.

Titus and Constance looked at each other and both came to the same conclusion that this must be Dad's stuffed animal for Dreamland. For the rest of the day, Titus and Constance couldn't wait for their dad

to get home from work so they could ask him about the stuffed squirrel and his adventures in Dreamland.

After doing all the chores in the barn, cleaning their rooms and doing home-school studies with their mom, it was finally getting time for their dad to come home. Titus and Constance helped their mother set the table for dinner while Evie was in her high-chair nibbling on cut carrots. Mrs. Drapkin cooked a roast along with peeled potatoes from their garden, cooked carrots and homemade bread. Between the smell of the fireplace, cooked roast and homemade bread, everyone could hardly wait until dinner.

Finally, the front door opened, and Jack came in quickly to keep the snow and wind out of the house. “Dear, everything smells great! You must have been cooking all day,” Jack said to his wife, giving her a kiss on the head.

“It wasn’t that bad. Titus and Constance helped with cleaning and peeling the potatoes and carrots while I prepared the roast and made the bread,” said Mrs. Drapkin.

“You kids are turning out to be great little helpers,” said Jack, tousling Constance’s hair.

Once they had sat down for dinner and said prayers, Titus and Constance both started asking their dad questions at the same time.

“Dad, I was in the barn searching for an egg when I found this stuffed squirrel stuffed animal,” Titus declared, pulling the animal from his pocket.

“Was this your stuffed animal, and does it have anything to do with Dreamland?” inquired Constance.

“Titus, it is kind of late in the year for an Easter egg hunt,” chuckled Jack.

“No, I wasn’t hunting for eggs, Dad. I was retrieving an egg that Constance let roll under the floorboards in the barn,” Titus said matter-of-factly.

Jack picked up the squirrel stuffed animal, brushed off some of the dust and straw and said, “Well, well, I haven’t seen Squirrely since I was a kid. When I started going to high school, I put Squirrely in a shoebox for safekeeping, and I guess I completely forgot about him.”

Titus and Constance looked at each other, then at their dad, and at the same time, they both asked, “Was Squirrely the Mayor of Willets when you were our age?”

“No,” said Jack. “He was just a student like me back then. Wait!” Jack exclaimed. “How do you know about Willets?”

Titus and Constance both laughed and said that last night, they went to Puffin Village in Dreamland and learned about Willets and how the mayor of Puffin Village, Harper and Remy were going to go to Willets to meet Mayor Bushytail. They were going to collect money

for Mr. Springer's roasted nut cart, which had been knocked over by a young squirrel.

"Squirrely's real name was Jim Bushytail. Everyone just called him Squirrely because he was always getting into trouble. I wonder if he is now the mayor of Willets," Jack added.

During this discussion, Mrs. Drapkin looked at Jack and the kids and said, "I think I missed something here. What are you all talking about? When I was young, I never went to that part of Dreamland."

"Dreamland is very large," said Jack. "Chances are, when you were young, you went to a different part of Dreamland. Did you have a stuffed animal you slept with when you were young?" Jack asked his wife.

"No," said Mrs. Drapkin. "When I was young, I slept with my favorite blanket."

"Well, that explains it," Jack went on to say. "You need a stuffed animal host to get into the part of Dreamland I used to go to." Titus and Constance nodded in agreement; at least that was their understanding on how to get to the fun part of Dreamland.

"That is true," Constance said. "Remy told me that If you go to Dreamland by yourself, you can end up anywhere. When you travel with a partner like Remy or Harper, or even Mayor Bushytail, you get to go to the best places in Dreamland where everything is fun and safe, and there are always new adventures to experience."

That evening, after the kids had cleaned off the table and gotten into bed, Jack thought he would tell them a funny story that happened to him when he was in Dreamland.

“Seeing Mr. Bushytail reminded me of an adventure I had when I was your age, Titus,” started Jack. “One night, when I got to Willets, Squirrely and I had just finished riding the rapids in an old canoe we found. We pushed the canoe onto a small beach and got out to explore the area. No sooner had we climbed up the bank did we notice the canoe had broken loose and was floating downstream.”

“What did you do?” asked a fascinated Constance.

“Well,” said Jack, “seeing a long vine hanging from a nearby tree, I jumped on the vine, swung out over the water and yelled a Tarzan scream as loud as I could. But I soon learned that I didn’t grab onto a vine at all but instead the nose of a very tall garaffant.”

“What is a garaffant?” asked Titus, his eyebrows furrowed together.

“Imagine a giraffe, but instead of a long neck, it has a long nose like an elephant. It is the same color as an elephant too. Anyhow, when I grabbed the garaffant’s nose I made him sneeze and he shot me into the river, past the canoe. It was like being shot out of a cannon, it was so fast.

“I was able to get into the canoe and, using the paddle, I made my way back to shore. Squirrely ran down to meet me to see if I was

okay, but before he could ask me anything, he fell on the sand laughing so hard he almost couldn't catch his breath! At that point, I was getting a bit mad since I had just risked my life by being launched into the air by a strange-looking animal, so I didn't see what was so funny. Squirrely managed to stop laughing long enough to walk me over to a still pond near the river so I could see my reflection in the water. Besides being soaking wet, I had a large glob of purple stuff covering my hair, which later turned out to be garaffant slime, and there was a live fish stuck in the slime looking back at me in the reflection. Upon seeing this, I started to laugh so hard that I woke myself up, causing me to leave Dreamland," Jack told them while chuckling at the memory.

"Okay, now it's time for bed," Jack said.

"Wait," said Titus. "You can't stop there; what else happened?"

"I will try and remember more stories," Jack said, "but now it is time for everyone to go to sleep and make your own dreams."

Jack picked up Evie to carry her to her crib, and Mrs. Drapkin walked Titus and Constance to their rooms and tucked them into their beds. Titus tucked Harper into his matchbox bed, Constance tucked Remy into her bed, and they all went to sleep as fast as they could.

CHAPTER 5

Mr. Nordmo's General Store



Within minutes, Titus was back in Puffin Village. He looked around and didn't see Constance or Evie, so he assumed they had not fallen asleep yet.

A voice from behind Titus said, "I understand you are going to Willets with Harper and Mayor Downing to collect the money the squirrel clan owes me for knocking over my roasted nut cart." It was Mr. Springer. "Is this your first trip to Willets?" Mr. Springer went on to ask.

Titus said, "Yes, it will be."

Mr. Springer said, "Here is a large bag of roasted nuts for your trip. Please stop by when you get back, and I will give you another bag for your troubles."

Titus took the bag and went to put it in his pocket when he remembered his pajamas didn't have pockets. Harper noticed for the first time that Titus was wearing his flannel pajamas. He told Titus that the train they were going to ride to Willets was pretty fancy, so

they should go over to Mr. Nordmo's General Store to pick out clothes for the trip.

Mr. Nordmo's General Store was less than a block from the village center. As they walked there, they passed Mrs. Wilson's Bakery, the Tuney Candy Store and the Cheese Barrel, which had cheeses from all over Dreamland.

"Harper, am I dreaming, or is the largest cheese store in the world?" Titus asked.

"Titus, everything in Dreamland is in your dreams, but this is the largest cheese store on the west coast of Dreamland," Harper said. "By the way, next time you come to Dreamland, instead of wearing your pajamas, you can dream up other clothes to wear so we don't have to go to Mr. Nordmo's General Store every time to get new clothes."

Stepping into Mr. Nordmo's General Store was like stepping back in time. The floor was made of old and uneven wooden planks that creaked every time Titus took a step. The counter was made of one large plank of walnut with a large scale to weigh things and an old-time cash register sitting on top. There were all kinds of farm tools hanging on the walls. On the floor, there were lots of barrels filled to the top with stuff. One had nails, another had flour, a third had apples, but the ones that Titus liked were the barrels filled with taffy candy.

“There must be fifty barrels of candy in all different colors,” Titus said in amazement.

“Mr. Nordmo makes his own saltwater taffy candy, using ingredients from around Puffin Village,” said Harper. “I think it is the best in Dreamland,” he added.

Mr. Nordmo walked over to Titus and Harper and asked how he could be of assistance. Harper pointed to Titus’ PJs and asked if Mr. Nordmo had anything more appropriate for a train trip. Mr. Nordmo brought Titus over to the clothing section, and Titus instantly spotted a cowboy outfit he really liked. While Titus was trying on the clothes, Harper was buying some supplies for the trip, including lots of candy and fruit to take along for snacks. Titus came over to the counter, dressed in blue jeans, a red and white plaid shirt, a tan vest, leather belt, leather boots and a large cowboy hat.

“Well, not entirely what I would have selected for this trip, but it fits you well,” stated Harper. Harper told Mr. Nordmo to add it to his bill. After Harper paid for the clothes and supplies, they made their way to the train station.

Titus had the nuts Mr. Springer had given him in one vest pocket and the watermelon taffy candy Mr. Nordmo had given him for the trip in the other vest pocket. Titus was happy. He had a new cowboy outfit and lots of snacks, and he and his new friend Harper were going on an adventure.

The train station was a large, ornate brick building. Inside, it had a huge waiting area with beautiful mosaic tiles on the floor and murals that covered most of the walls. The murals showed different lands within Dreamland. While they were waiting for Mayor Downing, Harper was pointing to each of the lands and telling Titus about where each land was and which animals lived in each land.

Titus was looking at the map, which showed the train trip they were going on to Willets, and said to Harper, “Willets looks like quite a distance away. How long is it going to take get there?”

“It will probably take one night, so hopefully, when you go to sleep tomorrow evening, your dream will pick up where it left off, and you will be back on the train,” Harper said.

“If this is a dream, how come we can’t just click our heels together like Dorothy did in the *Wizard of OZ* and just arrive there instantly?” Titus asked.

Just as Titus finished saying that, Mayor Downing showed up and heard what Titus said. “That’s the problem with all you real-worlders; you’re always in a rush. Each night, you have hours and hours to dream, and all you want to do is go to new places. Well, most times, the journey leads to more adventures than the destination,” said Mayor Downing.

Harper joined in and said, “What the mayor is saying is that the traveling part of the dream, or in the real world for that matter, can be as much or more fun than the actual place you are traveling to.

Wait until you see the inside of the train. I'm sure after you see it, you won't be in any rush to get to Willets."

The train conductor took Mayor Downing's luggage and showed them the way to the sleeper car. The train was like the one Titus had seen in old western movies. The floor was covered with thick red wool carpet with gold and blue patterns running the length of the car. The walls were a dark mahogany wood, polished to the point that Titus could see his reflection in it.

When they finally got to the sleeper car, Titus could not believe how much room there was. There were two large couches with a table in the middle and two beds up above the couches. The walls were the same mahogany wood and all the metal was made of brass.

"Harper, you're right. This is going to be a great trip. Can I please sit by the window?" asked Titus.

"Sure," said Harper. "Right after we pull out of the train station, I will show you the rest of the train."

Within minutes, the mayor was unpacked, Harper had placed some of the snacks on the table and the train started to roll out of the station. As the train began moving faster, Titus noticed it began rocking back and forth. At first, the rocking was light, then it got stronger and stronger to the point that Titus was being bounced around the sleeper car. Finally, Titus woke up to find that the rocking was Titus's mother trying to wake him.

“Titus, it’s time to get up,” his mother said. “You have been sleeping for over eight hours, and you need to have breakfast.”

Needless to say, Titus was not happy to be woken up from his dream just when his adventure was about to begin.

“Mom, why did you wake me? I was just about to take a train trip to Willets with Harper and the mayor when you woke me up.”

Titus’s mother gave him an odd look and asked if he had a fever. She felt his forehead, and when she didn’t feel one, she told Titus to get dressed.

During breakfast, Titus told Constance and Evie about what they missed in Dreamland. He told them about Mr. Nordmo’s General Store, his new cowboy outfit, the saltwater watermelon taffy, about the large train station and the beautiful sleeper car. He thought Mayor Downing wouldn’t mind if they all stayed in the sleeper car for the journey to Willets if Constance and Evie wanted to join him tonight in their dreams.

Constance and Evie really wanted to go on the trip to Willets with Titus, so the two bigger kids did all their chores, and while Constance cleaned her room, Titus took his bath and brushed his teeth. Constance then took her bath, brushed her teeth too and joined her siblings who were all sitting on the couch ready for Jack to read a new story about the adventures in Dreamland. They got ready for bed so fast that their parents hadn’t even finished cleaning up the dinner dishes.

No sooner was the story over, and all three of the kids hugged their parents and said they were ready for bed. Mrs. Drapkin thought they may be suffering from a fever since it was rare for the kids to go to bed without a struggle. After feeling all their foreheads and not detecting a temperature, she felt her forehead to see if maybe she was the one who was sick and imagining that the kids wanted to go to sleep.

“Titus, does that fact that all of you want to go to sleep have anything to do with the dream you told me about this morning? You know that Dreamland is not real, right?” Mrs. Drapkin said.

Titus told his mom that it seems very real for kids. Grownups are too old to go to the kid part of Dreamland unless they are invited, so that is why she didn’t think it was real.

“Well, that is not entirely true. When I was your age, I used to go to Dreamland from time to time,” said Mrs. Drapkin.

“But without stuffed animal hosts like Harper and Remy, you can’t visit the parts of Dreamland we go to,” Titus pointed out.

“If that is the case, then I think you should try to keep a dream journal by your bed; as soon as you wake up each morning, you can write down your dreams. This way, I can have a better understanding of Dreamland, and you can remember where to start your next dream,” explained Mrs. Drapkin.

Matchbox Dreams

Titus and Constance thought that a dream journal was a good idea. They promised to write in it every morning after they had a dream. They each got a pencil and pad to put next to their beds, hugged their mom and dad, placed Harper and Remy in their matchboxes and closed their eyes so they could pick up the dream where they had left off.